

klassikere – Galtung/Ruge-kritikken f.eks., eller kapitlet om TV-nyhedernes »live«-karakter.

Der er med andre ord nok at tage fat på. Hjarvards bog er et vellykket eksempel på at det er muligt at forbinde detaljeret, empirisk analyse med overgribende teoretiske refleksioner, og den er samtidig et intelligent argument for at opgive den gamle refleksagtige modsætning mellem human- og samfundsvidenskabelig medieforskning.

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**Torben Kragh Grodal: *Cognition, Emotion and Visual Fiction*, 1994, Copenhagen: Department of Film and Media Studies, University of Copenhagen.**

In this audacious book, Torben Grodal attempts nothing less than a complete rewriting of the theory of cinematic spectatorship. Remarkably, this attempt is successful. His book is the most satisfying treatment of this topic to date. It is a comprehensive, systematic, convincing account of how we make sense of movies, what kinds of emotions we feel as we watch them, and how these two aspects of response are related to each other.

If there is one feature which most sharply differentiates Grodal's approach from those of his predecessors, that feature is his adoption of a bio-evolutionary psychological foundation for his theory. The basic assumption of bio-evolutionary psychology is that human beings as a species are characterized by certain genetically-determined psychological tendencies that have been shaped by the forces of evolution. In recent years, this assumption has been supported by a variety of cross-cultural studies on such topics as male and female mating preferences, standards of physical beauty, and status-related behavior. The presence of this general assumption in Grodal's work represents a radical shift in orientation with respect not only to previous film scholarship but also to the broader field of media studies as a whole. In contrast to almost all other contemporary scholars concerned with the reception of film and television, Grodal bases his account of the reception process not on the contingencies of historical accident, cultural singularity, or per-

sonal idiosyncrasy, but on those aspects of human cognition and affect that can be assumed to be essential ingredients of our species-wide genetic inheritance.

In searching for the determinants of people's cognitive and affective responses to movies, Grodal assumes that the process of viewing visual fiction is an extension of such evolutionarily adaptive human traits as the capacity to engage in as-if thinking or to experience empathy with another person's emotions. Grodal's discussion of these matters is grounded in a thorough familiarity with current developments in cognitive science and related fields, including scholarship on the nature of human emotion. Drawing on this research background, he describes a wide array of subtly differentiated modes of response to screen images and to the narratives in which they participate. At the heart of the book is a typology of eight major categories of emotional engagement with visual narration, corresponding to eight paradigmatic movie genres.

The first two of these genres, namely, »lyricism« and the »canonical narrative,« exemplify in pure form two fundamentally distinct types of visual narrative – or, alternatively, ways of responding to the screen. In the canonical narrative, the viewer's emotions arise in consequence of identification with an active, goal-oriented fictive subject whose interactions with the surrounding fictive world are the principal source of that world's meaning for the viewer. Grodal points out that the canonical narrative is »by far the dominant genre of visual fiction« (p. 146) and can be found in such sub-types as fairy tales, erotic comedy, action-adventure, crime fiction, and romance. In contradistinction to the canonical narrative, the mode of visual narration that Grodal calls »lyrical« denies the viewer any opportunity for identification. In this mode, there is no fictive subject to give focus to the world of the screen. Consequently, the viewer responds to that world in terms of the diffuse network of associations emanating from the sequence of on-screen images. As Grodal notes, in mainstream fictional movies such »lyrical« sequences are used mostly as an embedded device, interrupting the flow of narration organized around other principles.

To a certain extent, the other six genres in Grodal's scheme can be described in terms of various contrasts to the first two. The third category, »obsessive fiction,« encompasses certain types of crime dramas and thrillers (e.g., *Blue Velvet*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*) in which the central subject's actions lose a clear connection to an

overall goal, so that the narration, as well as the viewer's engagement in it, becomes absorbed by process for its own sake, instead of as a means to an end. In categories number four and five, »melodramas of passion« and »horror fictions,« the viewer identifies not with an active subject but with a passive object. In the latter case, the consequent emotions are predominantly aversive; in the former case, however, they are more likely to involve resignation, fatalism, and melancholia.

Grodal's sixth category, »schizoid fiction,« is of special interest in light of contemporary trends in the subject matter of horror movies. As in the previous two categories, here too the viewer is presented with a passive object as the focus of attention. But the structure of the schizoid narrative (e.g., such »splatter« movies as *Dawn of the Dead*) leads the viewer to abandon his/her feelings for the victim's suffering and, instead, respond to the spectacle of suffering in a non-empathic way. Grodal interprets this withholding of empathy as a defensive act, something the viewer does in order to avoid getting hurt. But this may be the one point in the book at which the full implications of a bio-evolutionary psychology have yet to be worked out. If so many contemporary movies are offering their viewers the spectacle of a kind of suffering with which most of us would not want to empathize, might it be reasonable to conclude that the issue of empathy is actually irrelevant and that these movies are implicitly providing an opportunity for a different – and positively gratifying – form of emotional experience, with evolutionary roots of its own? At some point, visual-communication scholarship will have to confront this question more directly than it has thus far.

Grodal's discussion of his seventh category, »comic fiction,« is actually of some relevance to the above issue. As he observes, comedy shares with his »schizoid« category the fact that the viewer does not empathize with the protagonist. Instead, the protagonist's failures lead to positive viewer affect. Furthermore, as Grodal himself points out, schizoid narratives are themselves often viewed in a comic mode, depending in part on the real-world context of reception (type of audience, setting, etc.). These observations highlight the well-known link between laughter and (perhaps ambivalent) hostility. On the other hand, however, there are certainly other dimensions to comic fiction, as indicated by the fact that this genre often shares with Grodal's final category, »metafictions,« the quality of breaking the fictive frame, and generating emotion through the violation of expectations. This brief exposition of Gro-

dal's genre typology can hardly begin to do justice to the subtlety and the nuances of his analysis. No sensitive reader can go through this book without being overwhelmed by admiration for the author's immense intelligence and prodigious erudition. For the foreseeable future, the book is likely to stand as the definitive treatment of its subject. It is an instant classic.

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**Ole Christensen og Niels Kryger: *Lydmediet i skolen, Danmarks Lærerhøjskole 1995.* 118 s., kr. 70. (Bogen købes på Danmarks Lærerhøjskole, Emdrupvej 101, 2400 Kbh. NV)**

For en umiddelbar betragtning retter *Lydmediet i skolen* sig først og fremmest mod undervisere i folkeskolen. Bogen er en analyse af lydmediets muligheder som pædagogisk redskab fra 1. klasse til 8. klasse, og undervejs følger vi en række undervisningsforløb, hvor lærere og elever på forskellige klassetrin går på opdagelse i lydmediet.

Bogen indledes med to kapitler med en række mere grundlæggende overvejelser. I det første argumenterer forfatterne for mediernes væsentlige rolle i et moderne dannelsesperspektiv, et perspektiv hvor det ikke blot drejer sig om mediernes indflydelse på børn og unge, men også om hvad børn og unge kan få ud af medierne ved selv at bruge dem. Desuden indeholder kapitlet argumenter for påny at installere den æstetiske dimension i læreprocessen, vel at mærke ikke i sin fin-kulturelle betydning men som hverdagsæstetik, fordi den i stigende grad reflekterer børn og unges tilgang til omverdenen.

Det andet kapitel beskæftiger sig med lyd som erfaring og udtryk dels generelt, dels i forhold til skolen. Pointen er her at lyden til forskel fra skrift er sanselig erfaring, at lyde spiller en væsentlig rolle i dagligdagen som udtryksform og orienteringspunkt, og at verbalsprogets æstetiske kvaliteter først og fremmest er knyttet til lyd. I de næste to kapitler rapporteres og analyseres en række undervisningsforløb bygget op omkring lydproduktion, iværksat af forfatterne sammen med en gruppe lærere. De to sidste kapitler går nærmere ind på lærerrollen, skolekulturen og medieværkstedets rolle.