

Experiencing foreign spaces: memories lingering between afilmic, profilmic and diegetic realities

SCREEN MEMORIES: Depictions of State Socialism and 1989 in Screen Media

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LEVELS OF REALITY (Souriau, Buckland)

- 1. afilmic reality (the reality that exists independently of filmic reality)
- 2. profilmic reality (the reality photographed by the camera)
- 3. filmographic reality (the film as physical object)
- 4. screenic/filmophanic reality (the film as projected on a screen)
- 5. diegetic reality (the fictional story world created by the film)
- 6. spectatorial reality (the spectator's conception and comprehension of a film)
- 7. creational reality (the filmmaker's intentions)

• (Buckland *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film* 2003: 47).

QUESTIONS

- (how) do afilmic realities become profilmic, and hence diegetic realities?
- what is the consequence of using afilmic natural scenery in constructing retrospective allegorical heterotopias and dystopias about the communist Eastern Europe?
- the introduction of such an "extremely" afilmic reality-element in the narrative feature filmic diegesis as actual natural scenery complicates the construction of the diegetic reality

EXAMPLES

- Péter Gothár's 1995 *The Section/A részleg*
- Róbert Adrián Pejó's 2005 *Dallas Pashamende*
- Zoltán Kamondi's 2007 *Dolina*
- Szabolcs Hajdu's 2010 *Bibliothèque Pascal*
- Krisztina Deák's 2012 *Aglaja*
- Silviu Purcărete's 2012 *Undeva in Palilula*

SAMPLES

- to isolate the first sequence when a filmic, unique and (possibly highly) recognizable actual natural, geographical scenery is introduced in the diegetic reality of the movies
- "The credit sequences (...) function, in a most obvious manner, as an elastic border between two universes, between an interior seeking to escape its limits and an exterior wanting to penetrate into the discourse of the film."
- (Casetti *Inside the Gaze: The Fiction Film and Its Spectator* 1998: 44)

Dolina (2007, Zoltán Kamondi)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqkxDbknM_E
- “(...) in the objective configuration, a spectator who functions as an effective but silent witness (a truly hidden spectator) faces a space that, in general, refuses marked terms, a *neutral* space.”
- (Casetti *Inside the Gaze* 1998: 66)
- The afilmic-turned-profilmic natural scenery is diegetized in front of us

Dallas Pashamende (2005, Róbert Pejó)

- a poetics that is operating at the expense of a strongly afilmic space that might exist on its own as a profilmic reality, thus (possibly) allowing for the retrieval of personal (bodily and sensorial) memories, engendering a process through which actual, geographical and natural space functions (stands in?) as the time of former oppression
- "In the impossible objective configuration, a spectator embodied in the camera (and thus a mobile spectator) encounters a space traversable in even the most extreme respects, an authentically *modulatable* space."
- (Casetti *Inside the Gaze* 1998:66)

Aglaja (2012, Krisztina Deák)
Somewhere in Palilula (2012, Silviu Purcărete)

- "the subjective shot shows, to a spectator become character, a lived, interior space, marked by the character's physical and psychological interaction."
- (Casetti *Inside the Gaze* 1998: 63)

The Section (1995, Péter Gothár)

- the actual, afilmic natural scenery is barricaded from an “organic” diegesis through decisions that have been perhaps made to enhance their splendour, authenticity, and “real” status, and it stands apart by the apparatus/technology's working being highlighted
- "One feels sorry for this film - since the image of the garbage mine and the people roaming around, having turned into evil, petty and amoral beings, is such a defining view that it haunts you for days."
- "Tényleg kár ezért a filmért – a szemétbánya és az ott bóklászó, többségükben gonosz, kisstílűvé és amorálissá lett emberek képe olyannyira meghatározó látvány, hogy napokig elkíséri az embert."
"Szemét dolog a szerelem". Hungler Tímea,
<http://magyar.film.hu/filmhu/premier/dallas-pashamende-premier-kritika.html>, accessed on the 23rd of November 2014.

DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS, LOOPS

- "[Edward Branigan comes to a similar conclusion:] "Diegesis is not something that the film either possesses or lacks, but rather is a way of describing an interlocking set of judgments we make about the presentation of sensory data in the film at a particular moment." 37" (Buckland 2003: 92)
- "It is only outsiders (non-family members) who experience the home movies of others as fragmented. Operating within its intended institution, the home movie can function without the need for the operations of diegetization and narrativization." (Buckland 2003: 103)

DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS, LOOPS

- I propose a scale where perhaps the lowest degree/level of diegetization is the fragmentary home video-style (documentary) that cannot be "fully diegetized" unless former personal involvement is present on the part of the audience (Roger Odin, Warren Buckland)
- the highest level of diegetization would be that offered by the paradigm of classical storytelling, which can be accessed by all capable of processing the sensory data (David Bordwell, Edward Branigan, Thomas Elsaesser)

DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS, LOOPS

- “Hyperrealism is based not so much on careful and slightly abstract scenography as on the operation's ability to find the elements within itself for orienting the audio-visual discourse. **Any impression of extravagance and overabundance results less from the nature of the materials staged for the camera than from the task of the technical apparatus to present itself as the origin and finality of its own functioning, much in the manner of a ‘bachelor machine’.**”
- (Casetti *Inside the Gaze* 1998:56)

DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS, LOOPS

- These apparently highly stylized allegorical heterotopias do not reach the level of full diegesis (for which they are justly criticized) because their agenda is not making possible for every potential viewer to enter these diegetic worlds, but rather to allow entrance for those who possibly have actual bodily memories of such places as repositories of those times
- Their "fragmentary diegesis", to which the afilmic natural scenery contributes to a great degree, is a strategy to re-direct towards different paths the audience members, depending on whether **1. they consider these afilmic sceneries only diegetic and/or profilmic**, or **2. whether they have an experience/memory of these as real afilmic elements**

DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS, LOOPS

- 2. for those falling in the latter category, these fragmented diegeses have the power to evoke stored (actual, bodily and sensorial) memories of those times now represented as (ever) existing spaces, thus the hiatuses may be filled from one's own store (or rather the diegetic hiatuses lose their relevance compared to the excitement of searching through our own bodily memory)
- 1. while those in the first category must struggle with generating a diegetic world, a process which most usually fails - as attested by criticism

DISCUSSION: CONCLUSIONS, LOOPS

- “ ‘Space’ is thus not a static entity, but a constant activity and a negotiation between an external reality and cognitive/motoric work performed by the mind/ body complex (as well as socio-cultural expectations on space). Space is not objectively ‘out there’ nor totally ‘in here’, but in-between the two”.
- Per Persson, “Understanding Representations of Space: A Comparison of Visualisation Techniques in Mainstream Cinema and Computer Interfaces,” in *Social Navigation of Information Space* ed. by Alan J. Munro et al. (Springer PH, 1999), 196.

Thank you for your attention.

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