

LIMINA - FILM'S THRESHOLDS

X International Film Studies Conference

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Within the vast field of what surrounds a film text or the cinematic spectacle, of what "marks" its threshold, or of what lies in its nearest "outside," we would like to call attention to the moments of beginning and closure of the narrative/communicative act. As borders, passages, and areas that signal the spectator's entrance in the fiction and that accompany its exit, the opening and ending of a film might perform a wealth of crucial roles: they define its narrative models and generic conventions, arrange enunciation strategies, determine points of view and regimes of knowledge, evoke cultural and reception models. Within the study of early cinema, specifically, the fluidity of the boundaries of the film text and its mobile configuration render this an especially meaningful issue: the "borders" of the film are as mobile as the film itself. Consideration of such borders contributes today to the specification and assessment of new theoretical "subjects." Despite the lively interest displayed by film analysis, film theory has given scant, or at least discontinuous, attention to film openings and endings.

The Udine International Film Studies Conference intends to explore the issue of film openings and endings, seen as *thresholds* of the diegesis. Traditionally, the conference gives particular emphasis to early cinema even though consideration will also be extended to later phases in the history of film (with particular attention to the early sound era) and up to contemporary cinema. The multiplicity of methodological approaches will be, as customary, another prerogative of such meeting.

Film's frame and matrix

Often the opening and the ending of a film enact a sort of symbolic condensation of narrative meanings. The notion of matrix has been evoked to indicate the nature of the opening (but, we believe, also of the ending) of a film.

Likewise, openings and endings often present analogies and correspondences (both at the level of the signifier and at that of the signified) suggesting the presence of a sort of "shell" enveloping the film: a *frame* holding various functions within the narrative.

Narrative openness and narrative closure

Within the process that led to the institutionalization of narrative forms, the elaboration of strategies of narrative openness and closure plays a particularly crucial role in the understanding of the formation of different modes of representation.

The opening: text and paratext

There is an essentially ambiguous and volatile border zone, that we could refer to as

“opening credits juxtaposed to the textual opening:” here the fictional world takes shape while verbal information are provided which reveal its artificiality, therefore putting at risk the fictional contract. Where does the fiction start and where does information on its genesis stop?

Opening: hypotext and hypertext

This issue focuses on the understanding of the nature and the differences between various modes of expression of the same series of events, in order to establish the medium specificity or the textual characteristics of adaptations. What changes in the passage from a novel to a film? And from an original film to its remake?

The opening: author and spectator. Points of view and regimes of knowledge

The employment of a perspective relying on enunciation theory in the analysis of film openings and endings can be a useful tool. Openings and endings can present instances of reflexivity, meta-narration, or interpellation of the spectator, and institute simulacra of the enunciator and the enunciatee.

Furthermore, very productive is also the analysis of openings considered as privileged sites of negotiation of different points of view as well as instances establishing and regulating specific regimes of knowledge characterizing the film.

The opening and the ending in style, genre, and narrative models

Opening and ending can work as “indicators”, for instance, of the poetics and style of an author, or of generic mechanisms and conventions. They perform a crucial role in the definition and structuring of grand narrative models, which in turn reflect larger cultural contexts.

Opening in classical, modern and postmodern cinema

Are the boundaries of the film text subject to historical mutations? To what extent are the grand epistemes of film history reflected on the boundaries of the text?

Happy and other endings

In this case we are proposing an analysis of the location of the happy ending within generic system and conventions (considering also its attendant ideological implications), as well as instances of subversion of the mechanisms that oversees its correct functioning.

Openings and endings: variations (1)

The ending appears to be responsible for bringing the meaning of the film back to cultural traditions and reception models. The issue of planned variations, with reference to specific national (or regional) contexts, is therefore raised. In the early years of sound film, the systematic employment of multiple versions accomplished a sort of institutionalization of such occurrence.

Opening and endings: variations (2)

The intention of this heading is to address the multiple issues posited by variations on the border zones of the film text for such disciplines as restoration, philology, and archival methods. The borders of the film (meant as the material support) are consti-

tutively the most fragile zones and also the areas more emphatically susceptible of manipulation.

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