

Watching and imagining

Guiding imagination in film

An international scientific conference on film in Bremen,
from the 24th to the 27th of March, 2011

Calls for Papers

According to classical patterns of film description, the cinema is not generally considered a place of imagination: it is rather a showplace for the unmediated presence of images. But what we actually encounter is an extremely dense optical representation, an image which is always structurally 'over-coded' in that not all its meanings can be directly perceived. Therefore, 'watching', considered as a temporally pre-structured reception of possible (not only narrative) information that is guided by mise en scène and montage, by no means exhausts the activity of the viewer. The imagination of the viewer is also guided, partially through explicit marking by technical features in the film.

These 'imaginative additions' are necessary to be able to understand a film. But they also play a considerable role in controlling the emotional connection of the audience with a film. The suggestive impact of the image alone is not enough to understand this process. Specific genres have already brought the dialectic of showing and hiding, of indicating and again removing that which affects the viewer, to perfection. The *guided* imaginative work of the audience is therefore central.

The general theoretical parameters of this unjustly neglected area of study will be addressed in the forerunner conference *Auslassen, Andeuten, Auffüllen*, to be held in Berlin in December 2010. Our primary concern, in contrast, will be the description of the imaginative activities of viewers with respect to concrete individual examples. Are there authors, genres, film styles, which require the imaginative participation of the recipient particularly frequently? Is this particularly the case for narrative films? Has the documentary film developed its own aesthetic of filmic imagination? Is it fictional or factual films that stimulate the imagination more? Do examples of synaesthesia increase or weaken the differentiated capabilities of imagination?

Here, imagination is not to be understood as a process explicitly or directly thematised in the film itself. We are not concerned here with some explicit or implicit dream consciousness, which is projected by the film or developed further as suggested content by viewers in their imagination. Instead, imagination will be seen not only as a component of the comprehension process of constructing semantic content for a film but also as a strategy employable by viewers for coping with the emotional challenges of film. This applies particularly to the construction of the diegesis and the development of the plot as well as to the intellectual work of decoding intermedial references synthesizing the film experience with knowledge of the world. The imaginative addition can therefore turn out not only concrete and directly visual but also, via syntheses of conceptual constructs or narrative set pieces, abstract and mediated.

The conference is open to examples taken from all eras of film history. One session (Section 5) will devote itself in particular to different modalities of sensorial evocation through music, sound, image, text and spoken language, to the particularities of visualization of the olfactory and the haptic, to language substitution, to spatial concepts, and to diverse cases of synaesthesia. A further special session (Section 6) will collect and synthesise the results of diverse methodologies when applied to a single film in order to support the comparability of different approaches presented. The session is open to contributions from, for example, Neoformalism, cognitive theory and constructivism, from linguistics and semiotics, from discourse theory and pragmatics, narratology and fiction theory, from research into inter- and transmediality, as well as theories of textuality, reception aesthetics, gender, psychoanalysis and deconstruction, transculturality and discourse analysis. The film we have selected for analysis is the well-known recent film from Michael Haneke: *Das weiße Band. Eine deutsche Kindergeschichte* (*The White Ribbon*). The remaining four sections of the conference will address distinct varieties of guided imagination as suggested above.

Proposals for talks are invited in the form of exposés of a maximum of 300 words. Accepted talks will be of 30 minutes duration. Proposals should refer explicitly to the six sections of the conference as listed below:

- Section 1: shock, suspense, tension
- Section 2: empathy through imagination
- Section 3: coping with emotions
- Section 4: intermedial imagination und world knowledge
- Section 5: processes of sensorial evocation
- Section 6: methodological experiment (with reference to *Das weiße Band. Eine deutsche Kindergeschichte*)

Organizing Committee

The organizing committee dealing with the selection of abstracts comprises:

- Prof. John Bateman, PhD, Anja-Magali Bitter, M. A., Jihae Chung, M. A. and Dr. Heinz-Peter Preußner (all from the University of Bremen)

Please send your topic proposals, working titles and exposés electronically to Heinz-Peter Preußner at the following e-mail address: preusser@uni-bremen.de.

The conference is a continuation of the Berlin symposium *Auslassen. Andeuten, Auffüllen*, which takes place from the 9th to 11th December, 2010. The organizers of this symposium are: Dr. Julian Hanich (Free University of Berlin) and Prof. Dr. Hans Jürgen Wulff (University of Kiel).

Important Dates

Three days have been scheduled for our symposium in Bremen: Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A reception may also be held on Thursday evening. The dates are:

25th, 26th, 27th March 2011 and possibly the **24th March 2011** (for arrival and reception). Departure is expected to be at Sunday noon or early afternoon.

Please send us your proposals for conference contributions by the **19th September, 2010**. You will receive our response by the **30th September 2010**.

A proposal for funding for the conference will be submitted to the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft: German Research Council) at the **beginning of October 2010**. In the event that your submission is accepted and you are invited to participate in the conference, we may include parts of your exposé in the proposal being sent to the DFG.

The conference languages are German and English.

Further Information

The conference is supported by the doctoral (PhD) training group *Textualität des Films* (The textuality of film) and by BITT: *Bremer Institut für transmediale Textualitätsforschung*, (the Bremen Institute for transmedial textuality research), which both belong to Faculty 10 of the University of Bremen.

Additional information on these supporters of the conference is available at:

<http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/film/>

<http://www.fb10.uni-bremen.de/bitt/>.