

THE SPECTATOR'S SEAT: MOVEMENT AND THE BODY IN IMMERSIVE CINEMA*

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema was born at a time when immersive spectacles, such as dioramas and panoramas, were at the peak of their popularity. But the movie camera offered a new form of illusion, a different way of transporting the spectator that has had a decisive effect on popular visual culture ever since. Yet despite the hegemony of cinema's models of syntax, exposition and reception, the audiovisual medium has also always been present in other kinds of immersive products. In our century, with the various forms of navigability offered by different devices, and especially with the popularisation of virtual reality headsets, immersive audiovisual formats appear to have made some big strides forward. In this context, researchers need to develop models for studying the new forms of narrativity being shaped by immersive media.

This article proposes the spectator and their way of engaging with the story as a starting point

for the analysis of immersive cinematography. By exploring how spectators are integrated into the representative space and how they act in it, we will be able to develop typological frameworks, and above all, to explain and better understand the narrative and expressive strategies of this new cinematic form.

PREMISES AND PERSPECTIVE OF ANALYSIS: IMMERSION, TRAVEL AND THE BODY

For a clearer understanding of the concept of *immersion* in the image, it may be helpful to use the language suggested in the term itself: if the image is immersive, this means that the medium transports the spectator inside it, and once there, the image itself becomes the destination visited by the traveller, who is transported to far-off places on a simulated adventure trip. Cinema is a medium of virtual transportation.

Stationary contemplative experiences, such as viewing a painting, could also be described as a form of travel in a certain sense, but visual spectacles clearly display their nature as a journey when they offer illusory experiences based on an articulation of space and time, such as cinema, the magic lantern of the 17th century, or even the immense, all-encompassing panoramic paintings that became popular in the 19th century. Whether the image itself moves or the spectator moves around in it, the visual journey takes on special significance by articulating a narrative experience, and by creating the impression of visiting a new place, like a tourist wandering the streets of a foreign city.

All cinema is immersive, with its capacity to pull us out of our everyday lives and relocate us in other settings, events and stories, but the label “immersive” has been used for many years now to explore different ways of exploiting and enhancing the sensation of being transported.

There are different conceptual approaches based on different notions of immersion. Some of these can be grouped under the heading of apparently “disembodied” journeys, where the spectator’s physical body “rests” in a place in the dark while the action is presented on a screen with images, sound, and occasionally other effects. Other forms of immersion require the user to move around the scene or interact with the image by means of a navigation system.

Although this general categorisation may be practical for identifying similar analytical approaches, it is important to clarify what separates them and—especially—what does not. In phenomenological terms, the body is immersed in the image in both cases, as the spectators’ lack of movement in front of the screen is only an apparent, external motionlessness, while on their journey around the image their body is in fact fully active, engaged through their senses in the voyage.

Vivian Sobchack explains the corporeal dimension of perception and its vital importance

TO CONSIDER THIS ROLE OF THE SPECTATOR IN THE NARRATIVE JOURNEY, WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE SEAT THE SPECTATOR OCCUPIES IN THE VIRTUAL MODE OF TRANSPORT, AND THAT POSITION WILL DEPEND ON THE PARAMETERS OF EACH MEDIUM

for understanding the spectator, quoting Serg-fried Kracauer:

[...] Kracauer located the uniqueness of cinema in the medium’s essential ability to stimulate us physiologically and sensually; thus he understands the spectator as a “corporeal-material being” [...].

Until quite recently, however, contemporary film theory has generally ignored or elided both cinema’s sensual address and the viewer’s “corporeal-material being.” [...] there is very little [...] on the carnal sensuality of the film experience and what—and how—it constitutes meaning. (Sobchack, 2004: 55-56)

The body sitting in the conventional cinema is no further away from the image than the body that uses its own mobility to explore the space of an all-encompassing representation. As Steven Shaviro (1993: 255) has pointed out, the body “is never merely the lost object of a (supposedly disembodied) gaze. The image cannot be opposed to the body [...]” There is therefore no need to search for differences between different systems of immersion based on the degree of proximity or independence between body and image:

The important distinction is not the hierarchical, binary one between bodies and images, or between the real and its representations. It is rather a question of discerning multiple and continually varying interactions among what can be defined indifferently as bodies and as images: degrees of stillness and motion, of action and passion, of clutter and emptiness, of light and dark. (Shaviro, 1993: 225)

We must begin with the premise that in any kind of cinematic experience the body travels virtually, to then be able to focus on the ways in which the body travels through the image. In this sense, a crucial distinguishing factor for the various technologies of immersion is presence, location and attitude; in short, the body's position in relation to the movement occurring while it is being transported by the audiovisual medium. To consider this role of the spectator in the narrative journey, we need to look at the seat the spectator occupies in the virtual mode of transport, and that position will depend on the parameters of each medium.

BODY AND CAMERA: CINEMATOGRAPHIC IMMERSION

A good starting point for this analysis is the spectator's position in conventional cinema, with reference to certain similarities it bears to the way trains position their passengers. In the darkness of the cinemas, audiences found a way of travelling virtually through the image in a context in which travel was becoming an increasingly widespread social phenomenon. The train had just entered its golden age when cinema made its first appearance in 1895. While the steam engine fulfilled the promise of full mobility and the most ardent explorers' dreams, the projector helped to expand this mythical image of the romantic traveller through the big screen. Lumière's camera operators travelled the world to capture far-off places, and in turn they gave film spectators the opportunity to travel as well.

On the train, as in cinema, the driver, engine and controls are concealed inside the locomotive; for the user, it is just a vehicle full of passengers seated in private cabins, simply watching the landscape whirl past through the windows. Wolfgang Schivelbusch has analysed how this first mode of transport for the masses altered our perception of distance and time, among other

things. Describing the views from train windows, Schivelbusch argues that the depth perception of the pre-industrial gaze was lost with the first glimpse of the landscape through the glass:

The foreground enabled the traveller to relate to the landscape through which he was moving. He saw himself as part of the foreground, and that perception *joined* him to the landscape, included him in it, regardless of all further distant views that the landscape presented. Now velocity dissolved the foreground, and the traveller lost that aspect. (Schivelbusch, 1986: 63)

The space that the passenger sees became a setting, pure image, an area that did not belong to the same space in which the bodies of those contemplating it were seated. This is the same type of immersion in the image fostered by cinema, an immersion of the body but without the body: an immersion of our senses, our skin, but not our conscious presence, our motor functions. It is a dizzying virtualised motion for the seated passenger, or as Noël Burch (2011: 205-231) described it, an "immobile journey" as a "construction of the ubiquitous subject".

With the development in the early 20th century of a more narrative form of cinema articulated using shots and editing, filmmakers began creating experiences with a greater capacity to transport the audience. However, although this narrativity was gradually beginning to be institutionalised, there was already a tradition of using the screen as a simple window through which to watch the act of travelling.

Phantom rides were projections showing views taken from a moving locomotive. These films, which first appeared in 1898, were extremely popular with audiences and constituted one of the first true film genres (Fielding, 1970: 37). This virtualisation of the train would attain a higher level of realism with Hale's Tours, where real train carriages were turned into cinemas in which these films of rail journeys were projected.

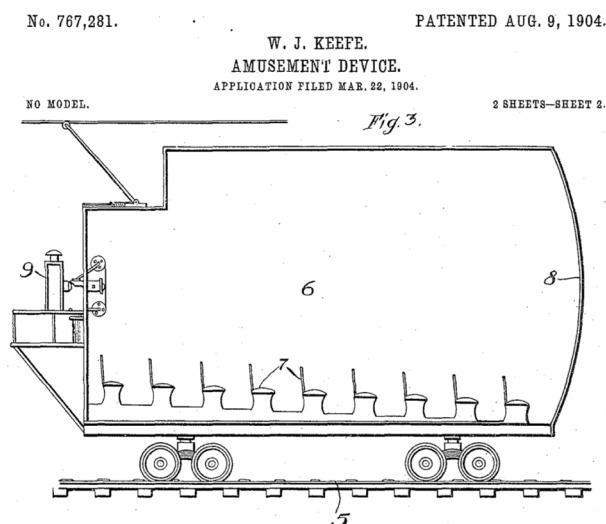


Image 1. Illustration of William J. Keefe's patent for the train carriage as an image projection system (1904). This idea would ultimately be financed by Fred W. Gifford and George Hale, who later bought all the rights and developed the technical and commercial aspects of the product that would subsequently be known as Hale's Tours. Image: Hayes, C. (2009). *Phantom Carriages: Reconstructing Hale's Tours and the Virtual Travel Experience*. *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 7(2), 185–198.

It is significant that in these carriages the screen was positioned opposite the seats and not in the side windows (Image 1). This seems to suggest that the whole exhibition design was no more than a warm-up, a way of setting the scene to prepare the spectator for the real spectacle: the projection of what the cameras had filmed. Looking at these moving landscapes in front of them sacrificed the simulation of the train to some extent, in the interests of exploiting the full potential of the screen and its particular way of transporting the passenger.

Robert Barker patented panoramas and made them famous as an amusement that would become the first visual spectacle for the masses. Preceding the success of cinema, panoramas transported spectators in a very different way, allowing them to steer their own gaze around the landscape that was spread out all around them. The aim was to dissolve the boundaries between the space of the visitors and the depiction, so that their bo-

dies seemed to step inside and physically inhabit the image, even though they were actually standing on a central observation platform.¹

The panorama and the cinema were the most popular visual spectacles of the 19th and 20th centuries, respectively. The same traveller's spirit fed the success of both forms, and both offered a completely original illusion, although each of these forms of realism, of immersion in far-off worlds, took different paths:

As one set of approaches for evoking a sense of presence, of immersion in a virtual world, Barker's notions of seamlessness, framing and masking strategies, and motion, found themselves redeployed not only in other media settings, but more importantly, in other relationships to space and time. From the mobile spectator to the mobilized image, from the frozen moment to the exploration of duration, from the distant vista to the penetration of space [...] (Uricchio, 2011: 11).

The kinship between the panorama and the cinema is even evident in the first film listings: *panorama* or *panoramic views* by title constitute the largest entry among films copyrighted in the United States from 1896 to 1912, with the majority of titles referring to films registered prior to 1906 (Uricchio, 2011: 7). However, although the panorama might have constituted the biggest cinematic category in those early years, it is obvious that it referred to a different type of panoramic movement: not an observer moving around inside a simulated landscape, but the movement of a panning camera. This relocation of the panoramic represents a relocation of the perceptual habits of the audience, as the death of one extremely popular medium coincided with the birth of another that very quickly eclipsed it.

By the time the term *panorama* had disappeared from film listings after the first decade of the 20th century, panoramic paintings were already a thing of the past; the mass audiences who had once walked around inside those immersive paintings were now sitting in cinemas. The abrupt di-

sappearance of panoramas in titles marked the moment that cinema embraced fictional stories, abandoning the projection of footage filmed from trains or other moving vehicles, or from high buildings or air balloons. It was in this shift towards fiction that the camera turned away from the panoramic gaze of primitive cinema. The spectator's point of view had taken off from the ground, from the human scale, and had also moved away from snapshots of motion, increasingly free from the railway tracks of the phantom rides:

Continuity and the demand for an encapsulation of the urban experience at the turn of the century reflected in all these films is [...] radically different from what would be defined later, especially as of the 1920s. The train films made before 1910 possess an organic and pictorial conception that would be definitively broken by the expansion of film editing. The visual art and the big urban films of the 1920s would use the constructive and analytic function of editing to explore fragmentation, the mechanisation that formed part of daily life, the surprising multiplicity of perspectives and the wide variety of stimuli that the metropolis offered the senses of those who walked its streets. This edited urban cinema would finally do away with the literary point of view of the *flâneur*, that vision of the person on a stroll who can adopt the most appropriate pace to experience the different sensations of the metropolis: the architecture, the urban perspectives, the laneways, the shops and the people walking through the streets. (Benet, 2008: 84)

The camera transported the gaze on new and fragmented journeys composed of aerial and overhead views, as well as elements so close and dynamic that they



Above. Images 2 and 3. Advertising for the Cinerama in its first projections in Spain (Image 2: Madrid, November 1958; Image 3: Granada, April 1969). This spectacle of multiple projections on a “wrap-around” screen (146 degrees) was publicised with the claim that “in a few seconds you will feel transported in your seat, participating in the action unfolding on the screen.” Although the seats did not move, the wrap-around images generated by its three simultaneous projections gave the audience the sensation of a dramatic land, sea and air journey through the recreation of a range of exciting experiences such as riding a roller coaster, travelling in a Venetian gondola and flying in a small aeroplane over the Grand Canyon. Images: Cinerama (advertisement on ABC) (1958) and Gurpegui (2017). Below. Image 4. Advertising for Kinépolis 4DX Cinema in Madrid (2018). Here, in front of a big screen, spectators are rocked in moving and vibrating seats, splashed with water, and subjected to smells, mist, wind, lighting flashes, bubbles, rain and artificial snow. The term 4D has been used for some time in spectacles at theme parks, and subsequently in certain film theatres, to refer to any addition to the cinematic experience, such as moving seats or watery mist sprayed over the audience, as in the case of the film *Shrek 4D* (Simon J. Smith, 2003). These are often added to 3D films, and thus these extra-filmic elements have come to be referred to as “extra-stereoscopic”. See Zone (2012: 147-148). Image: Kinépolis España (n. d.).

seemed to bowl the viewer over; the editing reconstructed a perception of modern life in keeping with a new conception of urban space that could no longer be expressed in a simple, global *panoramic view*.²

However, the all-encompassing realism of panoramas and the central role of the journey in experiences like Hale's Tours were not abandoned altogether. Similar strategies continued to be adopted, for example, with Cinerama in the 1950s and IMAX as of the 1960s. In these cinematic forms, characterised by the expansion of the projected image, the movement and kinetic impulse that defines travel is explicitly present in the subject matter and the forms of guiding the spectator through the image. For example, in *Time Traveling IMAX Style: Tales from the Giant Screen*, Alison Griffith describes the film *To Fly!* (Greg MacGillivray & Jim Freeman, 1976) as "the ur-IMAX film, since its visual rhetoric is composed of little else than that simulated movement through space" (Griffith, 2006: 241). This kind of immersive format has been diversified with various types of screens commonly referred to as *panoramic*, sometimes with vibrating seats, like the original idea of Hale's Tours, or using other effects on the immobile bodies of the audience. They are dramatic emotional journeys in which shock is the driving force.³

The audiovisual machinery sat audiences down in a wide variety of seats, with views of varying expanses and jolts that were sometimes quite literal, either with a clear narrative destination or as a mere circular journey, but always virtualising the passenger's movement with its machinery of lights and realistic images. This machinery seized control of the panorama to rule it with its cameras.

However, the spectator's mobility has recently undergone new transformations with the support of the interactivity and navigability of new visual environments and devices, with narratives offering the user the autonomous movement that characterised the old panoramas. The contempla-

tive exploration of panoramas in the 19th century and the mobility and narrativity of cinema in the 20th century now seem to be seeking ways of being brought together in the 360-degree cinema of the 21st.

THE BODY AND THE CAMERA: IMMERSIONS IN 360-DEGREE CINEMA

All-encompassing environments are highly illustrative of the traveller dimension of cinema discussed above, as they literally include actions such as walking around the image, or the idea of the image as an exotic space isolated from time for the visitor. Although they are characterised by user participation, these navigable immersive environments not only offer interaction and dynamism but also clearly express two opposing extremes: passive contemplation and exploration; submission to the image that encompasses and dwarfs the spectator, and domination of that same image, conquering every corner of it with the movement of the gaze. When viewing immersive environments, the relative presence of these active and passive components depends on the image and even on the spectator. It is especially interesting to analyse how these elements vary and interact in different productions.

Viewing 360-degree videos has something in common with the perspective of a passenger in the front seat of a car. In these videos, the spectator experiences the visual domination of being able to view different angles, like looking through the various windows of a car, or even like sitting in a convertible that offers a complete view of everything that surrounds you. But it is the movement that is beyond the omnidirectional observer's control that really guides the audiovisual narrative. It is not the observer's free gaze on their surroundings, but the movement of the camera and of the elements it captures that directs the journey on which the traveller is both spectator and passenger. Sitting beside the driver,

close to the controls and with a similar perspective to the person behind the wheel, the front-seat passenger feels like a co-pilot, yet without really co-piloting since the vehicle's operation generally depends entirely on the driver. Similarly, the privileged point of view offered by omnidirectional video, from what seems like a first-person perspective, creates the impression of a subjective, controlled first-hand experience. Based on this quality of 360-degree videos, we can explore how the virtual mobility of a spectator is positioned between the passiveness of a passenger being transported and the activeness of an individual who can steer their gaze from a point of view close to the controls. In this way, we can examine how the spectator moves and is moved.

BASED ON THIS QUALITY OF 360-DEGREE VIDEOS, WE CAN EXPLORE HOW THE VIRTUAL MOBILITY OF A SPECTATOR IS POSITIONED BETWEEN THE PASSIVENESS OF A PASSENGER BEING TRANSPORTED AND THE ACTIVENESS OF AN INDIVIDUAL WHO CAN STEER THEIR GAZE FROM A POINT OF VIEW CLOSE TO THE CONTROLS

The frontal view—like the one offered in phantom rides or in the flights in IMAX—is more effective than a side view in giving travellers the sensation of being the protagonists of their own journey. Yet paradoxically, when the camera is moving in 360-degree videos, this frontal view can end up exposing its programmed nature. It is from this type of perspective that viewers may feel more clearly that they are being directed on a route or through a story of predetermined events, while from the side or rear views it seems easier to escape this sense of directional control. Looking at these lateral spaces offers the sensation of being able to consider details apparently further from the established ac-

tion. This restriction is more literal during frontal camera movements, but it is also evident when a clearly defined frontal action is positioned in front of a stationary omnidirectional camera. Since an individual's focus of attention is limited, the producer of a 360-degree video may choose to locate a main area of action and reserve the rest of the representational space for spectators to explore freely in order to round out their view of the setting by looking at apparently incidental elements. This approach, in which the metaphorical co-pilot has the main scene clearly defined by the single direction of the road ahead, is used widely in the production of 360-degree videos, which are supported to varying degrees on this hierarchical organisation of the space surrounding the viewer.

This is how the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company decided to bring *Hamlet* to 360-degree video in 2019. *Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit*⁴ is an attempt to adapt Shakespeare's classic to a format that expands the stage to surround the audience with environmental elements that are always relegated to the scenery, which would be completely unintelligible without the actors who constantly guide the story with their performances in front of the camera. The camera remains practically motionless and the few changes of point of view during the production occur mainly in transitions between acts marked by a fade to black and a caption over the image, which position the spectator in another scene where the performance continues. There are very few moments when viewers actually need to turn their gaze elsewhere to follow the story, and these occasions could be compared to the neck movements that a theatre spectator sitting quite close to the front would normally make to follow the actions of the characters at different points on the stage. This production might therefore be more aptly categorised as *immersive theatre* rather than *immersive cinema*, although it stands as a significant benchmark for comparing the different narrative strategies used in 360-degree videos.



Above. Image 5. *Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit* (Steven Maler, 2019). Hamlet and his mother on-stage while the ghost, embodied by the spectator, is reflected in a mirror.
Below. Image 6. Still frames from the film *The Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947).

Although it may be too soon to describe 360-degree cinema as a format with a specific syntax of its own, to establish descriptive analogies and contextualise the spectator's relationship with these new types of audiovisual production, it might be interesting to analyse how much cinema there really is in 360-degree cinema, or more specifica-

lly, what cinematographic components can be identified in immersive video productions and what characteristics of the new technology cannot be compared to traditional cinema. In this sense, *Hamlet 360: Thy Father's Spirit* seems closer to primitive cinema than to the institutional mode of representation, firstly because of the basically stationary point of view that eschews the identification of the camera as a dynamic vehicle with a ubiquitous perspective, which, together with the mechanisms of continuity editing, forms part of the diegetic process of traditional cinema. It is also an interesting feature of this audiovisual production that it gives viewers a role by using their point of view as that of one of the characters on stage: the ghost of Hamlet's dead father. This ongoing identification with a character replaces the identification of the viewer's gaze with the camera as an invisible dynamic device, anchoring the perspective to a body that is also essentially motionless throughout the story, as it is the body of a dead person.

Immersive images like those of 360-degree cinema are often associated with first-person experience. This determines the way users move around the fictional space: by embodying a character in the story or by being included in the story themselves—in either case, identifying with the point of view of a virtual body inserted into the representation. This identification, which may be more

or less explicit, differs from conventional cinematic strategies, as these are not generally based on identifying the spectator with a specific body or character. Theorists like Christian Metz have explored cinema's primary identification in isolation from what happens to the characters, who are secondary, tertiary, etc., depending on their



Image 7. Still-frame from *Pearl* (Patrick Osborne, 2016)

different levels of importance. The viewer's identification with the movements, shots and editing cuts of the camera directs the viewing experience in conventional cinema, taking precedence over identification with the characters. Consequently, in cinema the viewer is absent from the screen as a perceived individual while at the same time omnipresent as a perceiver: we must leave our conventional way of moving behind to climb into a vehicle capable of driving us through a story articulated in images and stripped of bodily limitations like individual perspective.⁵

The (non-immersive) film *The Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) was unique in this respect; like *Hamlet 360*, it used the POV shot to anchor the spectator in a single role throughout the story: in this case, the detective who is the film's protagonist. In his review of this film, Noël Burch highlighted how this approach broke out of the *institutionalised* method in which the camera is erased so that it can follow the characters and the action invisibly. Burch even went so far as to suggest that as the observer's invisibility/invulnerability is the secret behind the most effective diegetic process, this continuous POV shot effectively interposed the camera between the audience and the diegetic world (Burch, 2011: 251-253)

Clearly, the spectator's uninterrupted embodiment in a character in both *The Lady in the Lake* and *Hamlet 360* may risk giving an audience familiar with conventional cinematic approaches more of a sensation of restrictive confinement than participation and involvement in the story. This seems to be the consequence of relegating the viewer's role in *Hamlet 360* to a dead, ghostly body, as well as the fact that in *The Lady in the Lake* the spectator may connect best with the screen at the moment when the spectator-protagonist is arrested and handcuffed (Image 6, still-frame 3). In *Hamlet 360*, the viewers' embodiment underscores the immobility of their point of view, while also justifying a key stylistic choice in the film: the abandonment of the mobility typical of cinematographic diegesis in favour of anchoring the viewer to a point of observation and a representation that is basically frontal.

This feeling of immobility, of being driven down a one-way street, could be partly counteracted by exploiting the viewer's capacity for action in a 360-degree video, with the exploration of the side and rear views of the scene. But for this exploration to acquire real meaning within the story and to insert the character fully into it, the hierarchy that prioritises the frontal view over the incidental environment would have to be concealed or rendered less obvious by avoiding an excessively frontal focus that is too independent of the rest of the space represented in the 360-degree image. However, while it might be tempting to assume that articulating a story from a stationary frontal perspective somewhat undermines the acentric nature of the 360-degree format, it would be hasty to draw any conclusions about the nature of such a young and heterogeneous format. Inserting dynamic elements between focal points of the viewers' attention to create a story that really does surround them completely is a way of leveraging the format's ability to encompass the audience with the representation. But this is not the only intrinsic feature of the me-

dium; nor is exploiting any of a medium's characteristics to the fullest a necessary condition for its appropriate use.⁶

The animated short *Pearl* (Patrick Osborne, 2016)⁷ literally uses the point of view of a passenger in the front seat of a car to anchor the spectator in one place throughout the narration of a story about a father-daughter relationship. The main focus of attention in this film is located between the driver's seat and the back seats, but this focus is made intuitively mobile for viewers, who can shift their gaze to what is happening in the different parts of the car as characters appear and move around inside the vehicle. With the car sometimes moving and other times stationary, the various windows and open doors also offer different levels of action, constantly functioning as snippets of reality, like mobile comic strip panels that work together to build the narrative space. Even while being anchored in the front passenger seat, the viewer is offered scenes that move from the foreground of the driver's seat to group shots of characters outside the car, framed in the

windows or open doors. In addition to guiding the viewer through these scenes, the film moves back and forth in time at different moments, using this technique as well to articulate the story. The experiences between father and daughter are depicted as memories of moments that occurred in and around the old car they shared. In this way, the vehicle forms part of the story of the two characters, which is presented without dialogue but with a song that serves as a soundtrack to the touching journey that the spectator is taken on through both space and time.

In this film, the spectator is identified with the camera as a dynamic, invisible device, but the visual ubiquity of shots and editing in conventional cinema is replaced with the movement of the user's view: a free movement, albeit carefully suggested by the action in each scene, which moves the viewer toward different points in the 360-degree space.

In the 360-degree action short *Help* (Justin Lin, 2015), these strategies for guiding spectators are used more clearly to orient our view around

Image 8. Still-frame from *Help* (Justin Lin, 2015).



the surrounding space. Among the strategies are visual signals, such as the characters' gazes and reactions, and the positioning of the sound, as the voices and noises are placed in specific locations using surround sound technology. Our free movement is subtly directed towards the various focal points, which change constantly throughout the film. And even when we are unsure of where to look, our hesitant search conveniently contributes to the construction of a tense atmosphere of uncertainty and vulnerability.

In addition to this capacity for controlling the spectator's freedom of movement with visual and audio elements, this film makes use of constant strategic positioning of the camera with a markedly cinematographic approach, which is also crucial to our immersion in the story. At certain moments, the point of view is positioned above the action, offering expansive long shots to provide some context; at other moments, the camera approaches the characters to focus more on their performances, and this proximity varies constantly in order to capture different actions. The perspective is often low, reaching ground level at times, thereby forcing a low-angle view that makes the viewer feel small.

This film's audience follows the action as invisible, ubiquitous observers in a manner very similar to that of conventional cinema, but with a capacity for movement and a sensation of subjectivity that is inherent to the omnidirectional perspective. 360-degree videos thus seem to experiment with the ways of transporting a *mobile audience* through the *immobile journey* that characterises cinema.

In *Help*, where the hierarchy of the frontal focus is noticeably dissolved with the movement of the camera and of the elements of action throughout the scene, the spectator may feel like the co-pilot of a dynamic vehicle whose side views can provide clues as to the direction that the story will take next. In this way, viewers can feel they are participating in the story with a vigilant gaze

on a journey that could veer off in any direction from one moment to the next. The film thus exploits the acentric conception of the omnidirectional format by expanding the action all over the space around the spectator. At the same time, this dispersed view is directed by suggestions pointing to different focal points and the use of expressive strategies characteristic of cinema, which are transformed in the 360-degree format, as are the shots which, although still functioning as film shots, are no longer enclosed frames.

CONCLUSIONS

The syntactic strategies of the cinematic tradition can offer basic elements for directing the story in a 360-degree video in order to steer the audiovisual storytelling. Other stylistic approaches may make use of the immersive quality of the medium to exploit the sensation of presence inherent to the 360-degree perspective, and to conceive of the viewer as a silent, immobile witness to a story that is much closer to a theatrical performance. However, regardless of these strategies for directing the audience, the 360-degree format is marked by an implicit active component that resists the subordination of the observer's capacity for movement and perception to the staging machinery. To integrate the inherent freedom of this format with the equally inherent directionality of a narrative medium is therefore the big challenge of this new 360-degree storytelling, which needs to guide the gaze while at the same time offering room for the viewer to move.

NOTES

- * This article forms part of the research project *Paradoxical Modernity: Artist and Tourist Experience in Developmentalist Spain (1959-1975)*, reference code: PGC2018-093422-b-i00 (MCI/AEI/FEDER, EU)
- 1 Even the space occupied by the audience was often arranged to merge with the representation. In *Pano-*

rama of the Battle of Navarino (Jean Charles Langlois, 1831), the deck of the *Scipion*, a ship that had actually taken part in the conflict depicted, was used as an observation platform.

- 2 The term *panorama* has come to be used today to mean *view of the whole*. Robert Barker himself patented his invention in 1787 as "*La nature à coup d'oeil*" (the nature of a glimpse). The term *panorama* would begin to be used later; the first record found of its use dates from January 1792, in a publication of *The Times*.
- 3 As Walter Benjamin explained, avant-garde art, such as the manifestations of Dadaism, sought to satisfy the need for provocation, for public scandal, and thus the work constituted a guaranteed vehement distraction. This vehemence has also been an essential part of cinema since its early days, with its ability to attract, captivate and direct the viewer with a powerful force:

From an alluring appearance or persuasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator. Let us compare the canvas (screen) on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested. Duhamel, who detests the film and knows nothing of its significance, though something of its structure, notes this circumstance as follows: "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images." The spectator's process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change. This constitutes the shock effect of the film, which, like all shocks, should be cushioned by heightened presence of mind. (Benjamin, 1989: 51-52)

As Benjamin points out, in psychoanalytic theory the concept of traumatic shock refers to a breakdown in an individual's natural protection against potentially harmful stimuli, which allows events to be accommodated in the consciousness as lived experiences, based on the coherence of their content. When this protective barrier is broken, the outcome of the reflexive assimilation is cut short, causing terror or distress, whether pleasant or unpleasant. In cinema, Benjamin argues, perception is based on shocks. See Benjamin (2010: 14-17).

- 4 A 60-minute 360-degree film adapted and directed by Steven Maler, available on the company's website, where it is presented as a way of exploring the new dimensions of the 360-degree video, offering the spectator a role in the story as the ghost of Hamlet's father. The viewer thus becomes an "omniscient observer, guide and participant" in the film.
- 5 See Metz (2001: 68-70).
- 6 It is important to stress that these stylistic questions of frontality are not unique to 360-degree video or to immersive images in general: architecture has often considered aesthetic and functional questions of the layout of elements around the user, as has sculpture in the round, although this is more in terms of the *position of the observer* in front of or around the image. However, in 360-degree video the arrangement of elements clearly takes on special relevance to the articulation of a story, requiring the combination of immersion and narrative while also posing the problem of matching the essentially spatial components with others that are basically temporal.
- 7 *Pearl* has won several awards, including an Emmy in 2017. That same year it became the first 360-degree video nominated for an Oscar, for Best Animated Short Film.

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THE SPECTATOR'S SEAT: MOVEMENT AND THE BODY IN IMMERSIVE CINEMA

Abstract

The way that conventional cinema guides the spectator around the image constitutes a very different form of immersion from the interactive immersion of all-encompassing media experiences. By considering such differences when studying immersive media, we can explore the full range of its potential benefits and how they can be combined to create new narrative formulas. Beyond virtualizing scenes, every immersive medium repositions the movement and the body of the spectator in the represented space. How these elements are redefined in each production is central to the viewing experience. This article studies immersive audiovisual storytelling, particularly in 360-degree video, from the perspective of the frictions between conventional cinematography and immersive media. These tensions are expressed through the different ways in which movement is depicted and the different positions of the spectator's body in the image.

Key words

360-degree Cinema; Immersive Cinema; Panorama; Body; Movement; Train; Travel.

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EL ASIENTO DEL ESPECTADOR. SOBRE MOVIMIENTO Y CUERPO EN EL CINE INMERSIVO

Resumen

En su manera de conducir al espectador a través de la imagen, el cine convencional supone una forma de inmersión muy distinta a la inmersión interactiva de los entornos envolventes. Tener presente tales divergencias a la hora de estudiar el cine envolvente es una manera de atender a sus más dispares potenciales y a cómo estos se hibridan en nuevas fórmulas de narración. Más allá de virtualizar escenas, cada medio inmersivo reubica en el espacio representativo el movimiento y también reposiciona allí el cuerpo del espectador; la manera en la que estos elementos se redefinen en cada producción es determinante en la experiencia del receptor. El presente artículo analiza las narrativas audiovisuales inmersivas, especialmente el cine 360, desde estas fricciones entre lo cinematográfico y lo esférico, expresadas en las distintas formas que adopta el movimiento y las distintas posturas de nuestro cuerpo en la imagen.

Palabras clave

Cine 360; Cine inmersivo; Panorama; Cuerpo; Movimiento; Tren; Viaje.

Autor

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