Minds Inside Out: Interior Monologue in Narrative Fiction Film

In narratrive mainstream cinema, dramatic experiments in using off-screen sound to represent interior monologues can be found as early as Alfred Hitchcock’s Murder! (1930). Yet, in contrast to (retrospective) voice-over narration, which received its wider critical appreciation in the 1940s, interior monologue in film – for a much longer time – was ridiculed as an artistically inferior or redundantly obtrusive technique of focalization. One may see the critical and artistic rehabilitation of interior monologue as analogous to that of the voice-over narration in the 1940s. Notably, Robert Altman’s spoof on film noir in The Long Good Bye (1973) not only transferred the story from the 1950s to the 1970s, it also has Philip Marlowe’s voice ‘think along’ rather than narrate after the fact. Yet, there are also crucial differences between these two narrative modes of representation. While voice-over narration seems to favor the distinctness of different sensory, semiotic and diegetic realms, interior monologues frequently create confusion about these dimensions. In The Long Goodbye, one is never quite sure whether Altman’s Marlowe is thinking or muttering beneath his breath.

More recent uses of interior monologues in fiction film programmatically exploit this ambiguity and frequently undermine the distinction between voice-over and interior monologue altogether. This paper will review such cases, whether they are motivated by intermedial relations to literature such as Adaptation (2002) and The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (2007) or explore new forms of subjectivity through drugs and delusions such as Memento (2000) or Enter The Void (2009). My discussion will focus on what seems to be at stake in many of these films: The conceptualization of narrative, mental and medial stance that is neither externalized and disembodied such as the narration by an absent or invisible narrator, nor fully internalized or embodied as interior monologue.

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Christian Quendler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of American Studies at the University of Innsbruck (Austria), where he teaches both literature and film. His research interests include publishing history and book design, narratology, inter-art relations and media history. He is the author of two books From Romantic Irony to Postmodernist Metafiction (2001) and Interfaces of Fiction (2010) and numerous essays on literature and film. He has just completed the manuscript for his third book Confessions of a Camera Eye, which examines camera-eye metaphors in different artforms, disciplines and historical periods.
Abstract

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Representing Subjectivity in Graphic Narratives

Although many literary scholars have started to show growing interest towards graphic narratives, the concepts and methods for analyzing this hybrid medium are still under development. Graphic narratives pose challenges to narratology but also evoke interesting questions concerning, for example, the word and image relations and representations of minds. In this paper, I focus on the means for depicting subjectivity and embodied experiences in a graphic narrative *Karu selli* (1996) by Finnish comics artist Kati Kovács. Throughout her oeuvre, caricatured characters are rendered in a very expressive drawing style and her themes underline issues related to gender, sexuality and identity. I aim to show how the representations of subjectivity of comic book characters are built in the interaction between the verbal and visual but also in the relations between individual panels and page layouts.

Graphic storytelling affords a wide range of visual and verbal clues for the reader to interpret the mental states of the characters. The rendering of characters, drawing style, breakdown of the panels, speech and thought bubbles and verbal narration are some of the most essential tools for the construction of a graphic narrative. Formal conventions - such as speech and thought bubbles - are widely used in graphic narratives but artists develop continuously new means for representing the minds of comic book characters. I claim that visual and multimodal metaphors that many contemporary graphic narratives develop can be seen as one answer to the compelling challenge of both representing and interpreting minds.
Non-linear storytelling environments take us one step closer towards immersive experiences while relying heavily on the emotional congruency of the presented stimuli as a function of user action. Describing the drama of a given narrative framework, dynamic music scores also act adaptively as an individual component of perception and behaviour related phenomena of the player.

Examining empirically the immersive effects of dynamic music for the first time, a pilot study was conducted to explore imaginary and sensory immersion, suspension of disbelief, involvement, flow, spatial presence self location, possible actions as well as emotional valence/arousal in the context of an action-adventure video game, while also considering decoding skills and intensified emotional involvement in trait musical empathy and immersive tendency. 60 subjects answered self-report questionnaires of experiential states each time after playing the game “Batman: Arkham City“ in one of three conditions accounting for [1] dynamic music, [2] non-dynamic music/low arousal potential and [3] non-dynamic music/high arousal potential, in this way manipulating affective arousal, structural-temporal alignation and emotional congruency of nondiegetic music separately.

Investigating the perceived drama related interactive qualities of dynamic music in the likes of a Theory of Mind approach, different layers of virtual mind sets between the player, avatar and game environment moderate a regulatory continuous modulation of emotional response, leading to an increase of in-game immersion and, by indications of the gathered data, to a decrease of post-game aggression by narrative-dramaturgic context effects of dynamic music.