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DIEGETIC DOMINANTS IN THE FICTION FILM

The term "diegesis", introduced into film studies by Etienne Souriau¹, has been generally accepted to describe the fictitious world of film's story. Some authors (e.g. Noël Burch², Kiyoshi Takeda³) have related it solely to spectator's (deceptive) impression of "reality" or "presence on the screen" of a certain world but only in its "physical" aspect, independent of the narrative structure and the acts of understanding it. Others (e.g. Souriau himself, Christian Metz⁴, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson⁵) have stressed the necessity for inclusion in its range not only the "material" but also the "referential" aspect - i.e. the fact that any objects, settings or characters are being grasped by viewers in their "physicality" and in their "role" or "status" as well. Therefore, in diegesis there would not be simply an indefinite "city" seen on the screen, but a specific city, for example "Paris" or "Metropolis". Anyway, diegesis has usually been conceived of not as an entity "really" existing, but as something which is only

¹ Cf.: *L'univers filmique*, ed. E. Souriau, Paris 1953, p. 7; E. Souriau, *La structure de l'univers filmique et le vocabulaire de la filmologie*, "Revue Internationale de Filmologie", 1951, no 7-8, pp. 233-234.

² N. Burch, *Narrative/Diegesis - Thresholds, Limits*, "Screen", vol. 23, 1982, no. 2.

³ K. Takeda, *Kino autorefleksyjne - kilka problemów metodologicznych*, transl. Ł. Demby [in:] *Film: język - rzeczywistość - osoba*, ed. A. Helman, J. Ostaszewski, Warszawa 1992.

⁴ Metz defines "diegesis" differently in different texts. His well-known definition from the essay *Some Points in the Semiotics of Cinema*, reducing diegesis to the "sum of film's denotation", is entangled in antinomies (cf.: *Film Language. A Semiotics of the Cinema*, New York 1974, p. 96). Necessity of taking into account not only "material content", but also referential aspect of fiction, is implied in other his definitions (cf.: *Film Language ...*, p. 144; *The Imaginary Signifier. Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, Bloomington 1982, pp. 144-145).

⁵ Cf.: D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, New York 1990, pp. 409, 411; D. Bordwell, *Making Meaning. Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*, Cambridge (Mass.) - London 1989, p. 8.

being imagined, supposed or constructed by a viewer, and having in its range the fictitious world in its "literality" - i.e. in its physical and referential aspects.

In my opinion, the attitudes outlined above seem to restrict the notion of diegesis too much; I would rather refer it to the projected fiction of a film. The intended and principal fiction of a narrative film may be a certain "idea", an "argument" or - more widely - some general abstract meanings compatible or not with the literal level. I should stress that as such meanings I mean the ones evidently expressed by a "text", indisputably accessible to every viewer, but not "meanings" concealed beneath the surface of the text, "revealed" or rather constructed in the process of interpretation.

Taking these into account, a reasonable solution would be, I think, to treat diegesis as an intentional object - in phenomenological sense. It is intentional as a product of human consciousness. As purely intentional, it is in some (except Plato's) sense an ideal one. It does not "really" exist in its material form, but the cues for its construction or certain vision exist materially as the data of a text, the film itself (which is an intentional object and a real one as well). Therefore, despite its "unreality" diegesis is a realm "objective" in some sense and intersubjectively accessible to every viewer. To a certain extent - within a scope delimited by film's cues - it is verifiable and cannot be freely shaped by a viewer. Thus, the sender's intention immanent in all the textual means of expression is channelling the potentialities of the receiver's intentions by restricting the range of possible viewer's choices.

In my opinion, in its verifiable scope diegesis comprises two levels of meanings. Meaning, conceived of phenomenologically as an intentional object, is correlated with the semantic intention having a different degree of its own "fulfilment"⁶. The first level - of "literal" meanings (the fictitious world in its physical and referential aspects) - is to a large extent "unfulfilled", not given "straightforwardly" and evidently to a viewer. Since we "see" the objects, supposedly three-dimensional ones, within two-dimensional space of the screen and perceptual and cognitive processes cause us to complement partially incomplete visual data. And many other components of diegesis in its "physical" aspect (e.g.: fictitious time; contiguous off-screen space and objects placed there; total fictitious space suggested by editing; events not presented on the screen but inferred in order to

⁶ This concept, taken over from Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*, is proposed for film analysis by Andrzej Zalewski in his article: *Typy konstrukcji znaczeniowych w filmie. Próba analizy fenomenologicznej*. "Kino" 1979, no. 5.

fill in any logical "gaps") are merely inferred or supposed due to cognitive processes and structures active in film viewing. Of course, intentions of the referential aspect of the literal level can be unfulfilled as well - for example, we may not know where the action takes place, what the name of a character is, etc. But such a "gap" should be differentiated from the lack of "filling in" (fulfilment) resulting from viewer's incompetence - e.g., his ignorance of the fact that a view of Tower Bridge situates a story in London.

The second level of meanings uncontroversially belonging to diegesis is constituted by certain general, abstract meanings (ideas, arguments, messages) expressed explicitly. Their semantic intentions can be fulfilled - and this is the case of a "traditional" or "classical" film - by the first level, the fictitious world in its progression and qualitative characterization (i.e. by story, its events, settings, beings, objects, etc.). However, these meanings can be pointed out without such "narrative fulfilment" as well - for example, verbally, as a commentary of narrating instance or as character's lines, or by commonly intelligible iconic signs like certain alegorical figures. This level establishes a conceptual fiction serving as a superstructure to diegetic world of the first level, but not necessarily compatible with it.

Some elements, usually associated not with diegesis but other components of film's structure (i.e. with the narrative instance and textual means of expression ⁷), should also be, I think, situated within the domain of diegesis - although only when they lose their attributes of "transparency" and "invisibility". Then they become intentionally designated as another level of diegetic objects or events made present for spectator (for example: rattle of a camera on the sound track; the narrative instance made itself present for a viewer by the titles, voice-over commentary or appearance on the screen of the director - just in his director's role). Such devices are not, of course, true interventions of the real world into the realm of diegesis but, precisely, one more fiction (or rather meta-fiction) bracketing literal and abstract meanings from the "lower" level.

The type and the way of use of textual means of expression enables - because of their immanent intentionality - to point out the intentional dominant of diegesis constructed due to their cues. Some kind of support for my attempt to outline here the typology of intentional diegetic dominants is Seymour Chatman's proposition confining all "texts" to the three basic types: Narrative, Description and

⁷ Cf.: Tom Gunning's description of narrative film's structure in chapter I of his book: *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film. The Early Years at Biograph*, Urbana-Chicago 1991.

Argument. By "text" Chatman means "any communication that temporally controls its reception by the audience. Thus, texts differ from communicative objects such as (non-narrative) paintings and sculptures, which do not regulate the temporal flow or spatial direction of the audience's perception"⁸. Text, in this sense, "requires us to begin at a beginning it chooses (the first page, the opening shot of a film, the overture, the raising curtain) and to follow its temporal unfolding to the end it prescribes"⁹. Then, all the texts require to follow their "external logic", which can be named (in agreement with Chatman's terminology from his earlier work¹⁰), the order of "discourse" or – as I call it – the system of "textual means of expression".

Texts have also their "internal logic" and by reason of its diversity there are different text-types. For Narrative specific is "chronology" – the order, frequency and duration of time of a fictional story and the logic of events. In traditional narratives this logic "entails the additional principle of causality (event «a» causes «b», «b» causes «c», and so on) or, more weakly, what might be called «contingency» («a» does not directly cause «b», nor does «b» cause «c», but they all work together to evoke a certain situation or state of affairs «x»¹¹)".

The other two text-types are distinguished by rather static or atemporal structures underlying their "internal logic". "Descriptions render the properties of things – typically, though not necessarily, objects visible to, or imaginable by the senses"¹². "Casual contiguity" seems to be the suitable name for the principle of Description.

"Arguments are texts that attempt to persuade an audience of the validity of some proposition [...]. Argument is the text-type that relies on «logic», at least in the informal sense; it may employ not the strict «demonstrative» logic of the syllogism but rather the softer one of the rhetorical enthymeme. Or the logic may be inductive or perhaps analogous. But unlike Narrative chrono-logic, Argumentative logic is not temporal. And unlike Description, Argument rests not on contiguity but on some intellectually stronger, usually more abstract ground such as that of consequentiality"¹³.

⁸ S. Chatman, *Coming to Terms. The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca-London 1990, p. 7.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca-London 1980, p. 26.

¹¹ S. Chatman, *Coming to Terms ...*, p. 9.

¹² Ibidem, p. 9-10.

¹³ Ibidem.

In one particular text (or rather "work", in order to avoid misunderstanding) we may meet the different text-types - few works as texts are "typologically pure". However, the text-types in work are "at each other's service", both locally and taking into account the global work's structure. If given text-type finally appears to have the other types subordinated to itself, it is the overriding structure, intentional dominant of some hierarchical whole.

Chatman gives many examples of reciprocal serviceability of the text-types and intentional dominants in work - e.g., *Ithaca*, the argumentative episode of *Ulysses*, is subordinated to the dominating Narrative, La Fontaine's fables use stories (Narrative) to support their main end - the Argument, and the common phenomenon in novels is the use of descriptions, presenting new characters or places, for principally narrative aims¹⁴.

Of course, sometimes it is difficult to state which text-type is the overriding structure of a whole. However, this intentional "indefiniteness" or "indecisiveness" of the text may be the reason of its particular charm or aesthetic value, and does not prevent recognition of the text-types on the level, for example, of its relatively independent fragments, like film's sequence or novel's chapter, clearly different from the rest of the work and not easily definable in their functions in relation to that rest.

Intentional dominants, proposed here as possible in film's diegesis, are roughly counterparts to Chatman's "text-types". In my proposition Narrative's equivalent is **story (fabula**¹⁵) and Description's - the **diegetic effect**. As for the third dominant, I keep Chatman's name - **argument** (but spelled with a small letter). I introduce these terminological changes in order to avoid associations with the verbal or literary aspects of the terms (for example, words like "story" or "fabula" seem not to evoke the act or process of narration, as "narrative" does, but only what is presented or related. Similarly, the term "diegetic effect", invented by Noël Burch as a name for an "impression of reality" of the fictitious world, seem to be suitable equivalent of too verbal category of "Description", particularly, if we take into account Chatman's definition quoted above).

However, there exists one more diegetic dominant, intentionally, I think, clearly different from the others but not derivable from Chat-

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 10-21.

¹⁵ American neoformalist David Bordwell suggests the term "fabula", taken over from Russian Formalists, to describe the chain of fictitious events in its "ideal" shape (equivalent term is "story"). Cf.: his books: *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison 1985, pp. 49-50; D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, *Film Art ...*, pp. 56-58, 412.

man's typology of texts. I mean **spectacle**. Postulate that in film this fourth dominant exists - what causes certain heterogeneity of proposed typology - is the result of the fact that films are not only "texts", conceived of so generally, but also - and perhaps first of all - spectacles, shows for viewers (although, to tell the truth, accessible only indirectly and just by "textual" means of expression). Diegesis with this dominant seems to be principally different from the ones having three other dominants and this has inclined me to postulate it even at the cost of typology's homogeneity.

Besides, in order to show the full range of possible kinds of film's fiction, we should also consider such a question as a reflexivity of intention (somehow justifiably not regarded by Chatman in his typology of basic text-types since it is, in a way, a secondary and derivative problem). Usually, intentionality immanent in the textual means of expression and implying the existence of the narrative instance, is directed towards "content", i.e. literal and abstract meanings from two diegetic levels. The words "immanent" and "implying", used here, although evoke two other structural components of the fiction film, at the same time, however, show that those components are, in fact, transparent and unnoticeable for a viewer. **Reflexive intention**, on the other hand, aims not at the two verifiable levels of diegesis, but at the textual means of expression and concretizing the narrative instance. Thus, the aprioric structural components become one more level of what is presented in a work. By establishing this meta-level they bracket the lower-levels diegesis and cause destruction of story, argument, diegetic effect or spectacle as dominants. Of course, creation of meta-diegesis is not the intervention of reality or truth into the work, but only one more fiction presented in it, intentionally projected by sender's consciousness. Then, the **reflexive intention** should be regarded as one more kind of diegetic dominant in the fiction film - although the secondary one as it only brackets and in some sense invalidates the other types.

In one particular work we usually can point out a dominant of the whole without great problems. It so happens that the most frequent one in fiction film is story (fabula). However, as I have mentioned earlier, there are the cases, not infrequent at all, when film's diegesis is typologically "impure". For example, it is particularly difficult to determine whether dominant is story, in non-classical variant, or the diegetic effect; or, whether story in classical shape or argument? In such instances, I think, diegesis of given film should be regarded as a "play of dominants", sometimes reciprocally functional one to each other, some other time being in strong conflict, without definite conclusions about dominant of the whole. And for exemplification or

in analysis it is enough to recognize dominants of relatively autonomous parts of the textual structure, e.g. certain sequences.

Besides, in every fiction film on the literal level of diegesis something happens in a certain world "somehow" existing, and thus - there are the story and the diegetic effect, always present, at least to a minimal degree. Since diegesis is an intentional object, one can also suppose some argument expressed by it, at least implicitly and unconsciously. Every film is made for viewers and as such is a spectacle. And reflexive (as inevitably implying the sender's instance choices in the qualities of the image and sound) is in its totality the whole system of textual means of expression - from inexorably present the border of a frame to the qualitative characterization of diegetic objects. Things necessary a priori should, however, be differentiated from diegetic dominants which are the result of directing the intention - more or less openly - just towards some of these aprioric structural necessities.

Story (fabula) is recognizable as a diegetic dominant due to the functionality of textual means of expression to the events from the level of literal meanings. This is particularly clearly visible in the case of "classical" variant of story¹⁶, where spectator is almost "led by the hand" by editing, framing, lighting, choice of an actor in accordance with his image, "meaningful" illustrative music, etc. Means of expression mark the physical aspect of the literal level in such a way that viewers have not problems with constructing the coherent "map" of diegetic space (thus, e.g., obedience to the "principle of 180° axis" or laws of screen movement's direction is the rule) and cognitive "clock" or "calendar" of the fictitious time (thus, e.g., the short lapses of time may be marked by the ordinary cuts, the longer ones - differently, say, by so called "montage sequence"). The camera shows only such parts of the fictitious world which are relevant and functional to the progress of story, for instance these penetrated by the hero, or others, where matters important to him take place. "The spots of boredom", as Hitchcock called narratively unfunctional portions of the fictitious world, here are "wiped away".

Thus, the film's world is focused on the events which "happen to" the protagonists or - more often - which are results of their actions. On the literal plane in the classical narrative film character tends to

¹⁶ Descriptions of structure of classical narrative films can be found in: D. Bordwell, *Narration ...*, pp. 156-207; D. Bordwell, J. Staiger, K. Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, London 1988.

some aim - he or she wants to attain something, win somebody over, unite with his/her beloved or restore the state of balance disturbed by his/her antagonists or by external circumstances. The classical film story can be in principle brought to the narrative schemata proposed by the structuralists or to the "canonical" in allcultures schema of plot, confirmed by cognitive psychology in, more or less, the following arrangement: introduction of place and characters - setting the hero/-es/ aim - efforts of character/-s/ and obstacles on his/her/ /their way - outcome - resolution¹⁷. Thus, the world of a classical story (fabula) is "closed" as for the way of its presentation, and the story itself is clearly a distinct whole, not dissolving in the rest of that world.

On the plane of literal meanings the overriding principle is, mentioned by Chatman, the logic of cause and effect. Another characteristic of this level is its "ontological definiteness" - therefore, means of expression (editing, colour and others) clearly accent that ontological status of character's memories or dreams is different from that of "reality".

Due to their schematism and unequivocal characters, events, states of affairs (e.g., initial - "evil", and after denouement - "restoring good") fulfil intentions of clear explicit meanings like, for instance, morals ("crime doesn't pay", "love wins all the drawbacks over", and so on). However, it seems that in classical narrative films such abstract meanings are rather casual, since they emerge from the plot as if "incidentally" and do not constitute the main aim of the story, invented only to illustrate them. Just this establishes the difference between films with dominant of story and certain argumentative films, also narrative ones, but directed first of all towards abstract meanings (what manifests itself in the other use of textual means, particularly editing and dialogues).

After all, a classical film does not renounce the coherence of the physical aspect of diegesis, and if it does - then not in favour of abstract meanings (as an argumentative film), but for the clarity of a presented story. The story's intelligibility has even priority over spatial unequivocalness - thus certain spatial "inconsistency" is permissible if only it is cleverly masked by the narrative logic. Noël Carroll has demonstrated that for the viewer of film with "classical" story the most important thing is its "erothetic form"¹⁸: viewer, moved by

¹⁷ D. Bordwell, *Narration ...*, p. 35.

¹⁸ Cf.: N. Carroll, *Mystifying Movies. Fads and Fallacies of Contemporary Film Theory*, New York 1988, pp. 170-181; also - D. Bordwell, *Narration ...*, pp. 33-40.

fictional events, asks himself some questions (what will follow next? what will hero do? what will be the final outcome?) and sets some hypotheses which will be testified (concerning, say, things purposefully omitted in the screen presentation but relevant, for example, to the narrative mystery - as in detective stories). The overriding and the most important are questions and hypotheses of suspense and curiosity.

In all types of film very important is *motivation* of given film's components, whether means of expression or elements of a fictional world, by neoformalists regarded equally as *devices* functional to the formal system of the work¹⁹. These devices can: 1) serve the story, argument or spectacle (*compositional motivation*); 2) imply probability and increase the diegetic effect (*realistic motivation*); 3) refer to the similar devices from other works (*transtextual motivation*); 4) be autonomous and reflexive as absorbing viewer's attention to themselves (*aesthetic motivation*). Due to the functionality of devices to the events of a story and presentation of the fictitious world's "pieces" in accordance with its logical progress, in a classical narrative film compositional motivation is a basic one. Realistic motivation manifests itself in the cause-and-effect logic and as psychological, usually simplified and unambiguous, accounting for characters' behaviour and actions. As for transtextual motivation, it finds its expression as certain conventions (for example, allowing for the existence of supernatural forces in horror, but definitely prohibiting them in detective story, etc.).

However, the story (fabula) can be a diegetic dominant in a **non-classical** version as well - it is difficult not to regard many works of the "art-cinema"²⁰ (whether "oneiric", neorealistic or expressionistic) as principally narrative films. But a non-classical story neither can be reduced in its essence to the "canonical plot schema" nor the chain of causes and effects be regarded as the logic governing its events.

Thus, there may be the case, mentioned by Chatman, that events do not result one from the other, but rather evoke certain situations or states of affairs (difficult, after all, to qualify them unequivocally). In this case we deal with the worlds intentionally projected as semantically indetermined, ambiguous and just by this indeterminacy

¹⁹ On the neoformalist concept of motivation see: D. Bordwell, *Narration ...*, p. 36; K. Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor. Neoformalist Film Analysis*, Princeton 1988, pp. 15-21.

²⁰ On the "non-classicality" of art-cinema see: D. Bordwell, *Narration ...*, pp. 205-233; Ch. Metz, *Film Language ...*, pp. 185-252.

demanding to look for hidden meanings (to gain their sense and "fullness" in the process of interpretation). Neoformalists attribute to such "difficult" or "unclear" meanings the role of defamiliarizing device, therefore - aesthetic motivation. And, indeed, the worlds of non-classical stories seem (paradoxically, despite their "unfulfillment") to be "fuller", more complete, more true, and films with that dominant often gain the dignity of cinema masterpieces. Then, behind semantical indeterminacy there is also realistic motivation of an intention - only notions of "realism" or "truth of the world" are conceived of not as this world's clarity, intelligibility, explicability, but as its indeterminacy, incalculability, unexpectedness. Categories of an accident and unpredictability, lack of direction in which events follow and absence of any aim on the horizon, replace here the logic of cause and effect and the "vector", typical of a classical story.

After all, the reasons for the "non-classicality" of a story may be quite different. It is imaginable, for instance, that in case of full viewer's access to the fictional events, he could see clear, easily comprehensible story line, governed by the cause-and-effect logic. As for the actual film, "merely" the textual way of presentation (called "plot" or "syuzhet"²¹) prevents spectator from easy statements since from among portions of the conjectured world he receives only certain remnants, vestiges, narratively irrelevant fragments. Another case is possible as well - the textual means of expression present physical aspect of the story's world according to the "classical" rules of narration, clearly and unambiguously, but the sense of character's actions, due to the quite different way of psychological characterization of protagonist, may remain indefinite. Needless to say, this may lead to the different interpretations, tending to make story comprehensible and unequivocal. "Non-classical" films with dominant of story may also present events from subjective perspective, as if deformed by character's point of view, or - by the reason of non-conventional use of textual means, against "readable" rules - to obliterate the borderline between "real" and "imaginary" regions of diegesis.

The range of possible means of expression in films with a dominant of non-classical story is practically unrestricted. Their use in film may be in accordance with the classical norms of functionality to the "literal" level, transparency and satisfying spectator's convenience, or, on the contrary, it may quite ostentatiously to disclose

²¹ Bordwell also took over from Russian the term "syuzhet" in order to describe the actual arrangement of narrative events in text (thus, it is opposed to "fabula"). Common English equivalent is "plot". Cf.: *Narration* ..., pp. 49-50; *Film Art* ..., pp. 56-58, 411.

the arbitrariness, and thus - intentionality of the work, although not to the extent of fully reflexive intention and creation of meta-diegesis. However, the sender's instance is here much more clearly implied than in traditional films.

Due to this diversity of kinds and ways of use of textual means, films with dominant of non-classical story create worlds very various even on the "literal" level, in their physical aspect (not to mention the numerous ways of making indeterminate their abstract meanings). For example, we may meet the worlds supposedly "real" but presented as if "subjectively", because of their particular qualities; or worlds evidently "imaginary", with impossible time and space or the "impossible" objects inside them; or worlds intentionally designed as the real one, with its "naturalness" and "ordinariness" in their appearance. In this last case non-classical story seems to be one of the two dominants co-present in film's diegesis. The second one is the diegetic effect.

Without the **diegetic effect**, i.e. the impression of reality of a screen world, it is practically impossible to imagine any film, not only the fiction film interesting us here. Let us suppose that we watch some film image showing an empty landscape where nothing happens, nothing moves. It is quite different in its qualities from the still photograph of the same landscape - at least by the fact that it lasts in time and due to this duration it evokes the diegetic effect. According to Noël Burch (who invented the term) this effect is inseparable from the film image, although separable from the narrative structures, not indispensable to and inherent in the medium, but taken over from somewhere else and demanding - as the history of early cinema demonstrates - invention and conventionalization of some rules for their transmission. It is true that narrativity (presenting stories) brought about the increase of the diegetic effect, but its fullness was the result of the technological development, particularly the introduction of the synchronic sound, in comparison with which innovations of colour, wide-screen or three-dimensionality are secondary and meaningless. As to the minimum degree of the diegetic effect, the sufficient condition of it is the movement of the profilmic objects recorded on the film tape or even less - the "pure image" alone, but so recorded and projected that the threshold of perceptual recognition of objects or settings on the screen is not transgressed (going beneath that threshold virtually destroys this effect) ²².

²² N. Burch, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-27.

Thus, in the fiction film the presence of the diegetic effect is necessary and, according to Burch, more "absolute" in that necessity than the structures of "story", just as the primary identification with an "eye" of a camera is "more primary" and structurally more relevant than the secondary one, with anthropomorphic figures. Therefore, it seems that aiming at the "fullness" and autonomy of that effect has to be distinguished as one of the intentional diegetic dominants, and that the project of "disillusion", the will to destroy the diegetic effect, is one of the most important aspects of reflexive intention - probably more relevant than destruction of story or argument.

Paradoxically, however, the diegetic effect as a dominant in the fiction film is relatively rare. This is the result of principal narrativity of most fiction films. In "pure" state, in a way, it is the dominant of one-shot "documentaries" from the beginning of cinema as Lumière brothers' *L'arrivee d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* or *La sortie des usines*, or of such experiments like impassive, terribly long Warhol's recordings (*Sleep*, *Empire*). These films, however, are outside the field of the fiction film.

Therefore, the diegetic effect as a dominant comes into dialectical play of symbiosis and struggle for dominance with the story (fabula), both in classical and non-classical variants of the latter. In the first case, in films intentionally motivated by realism (conceived of as indeterminacy, openness, contingency) unpredictable, loose fabula, resembling Kracauer's "found story", is connected with the effect of the real, everyday, unposed world. Sometimes that "impression of truth" is weakened by "narrative concentration" and too explicit "structuralization" of the story, but some other time it is strongly supported by story's unpredictability and lack of its direction. This is the case, I think, of certain films (or many their fragments) made by Renoir, Antonioni, neorealists or New-Wave directors. Textual means, expressing such an intention, are numerous and very different: from "accidental" framing in New-Wave films to careful compositions with deep space in works of Welles, Renoir or Antonioni; from the use of non-professional actors (neorealism) to the "toning down" of stars' acting (e.g., Monica Vitti in Antonioni's tetralogy); from minimalization of editing (long takes in which the world "lasts" in time) to the "documentary" carelessness of editing which is to evoke the truth of recording; etc.

In the second case (which genetically should be linked with the fact that cinema in the beginning, before its "narrative integration", was principally a "spectacular attraction") the diegetic effect comes into connections with the classical story. Then it consists in evoking

splendour, monumentality, horror or technical perfection of the fictitious world and filling viewers with fascination for these attractions. This is the case of many Hollywood films, whether action, science-fiction or great historical productions (e.g., monumental "reconstructions" of the ancient world in Babylonian story of *Intolerance* or, say, in *Cleopatra*, seem to be at least equal in importance as attractions to the narrative events).

Very instructive is the case of "disaster" films (i.e. action films showing a cataclysm or a great catastrophe), because they testify to the fact that films belonging to one particular genre can have different diegetic dominants. In every film of that genre we deal with both the narrative action - vicissitudes of a group of people entangled in dangerous circumstances, and the disaster itself. However, in some "disaster" films the story is definitely a dominant (due to identifying with leading characters viewers are in suspense, asking the questions: who will be killed? who will survive? - e.g., *The «Poseidon» Adventure*, *Airport 77*), whereas in the others the great number of characters prevents us from worrying about their fortunes; they rather constitute the crowd of "extras", the background which is to make the "disaster", permanent film's attraction, more picturesque, spectacular and horrible (e.g., *The Towering Inferno*, *Earthquake*). "Impression of reality" of cataclysm or catastrophe as the principal film's aim causes that just the diegetic effect is a dominant.

Needless to say, means of expression at service of that variant of the diegetic effect are quite different than in case of "intentionally realistic" variant. The most important are "prestylization" (huge sets built purposely for the use in film), editing, special effects (nowadays generated by computers) and the most of the classical rules of narration, mentioned above. Not the least important is obligatory presence of stars, and usually of first-rate - although this element is connected rather with narrativity than with the diegetic effect.

Argument as a dominant, first of all, consists in existence in the range of diegesis of the abstract meanings system, subordinating to itself the "literal" level. The film, seemingly having the dominant of a "classical story", can be qualified just as argumentative when some moral or idea does not result from the narrative events as if "incidentally", "by the way" (as usually in traditional Hollywood films), but when spectator has a sense of the story's "tending towards" or illustrating some thesis. Of course, even classical Hollywood films sometimes used to be an explicit propaganda (for example, during wars) and this testifies to the necessity of discrimination between

historical poetics and intentional dominants. However, as the most explicit kind of films with the dominant of argument but having traits of the story dominant, should be treated films belonging to so called "socialistic realism". They are disclosed as argumentative by the textual means of expression, less functional to the progress of story than to the certain foundations of openly manifested ideology. For instance, many shots resemble static "tableaux", posed in accordance with the obligatory "iconography" and, needless to say, this does not help to present the chain of events in the plot fluently. Dialogues do not push the action forwards, as in Hollywood films, but rather serve "ideological" self-presentations of characters and as transmitter of slogans. And despite the fact that action frequently is to be "adventurous", the spectator does not feel neither curiosity nor suspense, knowing in advance where everything is driving at. Therefore, the "erohetic form" (in which the questions, hypotheses and testing their value by viewer is so important), typical of a classical story, here, in fact, does not exist.

As argumentative should be regarded also films having the structure of drama, in which dialogues as the principal means of expression rather confront arguments, attitudes, ideas of protagonists than push the action forwards. Good examples seem to me Bergman's or Zanussi's films, or certain works like Bajon's *Sauna* or Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men*. This last film, because of its unquestionable suspense, may seem to have, first of all, the dominant of story - but let us remember that victory of one system of values over others is more relevant there than the personal success of the main hero. Thus, the argument is a dominant.

The one who contributed to the creation of argumentative film the most, both in primitive propaganda and more sophisticated shape, was David Wark Griffith, already due to his early films like *The Song of the Shirt*, *Gold Is Not All* or *A Corner in a Wheat*²³. Of course, these were narrative films, but with two or more story lines and these lines intersected not only on the ground of logical connections of causes with effects and spatiotemporal links between protagonists of each of them; equally - or even more - important were the explicit comparisons (for example, as in all the films mentioned above, between fortunes of rich and poor people). Frequently spatiotemporal relationships between scenes or shots were undefined, because it

²³ Descriptions of Griffith's argumentative films can be found in: T. Gunning, op.cit., pp. 134-137, 240-252. Cf. also: B. Brewster, A "Scene" at the Movies, "Screen", vol. 23, 1982, no. 2; R. Altman, "The Lonely Villa" and Griffith's Paradigmatic Style, "Quarterly Review of Film Studies", vol. 6, 1981, no. 2.

was the general sense which was relevant, "the enrichment of rich people to the poor ones' detriment is the source of social injustice". Editing, probably the first time in film history, has gained there the role of creating some abstract meanings independently of the physical aspect of the "literal" level and its serviceability to the presentation of story events.

In Griffith's work the principle of comparisons by editing found its apogee in *Intolerance* (1916) - sometimes even against "spontaneous" meanings having their intentions fulfilled by the story line. And because of that incompatibility it was necessary to fulfil the intentions of projected meanings more precisely by importunate verbal commentary or unambiguous signs, based on commonly intelligible iconography. Together with *Intolerance* there was created "conceptual diegesis", comprising not only "literal" level but also the narrative instance itself and belonging to it certain system of values and ideas.

This "conceptualization of fiction" was Dreyer's inspiration in *Blade af Satans Bog*. The so called "socialistic realism" took over from Griffith simple illustrativeness - exact narrative fulfilling the meanings given "in advance". And what may be esteemed as the most risky or incomprehensible in *Intolerance* - incoherence of the "literal" level together with parallel visualization of certain abstract concepts - would become the relevant characteristic of the Soviet montage school in 1920-s.

Of course, editing not functional to the story or the diegetic effect but, on the contrary, destructive to them, together with dialogues and verbal commentary of the narrative instance (titles, voice-over), are the principal means of expression in argumentative films. Thus, these films rather openly disclose sender's instance. However, because of presenting their arguments without bracketing sender's self-reflection, they seem to be principally different from films with meta-diegesis, with their dominant of reflexive intention. And the latter are represented by, for example, films of Godard - perhaps the most "argumentative" director in the whole film history, but by this reflexive intention cancelling, in a sense, his own arguments out.

Spectacle as a dominant, likewise the diegetic effect in the spectacular attraction variant, has its roots in the early period of cinema which before its "narrative integration" was, first of all, an "attraction", destined, in a way, for the stage. And in the double sense of that word "stage" - as curiosity demonstrated in the fairgrounds, theatres, music-halls and cabarets, and because of the formal shape of diegetic world, created as if on the theatrical stage in front of which the recording camera was set up. Such an openly "artificial"

world of films-spectacles from the "cinema of attractions" period ²⁴ does not give the impression of "being-in-itself" but rather of "being-for-spectator", and does not seem to go physically beyond this stage's "box". Of course, in those early films-spectacles (as also in the later ones) there are certain stories and their events, but the successive shots, as, for example, in Méliès' films, do not evoke the continuity and off-frame existence of fictional space and time. They are rather shaped as the static "tableaux" following one another and posed on the background of newer and newer sets for the successive fictitious roles but always inside the same stage "box". Therefore, film-spectacle evokes the diegetic effect not as an "impression of reality", but rather "theatricality" of the fictitious world, explicitly manifesting its destination for spectator.

This last point helps, I think, to see the difference between spectacle and the other diegetic dominants. Of course, as I have mentioned above, every film is "for spectator". However, this aspect of such rules as the "principle of 180° axis" or continuity of screen movement direction from shot to shot, is masked by their functionality to the cause-and-effect logic, coherence of cognitively constructed space or fluency of narrative events, thus - by their intentional subordination to the "literal" level of diegesis. Spectacle as a dominant sacrifices this fluency (and by this - realistic and compositional motivation) in order to put into relief theatrically conceived "show" or "number" (then - aesthetic motivation is overriding). This is particularly clearly visible in musicals where the story events in some moments as if "stop" and characters suddenly become singing and dancing for a viewer, for spectacle itself. To tell the truth, it is possible to motivate such their "behaviour" saying, for instance, that "they are singing and dancing because they are happy and have light hearts" - but this is only a pretext since their dance and singing are subordinated to the music coming from outside their physical world which suddenly become "heard" by them (then, it is difficult to call this music "non-diegetic"). The fullness of spectacle wins over any alibi pertaining potentially to the logic and physical aspect of fiction.

Needless to say, musical film also can attain specific balance between story and spectacle which happens in the masterpieces of the genre like Donen and Kelly's *Singin' in the Rain* or Forman's *Hair*, where "numbers" are excellently integrated with events keeping viewers in suspense. However, in many places of that films spectacle

²⁴ Tom Gunning's term, referring to the early cinema. Cf.: *The Cinema of Attractions. Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Gard* [in:] *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. T. Elsaesser, A. Barker, London 1990, pp. 56-62.

is definitely overriding. And although it is difficult to say that the story is "suspended" or "cancelled out", it is in a certain way "made unreal" by the obviousness of *mise-en-scène*. Thus, the story is more subjected to the requirements of spectacle than to its own dynamics, at least during "numbers".

However, spectacle as a dominant should not be associated with musicals only. It seems to be typical of certain kind of comedies, like that of Marx Brothers or Monty Python. The excellent structural analysis of *City Lights* by Jan Mukařovský demonstrates as expressive dominant in this film Chaplin's acting and as the diegetic dominant - Charlie's pantomime, which manifests itself, among others, in the theatricality and the closure of space of this pantomime on the shot level, and in subordinating the fictitious story events to the two "planes" of Charlie's gestures - private and public. I think that such subordination or "serviceability" (to use Chatman's term) of the story line to the pantomime numbers (spectacle) takes place in other Chaplin's masterpieces as well. On the other hand, though, they are masterpieces just due to the beauty and universality of meanings resulting from the fictitious events, and thus - not degrading story to the pretext only as it happens in musicals.

I think that spectacle as a dominant may be found also in other films, particularly having some characteristics of the "non-classical story" dominant - like, e.g., in Sergei Paradzhanov's films where story is presented in the plot in discontinuous and a bit opaque way by series of picturesque "tableaux", carefully composed for a viewer. And also in such moments from certain films where some portion of a fictitious world, not losing its status as simply this world's fragment, suddenly stills into an artistic quotation or allusion, a spectacle addressed to receivers with "intertextual competence". Here Andrzej Wajda's films *Brzezina* or *Wesele* are exemplary.

To means of expression serving spectacle as a dominant belong, first of all, "*mise-en-scène*", shaping the fictitious space in a closed way, not evoking what is off-screen, and such a framing that spectacular attraction (even if it is not narratively relevant element) is the centre of viewer's attention. The frequent device seems to be - in non-musicals - posing diegetic characters, objects and settings in carefully planned and self-sufficient compositions which, mainly in reference to the early cinema, are known as "tableaux".

As for the **reflexive intention** and meta-diegesis as the variant of fiction with this dominant, definitions seem already to be needless.

²⁵ J. Mukařovský, *Wśród znaków i struktur*, Warszawa 1970, pp. 381-391.

However, some examples would be useful. Of course, they restrict to the range of so-called **reflexive** or **self-conscious films**, but I mean here rather "stronger" version of reflexivity, straightforwardly making film's director the subject present in the plot or by permanent and total self-referentiality of means of expression causing destruction of the diegetic effect, story or "inferior" argument. Good examples of such "strong" reflexivity seem to be certain films of Fellini (*Roma, Intervista*) or Godard (*Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle, Tout va bien*), or such works like Bergman's *Persona*, Anderson's *O, Lucky Man!* or Wajda's *Pilatus und andere*. As weaker in their reflexivity should be treated fictions of Fellini's *8 1/2* or Truffaut's *La nuit américaine*. Although these films also introduce meta-level by making the subject the narrative instance and means of expression, it is, however, below the maximum degree of film reflexivity consisting in the referential identity of the director from the meta-level with a real author or "a film within a film" with just what we are watching.

"Reflexive" means of expression, non-transparent in relation to the story or diegetic effect, could be found in numerous films which, however, should be regarded as having other dominants. Perhaps it would be reasonable to restrain from definite conclusions as to the whole works. For example, Buñuel's device in *Cet obscure objet du désir* (two actresses playing alternately one and the same female character) is similar to the Anderson's one in *O, Lucky Man!* when the same actors play in one film several different roles. However, Anderson in the climax explicitly discloses all the actors as just actors in his film and such a solution manifestly puts the whole fabula into the parenthesis of his sender's intentionality. Instead, Buñuel's film, despite its "strong" and surprising device, is first of all intentionally directed to the "non-classical story". In turn, Monty Python's films or crazy, sophisticated comedy of Tage Danielsson *Picasso äventyr* have, in my opinion, the dominant of spectacle since "reflexive" means of expression used in them (ostentatiously artificial settings; playing different roles by the same actors; theatricality of the fictitious space; the break-up of story into episodes-"numbers"; incoherence of narrative conventions) are aimed rather at the gag as a cabaret spectacle's attraction than at the disclosure of subjective and intentional nature of diegesis.

The permanent stress on the film's intentionality does not prevent me from acceptance of Christian Metz's statement about principal

²⁶ Ch. Metz, *The Impersonal Enunciation or the Site of Film*, "New Literary History" 1991, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 747-772.

"impersonality" of film as medium ²⁶. Metz has found uselessness of the linguistic and literary analogies when we try to catch the "subject" of the film (however, not the formal narrators as, e.g., some characters recounting events, but the true narrative instance, the actual "owner of discourse"). Film, when aiming at the narrative instance, but not having, as a verbal language has, deictic elements *sensu stricto*, may employ only "reflexive" or "mise-en-abyme" constructions, i.e. bringing the sender's instance and means of expression to diegesis. Then, over the principal fiction meta-diegesis comes into being, but this reflexive intentionality is merely "presented reflexive intentionality", and only such "presentation" or "making it the subject" is definite and obligatory to a viewer. Since, on the other hand, as Metz has discerned, every device could be regarded by a spectator as reflexive when the sender's intentionality in the text "is silent" and to receiver's intentionality belong analytical decisions. This, however, would lead to rather absurd conclusions about film "pan-reflexivity". Otherwise a very interesting book of Bruce Kawin ²⁷ brings about just such a strange solution - the author, looking for the traces of film's "self-consciousness" (or, in my terminology, reflexive intention), finally obliterates the original sense of that notion so that it is possible to treat as self-conscious practically every film. Reflexive films, however, are principally different from the others, and sender's intentionality - if only is explicit - should be obligatory to the spectator. Therefore, it seems that the only reasonable solution is to regard reflexive intention as one more kind of an intentional diegetic dominant.

DOMINANTY DIEGETYCZNE W FILMIE FIKCJI STRESZCZENIE

Kategoria "diegesis" została wprowadzona w obręb filmoznawstwa przez Etienne'a Souriau. Zainspirowany rozwiązaniami amerykańskiego neoformalizmu i podejściem fenomenologicznym, autor przedstawia własną definicję "diegesis" jako przedmiotu intencjonalnego, obejmującego dwa poziomy: znaczeń "dosłownych", ustanawiających fabułę i jej świat, oraz znaczeń abstrakcyjnych. Twór ten, konstytuowany dzięki "tekstualnym wskazówkom", jest w pewnej mierze niedookreślony i zyskuje dopełnienie w aktach odbioru. Typ i sposób użycia owych "tekstualnych wskazówek" czyli środków wyrazu, umożliwia, z racji immanentnej im intencjonalności, określenie intencjonalnej dominanty diegetycznej, a tym samym określenie podstawowych odmian filmu fikcji, nietożsamyh jednak z gatunkami czy poetykami historycznymi. Wyróżnione przez autora (m.in. w oparciu o typologię tekstów autorstwa Seymoura Chatmana) i kolejno omawiane dominanty diegetyczne to: 1) **fabuła**, 2) **efekt diegetyczny**, 3) **argument**, 4) **spektakl** i 5) **intencja zwrotna**.

²⁷ B.F. Kawin, *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard and First-Person Film*. Princeton 1978.