



## Enthymema XXXVI 2024

### Kinaesthetic Narrativization of Place in 360° Stereoscopic Flânerie

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**Abstract** – In narrative film, space predominates over time, while in stereoscopic spherical cinema (3DSC), the transitions between spatial frames redefine the supremacy of space through *orientational gaze* and *kinaesthetic flânerie* by a *deputy actant* who explores the *geopsychic* space through the cartographic processes of narrativization. On one level, narrativization occurs through *routes* and geospatial *cognitive mapping* as well as horizontal cinescape projections within spatial frames. On the other level, it transpires at the intersection of a first-person perspective and *platial experientiality*, as the viewer's body relocates, finding its place based on cultural, political, and social proximities. Thus, the coordinate system of 3DSC, inherently platial, is anchored in narrative pauses, devoid of temporal aspects except for the perpetual "now". Whether 3DSC obliterates time through kinaesthetic wandering depends on the metalepsis of each narrative, the oscillating nature of the audience's perspectives, shifting between *exocentric* and *egocentric* views, *ocularization* and *locus, auricularization* and *situatedness*.

**Keywords** – Flânerie; Virtual Reality; Kinaesthetic 360°; Experientiality; Place.

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## 1. Introduction

While the production of cinematic virtual reality content, particularly 360° *stereoscopic* spherical cinema (3DSC), has substantially increased over the past five years, the narratological research exploring its rich storytelling potential remains limited (Cannavò et al. 1; Damas and de Gracia 342-343; Uskali et al. 43-4). The absence of notable discourse in this field, therefore, calls for a thorough investigation into immersive media narratives, and, more importantly, with respect to the complex relationship between movement and spatial arrangement that this format adopts. The following study aims to address the narratological void by delving into the concept of leisurely strolling as an embodied form of storytelling, which, akin to *flânerie*, directs attention towards the *kinaesthetic* aspects of ‘place’ and its narrativization as it manifests itself in 3DSC milieu.

The relevance of spatial narrativization in narratological research concerning 3DSC lies not only in the viewers’ physical stimuli in shaping the narrative, but also in the dynamic nature of such encounters that goes beyond visual immersion by incorporating the physically-visceral sensation of movement to enhance the narrative texture and depth. The main argument is that on one hand, the movement deploys *cognitive mapping*, where the succession of spatial frames that the audience of 3DSC encounters is experienced as a *tour map*, guiding the audience through its spatial configuration. On the other hand, the *platial experientiality*, in which the physical body of the main focalizer relocates from one spatial frame to another, constructing a sense of place based on cultural, political, and social proximities, is crucial in understanding the unique nature of experience in 360° stereoscopic spherical film.

The concept of “platial” is employed here in reference to place-based studies, paralleling the use of “spatial” for space-based (coordinate-system oriented) studies (Gao et al. 42-9). Thus, it can be posited that *flânerie* in 3DSC, due to its inherent *kinaesthetic* properties, is primarily orientational and fundamentally platial. That is, although the audience remains technically anchored and physically static, it traverses the spatial frames in a succession of pauses with *possible* movement where the space is being narrativized through our cinematic engagement.

Such an engagement is ontological. The Greek term *κινέω* (*kinema*), meaning “to move” or movement, forms the root of *kinematic*, *kinetic*, and *kinaesthetic* experience, whereby cinema, as an architectural space, allows us to perceive movement or be moved within cinematic space (Koeck 5). By extending this concept further, the 3DSC format can be described as a form of *geopsychic<sup>1</sup> habitat* where the cartographic processes in probing spaces challenge the traditional boundaries of cinema. It also expands our understanding to encompass larger territories, such as cities or landscapes, for spatial recognition, consumption (Koeck 5), and reflection.

<sup>1</sup> Giuliana Bruno in 2002 had described cinema as a form of “geopsychic exploration”, a cartographic process serving the probing of spaces; her definition begins to challenge the boundaries of a defined architectural space – that of the cinema – and opens itself up to seeing movement-based spatial recognition and consumption as a process that shares common ground with a much larger territory, such as a city (qtd. in Koeck 5).

To substantiate the chief arguments described, the following study lays out first the theoretical framework in which the kinaesthetic aspects of 'place' and its narrativization function in 3DSC. It does this by linking up Marco Caracciolo's concepts of the *deputy focalizer* and *slow immersion* with Marie-Laure Ryan's *tour* and *map* modes in traversing spatial frames of narrative landscapes. While the former and Caracciolo's deputy focalizer present frameworks for analyzing spatial design through perception where the decelerated pacing encourages deeper, texture-based engagement, particularly for environmental narratives, Ryan's tour and map mode approach complements the theories of 'embodied flânerie' that underscore the relationship between spatial representation and navigation in fictional and real settings.

After that, the dynamics at play are gauged against a conceptual template by drawing inspiration from the cinematic strategies employed in Michelangelo Antonioni's seminal work, *La Notte* (1961), in order to serve as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of *Surviving 9/11: 27 Hours Under the Rubble* (2021), a 3DSC short film situated within the urban spaces of New York. The ultimate goal of the inquiry is to elucidate how kinaesthetic flânerie is used to narrativize places in my own original 360° stereoscopic film prototypes: *Opportunities* (2021) and *Once Upon a Time in Bolderaja* (2022).

## 2. "Slow" Kinetics and Multifaceted Flânerie

In *Narrating Space / Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet*, Marie-Laure Ryan, a quintessential scholar on the issues of space across different media, describes a typology that can serve as a framework for comprehending how narratives are spatially inscribed and experienced in different milieus. She categorizes the so-called "landscape narratives" into four broad types predicated on the spatial and temporal scale of depicted events: "point narratives" that narrate an incident from a single location, typically employing a marker; "sequential narratives" that connect time and space along routes in a linear fashion; "complex narratives" that are used for intricate incidents spanning large areas or lengthy timeframes that are difficult to narrate in chronological order; and, finally, "hybrid narratives" that encompass the previous three (Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 160-80).

Out of the four types, the one most relevant to 3DSC environments is the combination of point and sequential narratives, which makes it easier to understand how the movement and mechanics of 3DSC space operate.

Point narratives represent the simplest form, commonly embodied by a lone marker conveying significant incidents localized to specific places. For example, the memorial in Chicago commemorating the tragic 1915 capsizing of the Eastland passenger ship, which resulted in over eight hundred deaths, or the memorial in Chicago honoring the labor organizers who were unjustly executed after the 1886 Haymarket Riot (Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 164). In both instances, the markers function as rhetorical devices to bring the incidents to the surface, rendering them accessible and more immersive for the audience.

A sequential narrative, in turn, is structured linearly along keyframed paths, guiding the target through a chronological sequence of events that unfold over intermediate temporal and spatial scales, be it the Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem, which mark the path of Jesus, or the Little Bighorn Battlefield in Montana, where the audience can follow automobile and foot trails that narrate the sequence of the final stand of George A. Custer and his troops in 1876 (Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 167).

3DSC narratives, thus, function as an offshoot of a hybrid narrative where both single-point markers and a series of sequential markers sketch out the unfolding of events at macro and micro levels, ensuring a richer, more interactive experience where some 3DSC users might follow a structured path while others might choose to explore specific points of interest in more detail. In either scenario, the exploration is generally decelerated, optically and viscerally, due to the particulars of 3DSC spatial framing.

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Ryan defines “spatial frames” as the immediate surroundings, shifting scenes of action, hierarchical in structure, and filled with an individual set of objects, such as “a “salon” frame that can turn into a “bedroom” frame as the characters move within a house”, while “setting” refers to a stable socio-historic-geographic unit, in contrast to spatial frames that may vary during the plot, with ‘story-space’ being a summation of the spatial frames, plus all locations mentioned but not serving as scenes for occurring events (Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 24). Furthermore, there exists a crucial narratological distinction between a traditional film, text, and 3DSC.

In the text-based medium, the reconstruction of narrative space is a purely cognitive act; in flat screen cinema, spatial frames are actual, interconnected by “giving the spectator a sense of what lies beyond what is framed by the current screen” (Ryan 803), whereas in 3DSC, the exposure to spatial frames is instantaneous and diegetically accessible, irrespective of the audience’s conditioned circumstance. In other words, there is a narrative tension between actual spatial frames and those *in potentia*, a dichotomy that hardly exists in spherical 360°. What sets the friction in the text and in the flat screen medium as opposed to none in 3DSC is the effect of immediate blur, whereby the distinctions between story-space and spatial frames of the spherical environment are instantaneously (and continuously) erased.

Sometimes it is easier to think of spatial frames in 3DSC as a chain, a succession of 360° stereoscopic spherical narrative situations filled with topographical determination and linked by an anticipated movement that sets up a kinaesthetic transition between one spatial frame and the next (see Fig. 1). While the movement is mostly mental due to the distinct three

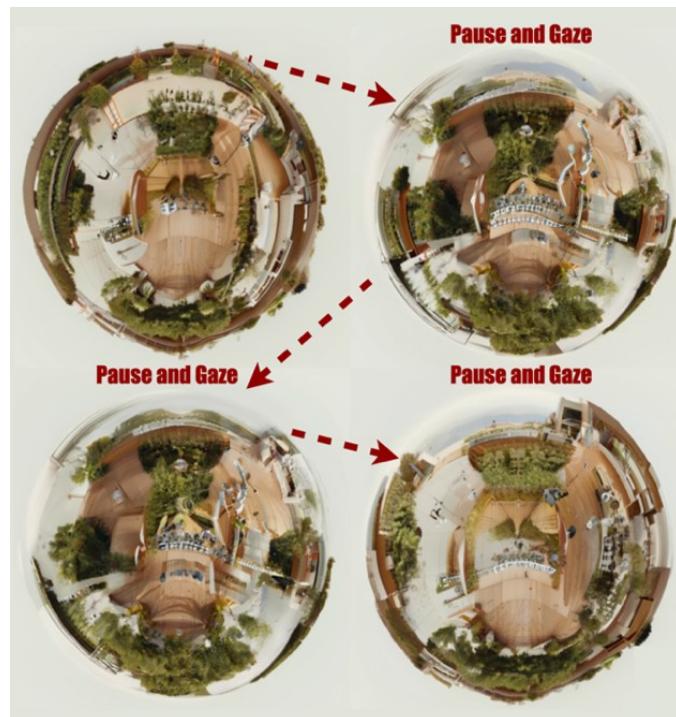


Fig. 1. Illustration of kinaesthetic flânerie in 3DSC (4 separate narrative situations) where perceptual movement from one spatial frame to the next is experienced viscerally by pausing and gazing.

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degrees of freedom (3DoF) technology<sup>2</sup>, the pause and gaze within each separate spatial frame is concrete, corporal and visceral. The pause is reflective, and the gaze is orientational.

In literature, the orientation in geometrical space that delimits the actions and movements of a virtual body that we could perform is bound by its “virtual access to the world”: since readers can never actually be transported to a fictional place (their presence bound to remain virtual), the sense of “being there” that some novels may give is found solely in that mirage, through sensory imagination grounded in human sensorimotor skills (Caracciolo 161-72). However, in 3DSC, the sensory imagination is not bound by any illusion (at least not optically), but what is similar in both mediums is a shared concept of orientational gaze by a “deputy focalizer”.

Caracciolo, in his *Experientiality of Narrative: An Enactivist Approach* (2014), defines “deputy focalization” as the residual of perceptual or imaginative access to the fictional world by an unnamed witness to an event who does not play any part in the story and is more of a tourist, an anonymous traveler (135-6) who enhances readers’ experiential engagement with fictional worlds (163). Unlike regular characters, deputy focalizers have no distinct identity or influence on the plot; their sole purpose is to stand in for the reader’s embodied presence in the storyworld by functioning more as a static cinematic lens, morphing the descriptive textual passages into visual simulations. Yet, these visual simulations, although experiential, not only lack the capacity to affect the plot, but also cannot narrativize the story’s spatial frames directly. By contrast, the anonymous sightseers in 3DSC, whom I designate as “deputy actants”, can.

A deputy actant also aligns more with Caracciolo’s concept of consciousness-enactment<sup>3</sup>, as it enables 3DSC users to embody a perspective within the narrative without direct interaction. And although Caracciolo’s deputy focalizer is not automatically tied to a third-person perspective, 3DSC’s deputy actant is more adaptable: it can function in the second-person perspective, where the audience is directly addressed (visually and vocally) and engaged as a “sidekick” to the main character, or it can also operate in a more fluid space between second and third person, allowing for what can be described as “a variety of ‘you’s’ and a variety of ‘I’s,” and a combination of these, moving along and across another boundary line in spatial frames (Ceplitis 88-102).

To understand the peculiarity of the deputy actant, it is important to also reflect on how narrative strategies exist in both Caracciolo’s and Ryan’s models of navigating space.

Caracciolo focuses on two projective cognitive strategies: the “gaze tour” and the “body tour”, with the former depicting a scene from a fixed position, by way of eyes roaming around the scene, while the latter involves imagining a movement through the space physically (Caracciolo 162). Ryan, on the other hand, describes the tour (or “route”) as a narrative strategy for creating space in texts, which sides more closely with Caracciolo’s body tour. The overlap between their models lies in the “body tour/tour” framework, which both scholars recognize as a dynamic, embodied way of experiencing space, except for some subtle nuances: Caracciolo’s gaze tour doesn’t have a direct equivalent in Ryan’s framework, whereas Ryan’s map strategy, introduces a perspective not explicitly covered in Caracciolo’s

<sup>2</sup> Three degrees of freedom (3DoF) in virtual reality settings pertain to the 3 rotational axes, enabling the ability to turn left/right, look up/down, and tilt the view; 6 degrees of freedom (6DoF) encompass 3 extra translational degrees, allowing for movement to the left/right, forwards/backwards, and upwards/downwards.

<sup>3</sup> For Caracciolo, the deputy focalizer often mediates the shifting of perspectives from the main character to another, guiding the reader’s engagement with the character’s cognizance by means of “consciousness-attribution” (a third-person perspective involving readers attributing mental states to characters) and “consciousness-enactment” (a first-person perspective involving readers gauging their own experience against that of the character) (Caracciolo 115-32).

dichotomy. In all of these models, the fundamental concepts are primarily about how readers cognitively reconstruct and engage with narrative spaces.

Within 3DSC environments, in turn, the “multifaceted tour” strategy comprises of “gaze”, “cognitive mapping” of spatial frames, and the “body tour”. To incorporate all these elements, it is useful to imagine the audience navigating the story-space by orienting their gaze first, and then progressing through spatial frames in a “stereoscopic kinaesthetic flânerie”. Or, to put it differently, on one hand, the narrativization of space in a static 360° spatial frame is experienced by its target through orientational pauses. On the other hand, it transpires at the crux of the first-person perspective and what I refer to as “platial experientiality” when the physical body relocates from one spatial frame to another, creates *its own place* in the world, and establishes its unique “situatedness” of a particular socio-economic and ideological milieu.

“Flânerie”, the leisurely pedestrian exploration of city streets, particularly where there is an aesthetically keen observation of inhabitants from different social classes (Andrews 24), can also extend the concept of strolling beyond mere inward reflection towards a much deeper emotional interaction between the body and the environment (Low 23). The trajectory and tempo of the stroll have a direct effect on the immersive qualities of narrativization.

In one of his latest works, *Slow Narrative and Nonhuman Materialities*, Caracciolo develops the concept of “slowness”, a narrative technique that proposes to decelerate reflection and shift the focus from spatial immersion metaphors to a more corporal encounter, which explains more accurately the complex, nonbinary relationships characterizing the Anthropocene, where human and natural processes meet (23-42). The relevance of “slow immersion” for stereoscopic 3D spherical cinema is that it reflects the nature of kinaesthetic flânerie as a contemplative movement through space, allowing for a deeper and more accurate narrativization. This challenges the traditional dichotomies between subjectivity, agency, and matter. The pause in this process is key.

For a child, his mother is “his essential shelter”, his primary place of existence (Tuan 29), expressed by a pause in movement where “each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (Tuan 6). Similarly, the pause could be looked upon as a core attribute of spatial frames in 3DSC environments where the essence of being physically situated at the center and its relation to other objects in space is based upon particular cultural, political, and social proximities, essentially platial.

To better understand the mechanics of platial experientiality and kinaesthetic flânerie at play, carried by a surveying deputy actant who explores the geopsychic space through the cartographic processes of narrativization, it is appropriate to look at the narrativization process of spatial frames in *La Notte* (1961).

### 3. *La Notte*: Spatial Cycle of Pause, Gaze, and Transition

Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni in 1961, *La Notte* examines the deterioration of Giovanni, an Italian writer, and his wife Lidia's marriage in the space of one day and night. The breakdown of their lives is illustrated by visual gaps and silent omissions, such as in various instances in the film where the married couple has little to no communication at all.

Initially, they travel to hospital together to visit their dying friend Tommaso who is an intellectual symbolizing a richer past compared to the contemporary moral decline. Witnessing Tommaso's closeness to death prompts Lidia to also reexamine her marriage and the society in which it exists. While deeply affected by Tommaso's condition, she is startled to find that Giovanni remains detached from the entire encounter.

As their disconnect widens at Giovanni's new book launch, following the hospital visit, it not only metaphorically signifies the superficiality of modern culture, but also “Lidia's presentiment of physical and emotional death as well as for the resistant singularity she develops

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in solitary and eccentric wandering" (Haaland 600), all of which results in Lidia's immediate departure from the party, in search of authenticity through new perspectives on marriage and her identity.

Spatially, the visual trajectory of Lidia's eventual wandering off alone through the streets of Milan to revisit the neighborhood where they once lived as newlyweds is one continuous loop. If *La Notte* were reshotted in 3DSC, the narrative schema could be read as follows: the succession of hospital spatial frames would morph into the succession of the book launch party spatial frames, then into their apartment spatial frame, and so on and so forth (see Fig. 2). The viewer in this instance would function as a deputy actant in a double gaze (*echoed*) scenario: one oriented by Lydia, and the other, ocularized by the audience and experienced viscerally.



Fig. 2. Schemata of kinaesthetic flânerie in *La Notte*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, Nepi Film, Sofitedip, Silver Film, 1961.

Lidia's voyeuristic journey differs from the traditional flâneur in her distant observation of demolished and abandoned urban spaces and the objects up close, while her encounters prompt her to question her place in a rapidly changing society. Through the use of geometrical juxtapositions and ambient noises, as well as sparse dialogue, the film critiques the impersonal and alienating effects of modernization, where more married couples occupy separate spaces, both in configuration and texture. Thus, when Giovanni, having read the letters, draws a curtain and reveals the exterior, one might suspect it is a classic continuity shot. However, it actually represents a significant temporal gap, even when optically it appears to be a match cut to Lidia strolling through different sections of Milan, which is actually happening in a different part of town at a different time frame (see Fig. 3).

Similar patterns of omission are repeated throughout the film. In a sense, her aimless wandering, her desire to re-fragment what is being destroyed by pausing and reflecting has all

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the hallmarks of point narratives. On one level, each pause is a signpost in the cartographic process of retracing her past. On another level, by becoming a “flâneuse,” Lidia projects herself onto what she witnesses in order to dissolve herself in buildings and objects in a state of movement, possibilities, and new identities, whether it is the sound of a jet engine she hears or the small rockets shot into the air she sees. Lidia’s flânerie becomes a kind of ethnographic exploration of “embodied space,” or what Low would define as an underscore of the importance of the body as a biological entity that “creates spaces through mobility and movement,” by means of spatial orientation and a desire to act in space (19). In Lydia’s case, it is



Fig. 3. *La Notte*, 00:31:55.

presented as a reflection on her feeling disconnected and unfulfilled, leading her to seek excitement and stimulation elsewhere, which also manifests in binary of sexual arousal and violence. Thus, in the shot, where she sees the young men fighting, she enters the frame in a rather evocative posture (see Fig. 4). Sexual arousal is mutually acknowledged, but Lidia soon



Fig. 4. *La Notte*, 00:35:55.

returns to her own Dantean spatial frame<sup>4</sup>, which the young man will obviously never be a part of, separated by the raw cage the working-class youth is clutching to (see Fig. 5).

It is important to note that Lidia’s flânerie through the city can also be seen not merely as a tour, but as a matrix of spatial frames, along vertical and horizontal vectors. Akin to Ryan’s

<sup>4</sup> “Dantean place” refers to a narrative space that empathetically expresses and embodies the internal conflicts of a character. More broadly, a Dantean moment includes the sense of being psychologically damaged by an earlier moment such as in PTSD experiences often overlap in narratives and real life (D’Adamo 26).

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construction of narrative space, neither a tour nor a map strategy is sufficient in itself in 3DSC, since the 360° stereoscopic flânerie requires the narrator to be “on a chessboard” - a strategy that presupposes both a map-like vertical projection” as well as “a natural walkthrough” (Ryan 804). In this instance, the cognitive mapping of spatial relations (tied to geospatial direction and emotions that inhibit the storyworld) is “built from images of individual spatial frames that replace each other in short-term memory” (Ryan 804), while a horizontal projection of “cinescapes”<sup>5</sup> within actual spatial frames exists in the environments that only 3DSC affords beyond a mere construction of a mental model. Such a matrix of divergent spatial frames reveals itself more accurately in the ending scene, where Lidia reads Giovanni his love letter that he had written to Lidia in his youth but now does not recognize (see Fig. 6). As the camera dollies out, Lidia's horizontal tour, characterized by moments of



Fig. 5. *La Notte*, 00:36:35.



Fig. 6. *La Notte*, 01:57:05.

turmoil and psychological disorientation, is juxtaposed by Michelangelo Antonioni's cognitive mapping and his god-like focalization (see Fig. 7).

While Lidia's horizontal exploration not only narrativizes her personal story-space, but also embodies the social and cultural disjunctions of post-war Italy, Antonioni's vertical map strategy underscores the tension between the personal and the universal, the easily read and the covert, since Antonioni does not explicitly reveal the reasons behind Giovanni and

<sup>5</sup> The term “cinescapes” addresses the manipulation, based on the syntax of cinema and landscapes, “or to be precise, filmic and cinematic phenomena related to urban landscapes.... [that expands] the argument of the reciprocity between architecture and film it examines the ways that properties and methods traditionally situated in the sphere of film have influenced spatial practices in contemporary architecture and urban design” (Koeck 4).

Lidia's marital troubles or provide a clear resolution. He certainly leaves certain aspects of their marriage unexplained.

What matters most in the equation is that Lidia's narrativized space comprises loosely connected Dantean shots, penetrated by flânerie and accentuated by pauses in movement within each spatial frame where each succeeding location is experienced as a “pause>orientation>gaze>reflection” container and then as a subsequent movement in between, the disintegration process that repeats itself.



Fig. 7. *La Notte*, 02:00:42.

#### 4. Shifting mentations in 360° stereoscopic places

Once we acknowledge the importance of pauses within and between different spatial frames and understand that there is no true continuity in the visual progression of a story, it becomes simpler to establish a narrative structure that encourages audience engagement in a 360° space.

*Surviving 9/11: 24 Hours Under the Rubble* (2021) is a spherical tribute to the last survivor rescued from the rubble at Ground Zero and a good example of audiences being motivated to explore a 360°. The film follows Genelle Guzman-McMillan as she relives and narrates a complex virtual reality journey, twenty years after being rescued during 9/11. Her words are enhanced by the work of 360° rendered archive photographs from the 1990s to allow the audience to be immersed in New York City prior to 9/11. The narrative configuration rests upon a two-fold homodiegesis: first, by means of AI-restored 8K 3D footage, which provides an impressive sense of presence at Ground Zero from the first-person perspective by a deputy actant, that is, embodiment mediated by a persona to the fictional world without being a character of the story, but virtually present, and, second, by means of Guzman-McMillan's voice-over.

When the structure of the work is closely examined, the subject's homodiegetic recount of heartbreak events, “I'm originally from Trinidad and Tobago, but I wanted to live out the American Dream. I always wanted to be that girl, to come to America and make it big... then 9/11 happened...” demarcates the narrative layer on which she operates. Genelle Guzman-McMillan acts chiefly as a protagonist on the narratorial level. Very little of her is physically present in any of the spatial frames when key events are parlayed. The design of the 3DSC narrative can be seen as a paired “offline mentation”, a “jump from *discourse here-and-now* to the *story here-and-now*” (Jahn 39) - one by the speaker, the other by the audience. In parallel with Guzman-McMillan's homodiegetic narration, the deputy actant optically witnesses and experiences the streets of New York according to his/her own particular cultural, political, and social proximities. In my case, I had visited New York City many times in the

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late 1990s; so, as I stand in the midst of Manhattan posed in 3DSC (see Fig. 8), the space I am narrativizing is an “ecstatic place”, formed through kinetic transference and by cognitive mapping of the city’s iconic spatial frames, cocooned in an intoxicating atmosphere of limitless opportunities and potent recall.

While Guzman-McMillan’s reflections, after the towers have been hit, are those of a subject who is emotionally removed and offering a *matter-of-fact* accelerated account, my experience is actually a deceleration in time, an awe and the binary of fascination with the destruction and angst. At these particular moments, her voice-over recedes into the background haze as a less important discourse here-and-now, all the while my own encounter is ocularized and experienced in line with the attributes of the ecstatic place. The residual effect is being not only virtually but psychosomatically present in a room of the North Tower (see Fig. 9).



Fig. 8. The equirectangular 360° spatial frame in *Surviving 9/11: 24 Hours Under the Rubble*, directed by Gédéon and Jules Naudet, 2021, 02:31.

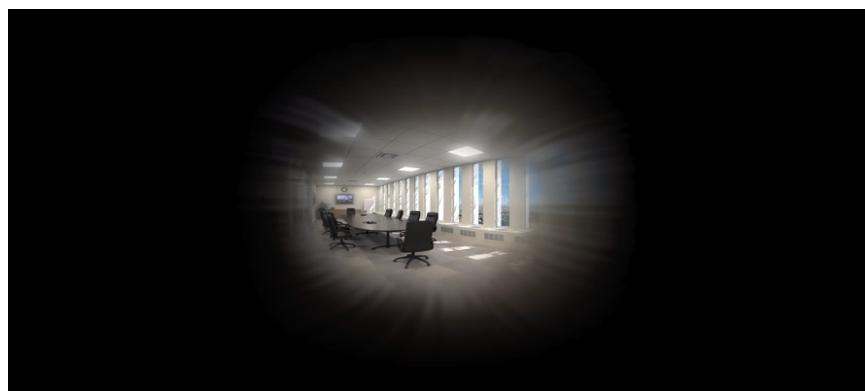


Fig. 9. *Surviving 9/11: 24 Hours Under the Rubble*, 07:01.

## 5. Tactuality and movement along kinaesthetic paths

In part, such psychosomatic effects of spatial experientiality are stringent upon what I would designate as “tactuality” and an “haptic Call to Action” (hCtA), the terms that describe a combination of tactile and strongly sensational, almost visceral awareness of touching virtual objects when no such activity is possible.

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Their original phenomenological reference points to Ed Tan's concept of "desiring to amend the situation" in film viewing by the audience's emotional urge to intervene or act upon the events unfolding on screen, despite being physically unable to do so (Tan 106-23). And while in flat screen cinema, we cannot act upon it, in 3DSC, by contrast, we are *called* to act due to being encapsulated in a stereoscopic spherical space. This means that hCtA and tactuality in 3DSC form a default embodied activity constrained by 3-DoF movement limitations, which fosters an oscillation between the audience's desire to act and the power of its physical limitations, prompting it to vicariously transcend its bodily constraints (Ceplitis 92).

As in *Surviving 9/11: 24 Hours Under the Rubble* (2021), where tactualities occasionally exist, in my own 360° stereoscopic narrative *Opportunities* (2021), tactualities connect disparate spatial frames into a consistent narrative setting. The film uses a bracketing technique, beginning and ending with a succession of voice-overs by a neoliberal prime minister who has recently been rotated out of his position.

At the backdrop of a fictionalized movie set meant to transport the audience into the independence revolt of 1991 and elicit an empathetic reaction irrespective of one's cultural, social, and ideological experiences, the opening spatial frame with St. Jacob's Cathedral in front of the barricaded parliament building and narrated by the former prime minister suggests acknowledgement of the sacrifices the society has fought for to create opportunities (see Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. The equirectangular 360° spatial frame in *Opportunities*, directed by Aigars Ceplitis, RISEBA, 2021, 00:10.

As the audience moves from the exterior to interior, from the public to private, the gaze of the deputy actant is nevertheless 'exocentric'. Here, the triptych offers an opportunity to intrude into the thoughts of a Second World War veteran who still feels pride in having defeated the Nazis, yet abhors war as the ultimate evil, the poignant sorrows of a former boxing champion, now a drug addict, whose girlfriend miscarried their child, and the fading memories of the Latvian deportations by a Gulag survivor who feels rejected by the society she had high hopes for. The intimate living quarters of the main characters are combined into a series of assorted spaces, each with a specific past guided by the type of social significance attached to each character.

A gradual transition from one spatial frame to another makes each pause in movement a site of dejection, the aesthetics of which are operated by means of the junction: places, voice-over narrations, and superimposed placeholders of archived footage to orient the depth of the 'natural' setting: the modest abode of the Soviet War veteran (see Fig. 11), then a one-

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bedroom apartment of the boxing champion (see Fig. 12), and finally, a living room in a Khrushchyovka, a low-cost, concrete three-to-five-storied apartment building (see Fig. 13).



Fig. 11. *Opportunities*, 01:03.



Fig. 12. *Opportunities*, 02:33.



Fig. 13. *Opportunities*, 04:05.

All three represent “places” that are framed by a consistent *container*: the Soviet past and its inescapable architectural influence, particularly the Soviet panel buildings in which the majority of the working class in the capital still lives, the very influence one schizophrenically wants to erase, redesign, or cancel out. Once the prime minister finally speaks again in the final bracket, set against the ‘cinescape’ of St. Jacob’s Cathedral, his uplifting Westerner’s speech sounds as if it is coming from the halls of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

## 6. Metaleptic oscillation and egocentric views

As stated earlier, the optical slant for the audience in *Opportunities* is predominantly an exocentric (landscape), gazed upon by a deputy actant but in an extruding (“spear”) mode due to the very confined spaces the audience experiences. By contrast, my second 360° short film *Once Upon a Time in Bolderaja* (2022), is experienced mostly as an “egocentric” (cityscapes) gaze, even though the gaze is “sequestered” since it deploys Seth Low’s mode (Low 23) of flânerie.

The film retraces the sequence of events that led to the 1977 rape and killing of a teenager in a post-Soviet suburb of Riga that looks frozen in time. The film uses a reenacted voice-over of the killer who recounts the tragic events of that day. There are no actors playing out the scenes; instead, the audience is visually placed at the actual sites where the rape and killing occurred, as if mentally and emotionally witnessing the crime. The narrative structure is somewhat complex as it contains an oscillating perspective that is an offline mentation of the killer reflecting on his life in two parallel oscillating mentations: the narrated flashback by the killer and its duplicate, reconstructed by the viewer since the audience hears the re-enactment without any optical witnessing being in place.

The heterodiegetic offline mentation of a killer recounting a rape he committed is homodiegetic in terms of auricularization: the audience hears his recount on the extradiegetic level (something other characters do not), but his precise recounting of events during the killing is auricularized by all. Or to put it differently, his voice-over is auricularized intradiegetically, where his narration is carried out hetero-homodiegetically because (a) the killer does not indicate that he actually hears the conversation replayed in real time to the viewer who witnesses the unfolding events, and (b) although he is part of the story-world, optically he is never seen (see Fig. 14). His presence is drawn by the audience, based on the spatial attributes of spatial experientiality with its roots in the perceptual and psychological ‘natural’ affinity that the shabby, working-class milieu provides.



Fig. 14. The equirectangular 360° spatial frame in *Once Upon a Time in Bolderaja*, directed by Aigars Ceplitis, 2022, 02:01.

The use of auricularization and ocularization as narrative devices is crucial here, as it creates conditions for metaleptic oscillation between the two forms of focalization, between consciousness-attribution and consciousness-enactment, as well as between exocentric and egocentric geospatial positioning.

Feyersinger, in his *Metalepsis in Animation*, establishes many different types of narrative metalepsis based on the variety of directions and modes of transgression in ontological

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realms (67). His typology can be effectively applied to the design of 3DSC spatial frames, where the fictional and virtual become increasingly fluid and permeable. Of the seven metaleptic modes he discusses (Feyersinger 67), “Interdiegetic Ontological Transgressions” is directly applicable to 3DSC, as it allows viewers to physically enter the diegetic space, with other narratorial techniques to ontologically tint their physical presence. Such as, for the killer who narrates the story, the suburb of Bolderaja represents an “abased place”, one beyond repair and redemption, reproducing what it has always reproduced since 1977. For the killer's friends, Bolderaja remains a “shaded place”, the empathetic space of hauntology that takes us inside the sensibility of a character “trapped in a sense of loss, usually because of death” (D'Adamo 262) (see Fig. 15), but to me, Bolderaja represents a somewhat “tainted place”, for



Fig. 15. *Once Upon a Time in Bolderaja*, 04:05.



Fig. 16. *Once Upon a Time in Bolderaja*, 01:04.

it was in these spaces that I spent my early childhood, which I perceived as the most care-free, loving, mischievous, and bright place (see Fig. 16). It is for this reason that, in the making of the film, I chose not to use a full re-enactment of the horrific events of 1977, as the contemporary violence is not what Bolderaja stands for me. Instead, what is auricularized is not optically seen but imposed externally in a violent manner as if the suburb of Bolderaja was not inherently marred to force the viewer to erase places that are otherwise frozen in time.

## 7. Conclusion

360° stereoscopic spherical film, while still overcoming technical challenges to reach wider audiences, is well positioned to remain a uniquely impactful format due to its high-fidelity capacity to document reality in 12K and beyond. Certainly, computer-generated virtual reality has yet to match the authenticity of stereoscopic 360°. As a storytelling device, it presents its own propensity for a particular narrative design that gravitates towards the structures inherently *platial*, in line with a coordinate-system oriented format where a narrative pause becomes the core attribute of its spatial extensions. This phenomenon is experienced by its target through *orientational* contemplation and *kinaesthetic flânerie*, where a *deputy actant* explores the *geopsychic* space through the cartographic processes of narrativization. The overall kinetic strategy is that of a *multifaceted tour* that encompasses *gaze*, *cognitive mapping* of spatial frames, *body tour*, and *tactualities*, in the form of a potent visceral desire to move and interact with objects in space.

Each pause, a movement *in potentia*, where narrativization starts off, be it on the stock-still streets of New York, the Soviet one-bedroom apartment of a former boxing champion, or a country road in Bolderaja, oscillates metaleptically between the audience's *exocentric* and *egocentric* views, *ocularization* and *auricularization*, situated in a specific socio-economic and ideological milieu where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial forms.

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