

# Editorial

The idea of this “Panoptikum” issue appeared about a year ago. It originated from our interest in film narration and its transformations, and as a result of a conference track, so typical for academic life. An interest in film narration is an important mark of film studies at the University of Gdańsk, with many books, papers, doctoral dissertations and conferences tackling such issues as classical and not-so-classical forms of narration, both in global and local contexts. Our intention was to contribute to the debate on classical vs. postclassical cinema, but with a certain shift of emphasis. The “classical” part of the volume is rather methodologically-minded. It is devoted not to classical cinema, but to the category of norm, which was crucial in establishing an edifice of “classical Hollywood cinema”. The “post-classical” part concerns above all new cinematic forms which developed from the encounter of typical mind-game films with new forms of seriality, such as super-hero franchises, TV serials and cinematic sequels.

Then, in the course of our work on this “Panoptikum” issue some tragic information reached us: Thomas Elsaesser died in China during one of his many lecture tours. Thomas was a friend of ours, he was a visiting professor at the University of Gdańsk during the academic year 2017/2018, and later on he returned many times, on various occasions. We translated and published a very coherent collection of his essays on puzzle films, entitled *Kino – maszyna myślenia. Refleksje nad kinem epoki cyfrowej (Cinema – A Thinking Machine. Reflections on Cinema of the Digital Era)*. Thomas liked the book and cherished the idea of publishing it in English, with some additional essays. To this end, he also wrote a huge (24 000 words) paper entitled *Mind-game Films as Tipping Points* and sent it to me, asking for comments. It was the way he worked: when he wrote a paper, he often sent them to his friends, asking for comments, which he listened to perceptively. When I saw him for the last time, during the conference “Screen Narratives: Order and Chaos” in Porto, in September 2019, where he was invited as a key-note speaker, we spent a couple of hours on the terrace on the roof of his hotel, discussing this paper. He was so kind to give me permission to use an excerpt from it in an upcoming “Panoptikum” issue. Grateful for this, I could not predict that this would be his post-mortem contribution, referring in a way to numerous remarks on post-mortem states, which can be found in his papers on mind-game films.

This terrace on the roof in Porto played host not only to two, but to four of us, because Agnieszka Piotrowska and Warren Buckland were also there. For some time we hung around together, meeting in various worldly places. These were unforgettable meetings, full of wit and good energy, but also of fresh and inspiring discussions, remarks and comments. This made the news of Thomas’s

demise even more shocking. Nobody could believe that. Thomas was so brilliant, so energetic, so full of ideas for the future. He was planning new books and lectures, and, following up on his documentary film on *The Sun Island*, he was working on a screenplay based on his family stories. He led an extremely intense life, too intense perhaps, and he died while on the move. Perhaps it was a gift from God.

The idea to pay homage to Thomas in this issue was pretty obvious, more than natural. We have published many of his papers in our magazine; he was a friend of ours; he was fascinated with the main topic of the issue – puzzle films (which he called mind-game films) – and he furnished film studies with a plethora of ideas and concepts about them. So, the opening part of this issue is a tribute to our dearest friend. It consists of four papers: an English translation of my foreword to *KiNo. Maszyna myślenia*, adapted to new circumstances; an excerpt from his essay *The Mind-Game as Tipping Points*; Warren's paper on Thomas' contribution to mind-game film theory; and Agnieszka's personal recollection of Thomas, centred around his film *The Sun Island*.



The second part of the volume concerns the notion of norm in cinema and consists of two papers. The first one, by **Radomír Kokeš**, provides a comprehensive description of Mukařovský's concept of norm and the way it was applied by Bordwell. **Miroslaw Przyłipiak** also touches the issue of a Mukařovský-Bordwell relationship – albeit from a different angle and with different conclusions – but his scope is broader, he also ponders such issues as justification of norms and a dialectic of norm/deviation.

The third part of the volume is about something completely different – it is about films which supposedly break the norms of classical cinema (although it is a matter of hot debate), namely, so called puzzle (or mind-game) films. **Małgorzata Jakubowska** focuses on subjectivisations in feature films. She sketches the evolution of forms of subjectivisation from pre-classical through classical and modernist cinema and against this background she presents a development of forms of subjectivisation in mind-game films. **Radomír Kokeš** continues his interest in so called spiral narratives<sup>1</sup> (in which a protagonist stuck in an iterative situation is not only fully aware of their predicament but also tries to deal with it), this time focusing on its application in the low-budget horror movie *Happy Death Day* and its sequel, presumably “the *very first sequel* to a spiral narrative film”. **Matthias Bruetsch** also continues his interest in puzzle films<sup>2</sup>, this time examining the consequences of this form for television series. To this purpose he undertakes a comparative analysis of one classical feature puzzle film – *Abre los ojos* by Alejandro Amenábar – and two recent TV series, *Westworld* (2016-) and *Dark* (2017-). **Tomasz Żaglewski** writes about narration in modern super-hero movies, discussing their evolution from supposed plot-lessness to multiverse structure, coupled in *Avengers: Endgame* with a humorous refreshing of such hackneyed puzzle film gimmicks as time travel. Last but not least, **Terez Vincze** provides a description of Hong Sang-soo films, in which the puzzle film form is consequently employed. This paper seems to be a perfect summary of the whole volume, as Vincze analyses these Korean *auteur* films through the prism of two competing perspectives: *the* Bordwellian notion of classical cinema and Buckland/Elsaesser (among others) concepts of post-classical mind-game films. In this a norm/deviation model, analysed in the second part of the volume, is complemented.

Mirosław Przyłipiak

<sup>1</sup> See his: *Edge of Time Loop: Notes on “Spiral Narrative” as a Creative Tactic in Cinema and Television*, in: M. Przyłipiak (ed). *Cinema and Narration. Fast, Slow and Reverse*. Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> See, among others: Berlin: Walter de Gruyter; From Ironic Distance to Unexpected Plot Twists: Unreliable Narration in Literature and Film, in: J. Alber, P.K. Hansen (eds.), *Beyond Classical Narration: Unnatural and Transmedial Narrative and Narratology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, When the Past Lies Ahead and the Future Lags Behind: Backward Narration in Film, Television, and Literature, in: J. Eckel (ed. et al.), *(Dis)Orienting Media and Narrative Mazes*. Bielefeld: Transcript.