

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THEATRE AND FILM ARTS

ÁGNES INCZE

ELEMENTS OF TALES IN FEATURE FILMS

- the explorations of a practicing filmmaker in relation to a film plan -

“theses of the doctoral dissertation”

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Elements of Tales in Feature Films as the theme of my study was chosen because I wish to understand how the narrative techniques characteristic of tales function and to employ these techniques with increased awareness in my film plan.

Drawing on the effects of magic characteristic of tales, my plan for a film is a story about dilemmas we currently face, and it focuses on the question whether individuals are able to take the necessary action that is ideal in their own reality, and whether they should have the courage to face challenges in their lives. The essence of my story is not about reaching a fairy tale happy end, which would merely confirm that the right way of thinking implies that it never pays off to take a share in wrongdoings or to legitimate wrongdoings and give them life through silence. The essence unfolds while the audience watches the film, and the viewers are recurrently prompted by little situations and gestures to assess and judge the characters and the scenes, in other words viewers are encouraged, in an unnoticeable way, to formulate an opinion and take a standpoint on the basis of what is seen to happen.

The form that is built up from the tiles of the mosaic of the real world and from elements of tales in combination creates a context where imagination and intuition can have more space and thus interconnections that can reveal new qualities in terms of contents and emotions become perceptible. The ultimate message of the film unfolds from the elements and motifs of tales formulated with the help of film language tools in interaction with details of our contemporary reality. The tale as a form of film is by no means a decorative motif; it has a dramaturgical function and is drawn on as the most efficient way to communicate a message. The question may emerge: is it possible to arbitrarily combine apparently different worlds. I believe in the free interpretation of where the limits of genres are, and in the well-considered and increasingly conscious putting together of building blocks, independent of their styles or categories, because there is only a single goal: to tell a story as perfectly as possible.

In my study, I explore how and along what aspects it is possible to adopt particular elements of an epic genre i.e. tales in the context of films in a way that the special potentials and atmosphere that these elements carry are retained and conveyed by the film, and the story is supported. Issues under discussion here are not restricted to the interplay between the film and the tale, but also

concern the simultaneity between recording on film that has a reality and tales that go beyond reality; their interconnection carries risks and multiplies problems that may emerge. My assumption is that interaction can take place when the film material is “inspired” by the tale in a way that particular narrative solutions that make tales work are adopted in the film, while the features of tales are supported with film tools, images and sound, and eventually an optimal state is reached through the combination of a variety of film effects. Interaction is good when reality and the character of tales cannot be told apart because they work together naturally like components in a system.

Even though tales constitute an extremely complex and multifaceted phenomenon, there is a conceptual understanding of tales in the everyday sense. This implies that certain operational mechanisms are considered to be widely accepted in the public mind and are clearly attributed to the realm of tales, and more or less the same expectations are formulated in terms of the experience they are to evoke. Therefore I aimed to explore and identify key elements in tales that help and enable me to transfer the story I have to a special dimension where observations and statements are conveyed through different inner channels to the recipients.

Elements of tales i.e. components from tales that can be identified on the basis of structural and psychological functions jointly used with film effects that represent and convey these elements induce complex processes, and therefore carry great significance in the dramaturgical development of a story. When a filmmaker explores film solutions, the principles of the story itself are to be taken as the departure point and it is almost impossible to transfer results from elsewhere in the process of implementation. At the same time, it is extremely important to discover and understand how other filmmakers think and how bravely they draw on unique resources that enable them to create their own world and tell a story that nobody else can tell for them. This is very much inspiring and the exploration of these processes can open up imagination. Therefore, apart from the analysis of my own film plan, I decided to examine three films that also focus on substantial social issues such as poverty or a superficial and soulless world or dying, and transfer these themes to the context of tales in order to position the message more powerfully, among other things, through the unexpectedness of the solution. All three films are underpinned by a somewhat similar basic thinking: in order to give more emphasis to what

they want to tell, the world is presented from a different aspect, currently existing problems are discussed and accentuated in a manner different from usual approaches. The three films of my choice are relatively far apart from each another in terms of style, but all the three films place the discussion of the problem in the environment of tales in order to proceed along a set of intentions. The solutions and tools used in these films are completely different, elements of reality and tales are combined with different accents and to different extents. In addition to my own film plan, I focus my explorations on the following films: *Miracle in Milan* by Vittorio de Sica, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Tim Burton and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by David Fincher. I examine which of the conditions that allow a tale to come into being can be found in these films as well as I analyse the use of film language tools in the context of the effect that has been created. Therefore, using the same set of criteria in a systematic way, I strive to reveal why and in what ways a scene with elements of tales works differently; what commonalities and differences there are when the three selected films are compared; and what conclusions can be drawn from the above regarding authorial intents. I am convinced that the in-depth analyses of these films appropriately demonstrate my creative aspirations: the utilization of the potentials of elements of tales in my film plan.

The films were examined according to the aspects described below:

What follows or differs from the criteria of tale imagery: this is an overview or enumeration with the aim of identifying what elements are present or absent in the story in terms of how tales work.

Mise-en-scène: an analysis of the use and dramaturgical role of film language elements according to the following aspects:

- 1 Visual world, locations
- 2 Lighting
- 3 Building up a scene, camera management
- 4 Colours
- 5 Music
- 6 Acting and characters

7 Interplay of tale and film elements of effect: this section summarizes how and in what way tale and film elements in the specific story affected the message.

It is my conviction that audiences can adapt to any kind of constructed world if there is a coherent way of thinking underlying it. This can only be achieved if the various film language components are based on conscious decisions, mechanisms of action are calculated, and the author uses these building blocks in a synchronized and integral way.

With my own film plan in mind, I examined the potentials that elements of tales offer when they are used in feature films, and being a filmmaker my explorations were done from practical aspects and for reaching results that could be put into practice. I feel that the thoughts I am engaged with have clarified and matured. I have understood how important it is to bring together emotions and conscious analyses, to set dramaturgical objectives and to connect the right points.

In my understanding, the outcome of my study makes a difference if any of the statements I make is found to open up the imagination of others.