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Film analysis : summary

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SUMMARY

FILM ANALYSIS

The book focuses on possibilities of analyzing a film as a system. Its aim is to deal with the process of asking questions in such a way that their answers will contribute to convincing solutions of exactly formulated tasks related to the structure of a film work. It is not a broadly conceived exposé of numerous kinds of analyses of numerous types of films; it rather follows the method of in-depth study of a limited scope of issues. As such, it consists of four sections. Each of these sections offers different questions and answers, presents different findings to the reader and follows different methods of work with the explication. All sections logically follow from the others, and thus analysed topics reappear in various contexts, as well as complement and develop each other. An invariable background of the explications in the book is formed, first, by aesthetic norms of the classic Hollywood film, second, by traditions of the Czech cinema and third, by Kristin Thompson's and David Bordwell's neoformalist poetics.

- (1) The first section is titled **TO OBSERVE** and it presents the basic tools for an analysis of a work of art. It sees the work as a system, where it distinguishes between basic components of *narrative*, *style* and *the fictional world*. It explains each of these components separately on specific examples. It gives special attention to the films: *A Close Shave* (GB, 1995) and *Once upon a Time in the West* (USA/Italy, 1968). The subject matter of the explication is a **film work**.
- (2) In the second section, **TO PLAN**, the book approaches to discussion and writing about film as a way of issues-solving. It explains the importance of finding, posing, and answering question about the structure of a film. It gives examples of the films *Titanic* (USA, 1997) and *Bloody Sunday* (GB/Ireland, 2002). For a better understanding of the topic it deals with, it offers

a conception of **two types of theses: centripetal and centrifugal**. The subject matter of the explication is the **analysis as such**.

- (3) The third section **TO WRITE AND READ / TO READ AND WRITE** is the most guiding one, as it focuses on practical aspects of analytical writing, theoretical coherence and the field of recommended publication, which can help to enhance this sensibility. The subject matter of the explication is a **written analytical text**.
- (4) The final section **THREE ANALYTICAL FORMATS AND A READER** makes it easier to understand on a higher level the various ways of structuring an analysis and its functions. It presents three formats of such texts: **an analytical essay, an analytical study and poetological study**. An adaptability to analysed issues follows primarily from six case-studies of the films *Who Wants to Kill Jessie?* (Czechoslovakia, 1966), *Arsenic and Old Lace* (USA, 1944), *Speed Racer* (USA, 2008), *Memento* (USA, 2000), *Smugglers of Death* (Czechoslovakia, 1959) and *A Tooth for a Tooth* (Austria-Hungary, 1913). Each of these more or less comprehensive studies deals with a different issue, asks different questions and (intentionally) addresses readers with different levels of experience. The subject matter of the explication is a **unity of approach on the one hand and a variety of issues-solving on the other hand**.

The book aims to show the widest range of the explanatory possibilities of its approach, which it labels a **poetics of fiction**. When working with its case-studies, it repeatedly proceeds in the chapters from formally playful films (like *A Close Shave*, *Titanic*, *Speed Racer* or *Memento*) to structurally complex works (like *Once Upon a Time in the West*, *Bloody Sunday* or *Smugglers of Death*). This enables it to cover a wide range of challenges, which one can encounter in the process of an analysis of (not only audio-visual) works. And finally, the last chapter introduces the theme of a historiographic dimension of the book. It presents an original research of the beginnings of Czech cinema.

The field of an analysis of a film authorship is rather suppressed in the explications, although it remains crucial and as such it is primarily dealt with in the second section of the book, which can thus be also seen from this perspective as an original contribution to authorial poetics and questions of a realistic effect in the work of the director Paul Greengrass.

Given the reasons stated above, *Film Analysis* wants to be (a) a comprehensible guide to the analytical process of a wide readership (especially students of programmes in history and theory of the arts, cinephiles and beginning critics), (b) a collection of original analyses, which explain a variety of issues related to structures of film from the perspective of the poetics of fiction, and (c) a source of helpful tools for not only film analysis, but also the analytical process as such (for example, kinds of theses or analytical formats).

Translated by Tomáš Kačer

