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CLOVERFIELD THE GAME

Film theory is focussed on (dis-)identification however new media and (video) games changed film by introducing new aesthetics and conventions, which means new analytical methods of media are also needed.

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Introduction

Cinema is seen as the perfect medium to tell a story and video games enable the player to be completely immersed. This type of immersion is not the same as the one we know from the traditional novel or classic cinema therefore a re-appreciation of immersion was needed. (Dis-)Identification is still predominantly linked with narratology and interactivity is strongly linked to ludology (game studies). In her “From Narrative Games to Playable stories” (2009) Marie-Laure Ryan points out that: ‘While narrativity is a type of meaning, interactivity, when put in the service of entertainment, is a type of play.’ (45) New media and in extension video games, created a new set of aesthetics for literature and cinema, and video games took cues from literature and especially cinema. This led to new stylistic features and narrative tactics for cinema, for example the traditional narrative is replaced and/or complimented by alternative ordering principles known from new media that break with linearity¹ and sometimes also teleology². (Elsaesser 22, 23)

The media analysis of cinema of von Trier and the TV-show *The Wire* (David Simon, 2002-2008) are examples of media analysis where analytical methods known from ludology and game theory are used. The media analysis as a result now includes virtuality and simulation. This presents a whole new perspective on these media products that would not have been included when only using classical, critical and/or contemporary film theory. The case study *Cloverfield* (dir. Matt Reeves, 2008) is an innovative film from the monster/disaster genre that uses the unconventional first person camera perspective throughout the whole movie. This film has many video game characteristics and new media aesthetics. Therefore I will use the analytical methods known from ludology and game theory to analyse this film and prove that only using film theory is not enough to cover all the special features of this film.

The first part of this thesis is focussed on the changes of traditional narratives and the second part on the alternative analytical methods. The case study is used as a way to show how these extra analytical methods can complement existing film theory.

¹ This is enforced by the new media dynamics and its real-time feedback and response; using *mise-en-abyme*, layering, seriality and allowing multiple options and open-endedness. (Elsaesser 23)

² A hypertext architecture, for example webpages that are connected through hyperlinks. This way of navigating is also linked to the database, rhizome and the archive. (Elsaesser 23)

Part one

Chapter 1

Cinema has developed itself as a strong storytelling medium making it hard to abstain from having narrative in a film. The viewer has learned to identify the conventions used by the filmmakers to create a comprehensive narrative. We always watch intertextually and therefore the filmmaker can only guide the favoured interpretation, but not control it. Focalisation is used to give narrative information of which especially internal focalisation is important. These subjective shots also called point-of-view shots, encourage the viewer to sympathize and identify with the character to whom the vision belongs.

Early narration

In his *Plato to Lumière* (2009) André Gaudreault describes the development of early cinema towards a cinema of narration. Early cinema signifies the period before 1915 in which filmmakers started searching for a cinematic language to address their contemporaries. (Gaudreault 12) In this period the narrative was implemented in cinema. Three modes of film practice³ can be identified. The last mode of film practice started in the early 1910s. In that period filming was determined by the editing, which meant that scenes were created with the editing possibilities in mind. (13) The film now had scenes that communicated with each other and showed lapses of time similar to the chapters of a book. (14)

Gaudreault mentions: ‘One of the fundamental hypothesis of this book is that cinema, as Metz said, has ‘narrativity built into it’: that the filmic *énoncé* can only abstain from narrativity with great difficulty and in exceptional cases if it is not to deny its very nature.’ (32) In his *Film Narratology* (2009) Peter Verstraten explains that non-narrative can only be created with the complete removal of all psychological aspects and the suppression of temporality, space and causality. (21) However, the interpretation of the viewer cannot be controlled, meaning that a narrative could still be identified by the viewer even in for example an abstract film. (24)

³ First the one shot film that ended roughly in 1902 which was a singular autonomous shot. Second was the multiple non-continuous shots film that started in 1903. (Gaudreault 13)

The narrative agent and the viewer

According to Verstraten two levels of narration can be identified, the first is filmic showing (*mise-en-scène*⁴ and cinematography⁵) and the second is editing⁶. (8) Filmic showing is influenced by the visual narrator, there are for example many ways to introduce a character. (37) What we are shown is an implicit way of describing a character, but with selective framing and visual overspecificity certain characteristics of the character can be emphasized. (52) With editing you can manipulate time, frame space and create causal links by for example using the cross-cutting technique. (16)

Classic cinema aims to form a straightforward plot with an introduction, a conflict and a resolution. (201) As Verstraten sums up: ‘A classic Hollywood film shows a chronological process of carefully sequenced causal events; the story is carried on by psychological developments.’ (179) Typically the hero with a background needs to overcome an obstacle (this could be other characters with opposing interests) to achieve his/her aim. (3) A genre serves as a model for the plot; it has specific narrative conditions. Every new film has to take a stance and defend its own narrative stipulations against that of the genre. (172) A consequence of this is mentioned by Verstraten: ‘Being aware of the narrative conditions of genres also enables us to recognize any deviations from standard patterns as meaningful interventions.’ (11) When the violation is recognized it is no longer a generic register. (172) The Western has a basic model for the plot. The hero typically overcomes the obstacle and achieves his aim. (37) However, this tradition of the good overcoming the bad can be broken: ‘The moment the hero loses, it can be taken as a meaningful comment on the genre; additionally, when the difference between good and evil becomes blurred, it may be that (American) heroism is being morally criticized.’ (37) Here you can state that a deviation from the norm becomes meaningful, breaking with the narrative conditions means sending a message to the audience.

The filmic narrator uses specific conventions as a manipulative tool to influence the viewer’s interpretation. (173) However this can never be fully controlled as Verstraten explains it: ‘... a certain attitude can be expected of the viewer but that there is no pre-set route to be followed. ... we always watch intertextually.’ (26) The principle of intertextuality means that we are always making comparisons to other genres and films. (173) The filmic narrator uses narrative tactics and stylistic features to represent the story in a specific way to stir the preferred interpretation, however the viewer can still have his own interpretation. As Verstraten brings forward: ‘The conclusion to be drawn is that narrativity in cinema is created by an interaction between the narrative agent and the viewer.’ (26)

⁴ ‘Mise and scène encompasses everything that has been constructed within the image frame, such as choice of actors, their acting style and position in front of the camera, costumes and make-up, the scenery, the location, the lighting, and the colours.’ (Verstraten 57)

⁵ ‘Cinematography is the technical and artistic way in which a scene is photographed. It encompasses matters such as how we record the scene (on what material and at what speed; from what angle we film the scene and with what lenses; what optical effects we apply and how long we hold the shots.)’ (Verstraten 65)

⁶ ‘In its most basic guise, editing concerns the ‘suturing’ of two shots recorded from different camera angles, on different times and/or on different locations.’ (Verstraten 77)

Focalisation

Focalisation is the perspective that is used to provide narrative information within the story. There are three types of focalisation; external, ambiguous and internal. (Verstraten 9) An example of external focalisation in cinema are the establishing shots⁷ that have a clear functional purpose of defining spatial relations. Focalisation is considered ambiguous when it can neither be identified as external nor internal. Internal focalizing⁸ often occurs via a character and is part of the larger story told by the filmic narrator. (12) When the perception of the character coincides with that of the visual narrator the shots become subjective. (103) Whenever subjective shots are used in classic cinema, they tend to be followed up by a reverse shot, which serves as an explanation to the viewer to whom the vision belongs. (97) Verstraten explains the point-of-view shot as the following: 'We are 'literally' looking along with a character since we see the events more or less from his or her viewing direction and position. Logically, such a character has a privileged position: we feel sympathy for his or her vision or situation.' (91) The subjective shots therefore also encourage you to sympathize: '...subjective shots are used to make us identify with the focalizing characters.' (Verstraten 91) Next to giving you narrative information such as spatial relations, focalization can also be used as a vehicle for identification.

⁷ 'In an 'average' film, establishing shots serve an introductory purpose. They are intended primarily to position characters within a certain space.' (Verstraten 100)

⁸ 'The focalizer can also be a character, however, in which case this internal, second focalizer is hierarchically lower and embedded in the external focalization.' (Verstraten 12)

Chapter 2

The viewers' identification with a character is fluid, it can shift during the film. Identification can be guided towards a certain character in which case it does not matter whether the character is male or female. Art cinema (*La Nouvelle Vague*) tries to prevent identification and aims to cause estrangement in order to let the viewer keep their critical distance. This distance is needed to discover the overall purpose of the film and form meaning. Another way to lift the film from its standard interpretation is the usage of filmic excess in the form of stylistic overkill. For example the melodrama can escape its own conventional codes and be interpreted as ironic. Irony can create emotional distance from the sentimental content, this offers an alternative way of reading the film making the work self-reflective in the process.

Identification

In her *Women, and Chain Saws* (1992) Carol J. Clover introduces the Final Girl theory. In the slasher film identification is guided towards a female lead halfway through the movie. This leads to a completely different gender dynamic in this horror subgenre, which is predominately watched by (young) males according to Clover's observation of video stores. Within the slasher film, the division of gender in relation to their roles is often the same; the killer is male and those he kills are mostly female. (77) In this standard example of a slasher film, identification with a male character is quite difficult. Most male characters are marginal, and it is also hard to identify with a killer, because he does not evoke empathy and you often only get information about his mental condition and possibly traumatic past. (78) The killer is mostly unseen, you only get glimpses. Sometimes we watch from his point of view, but these short moment are rare. The identification is guided towards the victim turned heroine who gets most of the screen time. We start to identify with the Final Girl when we get to know her, she is usually the only person of whom we get a psychological background in detail. Like the viewer she has an investigative nature and is the first to fully understand the situation, which creates an engaging perspective. Near the end the point of view shifts in its entirety to the Final Girl. Although in the beginning we could identify with other characters, at the end it all adds up, leaving no alternative but the Final Girl to identify with who is often literally the last one standing. (79)

Seeing a female character getting killed has a double function⁹. We have a vicarious stake in both; when the victim gets killed we see this happening through the eyes of the threat, but before that we follow the victim as she is being stalked, we feel her terror as well. (Clover 85) The Final Girl functions as a male surrogate¹⁰. (83) The identificatory buffer provides emotional remove allowing themes such as incest and castration to be observed or experienced by the male audience through the female lead. This identificatory

⁹ 'This fluidity of an engaged perspective is in keeping with the universal claims of the psychoanalytic model: the threat function and the victim function coexist in the same unconscious, regardless of anatomical sex.' (Clover 80)

¹⁰ 'The Final Girl is (apparently) female not despite the maleness of the audience, but precisely because of it. The discourse is wholly masculine, and females figure in it only insofar as they "read" some aspect of male experience.' (Clover 83)

buffer combined with abject terror¹¹ being gendered feminine is why there is a Final Girl. (82) The Final Girl theory is proof that identification with the anatomically female character is possible for a male audience. (85) She can be the heroine who does not need to be rescued by a male and triumph at the end. (84) Moreover, identification is flexible, we can switch from character to character throughout the movie. (79) It does not matter whether the character is male or female, the killer or the Final Girl.

¹¹ 'Angry displays of force may belong to the male, but crying, cowering, screaming, fainting, trembling, begging for mercy belong to the female.' (Clover 82)

Estrangement of art cinema

In his “Godard and Counter Cinema” (1985) Peter Wollen describes the seven deadly sins of old cinema and compares these to the seven cardinal virtues of the counter-cinema of Godard. Instead of a passive viewer that absorbs pleasure Godard wants an active viewer who gains knowledge. (501)

Narrative transitivity	Narrative intransitivity
Identification	Estrangement
Transparency	Foregrounding
Single diegesis	Multiple diegesis
Closure	Aperture
Pleasure	Unpleasure
Fiction	Reality
(501)	

Narrative transitivity means that the story of the film consists of causal events in a chronological order. The narrative is predictable and psychologically motivated. Narrative intransitivity has gaps and an episodic construction. (501) The main reason for Godard to break with narrative transitivity: ‘...is that he can disrupt the emotional spell of the narrative and thus force the spectator, by interrupting the narrative flow, to re-concentrate and re-focus his attention.’ (502) Emotional involvement is seen as something negative: it disables the distance that is needed to be critical. (502)

Identification is both cognitive and emotional involvement with the character or star. Next to finding psychological points of alignment, suspension of disbelief is needed to be able to empathize with the character. The opposite of this is cinema that encourages estrangement. The characters that normally encourage identification are now used to create emotional distance. This is typically done by having a lot of characters that both contradict and criticize themselves, as well as each other. (Wollen 502) This makes the viewer incapable of identifying a clear motivation, seeing how the characters seem to reject all logic. (503) Godard also uses mismatched voices, public persona and direct address to strengthen estrangement. (502) His aim is to break our acceptance of characters and narrative and make us ask the question ‘What is this film for?’ (503) The viewer is being encouraged to question the decisions made in the story as well as discover the overall purpose of the film. (503)

Pleasure refers to the Hollywood film’s aim to entertain and satisfy the movie goes by offering escapism. (Wollen 506) Unpleasure is created with scenes that irritate, interrogate and insult the audience. Godard wanted to provoke and ultimately change the spectator. Next to giving critique Godard tries to create a relationship between filmmaker and audience, intent on forming meaning together. (507) Fiction uses fantasy to fortify existing ideologies and beliefs. As for reality, Godard concluded that truth can’t be captured

or revealed via cinema, because it is a representation, meanings however can be created via cinema in relation to other meanings. (509)

Filmic excess

The interaction between the narrative tactics and stylistic features determines the narrative. When filmic techniques that shape the content become so specific that it is recognizable as a style or genre it stops being a narrative tactic and ends up being a stylistic feature. Stylistic features can become filmic excess¹² when they distract you from the story and draw too much attention to themselves. (Verstraten 22) In short, filmic excess is an autonomous stylistic feature that temporarily overloads the content and pushes it to the background. (11) Its distinguished style is outside the unity of the film, however every film has filmic excess¹³. (23) The classic film has a tight narrative structure and a sound narrative logic, which means filmic excess can easily be absorbed. This absorption becomes harder when there is less content and more form. (22) In the other extreme, the film can become excessive in nature. (22, 23) The narrative is suppressed and more importantly secondary to style¹⁴. (191-92)

The status of the film is of crucial importance when trying to analyse the story. Sometimes when using filmic excess the film tries to say that it is not a standard film, but for example a self-reflective film. Filmic excess can change the viewer's straightforward and naïve reading into a reading determined by irony, parody or persiflage. To be recognized as filmic excess within a traditional narrative, it needs to dismiss stylistic conventions and instead be a form of stylistic overkill, only then can it be used to solve interpretative problems. (Verstraten 11)

The melodrama

Douglas Sirk is known for his 1950s Hollywood melodramas: his films are overly sentimental, whilst having a tight logically structured plot and clear psychological motivation. The restrictive social milieus where these stories take place have lavish interiors with bright and exuberant colours that underline the social codes. (Verstraten 192) In the middle-class conflicts are not solved by force. The music is linked to the suppressed emotions that are only sometimes shown as outbursts in a theatrical way. (192-93) The emotional confinement is made explicit with the usage of enclosed framing which also represents the lack of human contact of the character. (193)

The Sirk melodrama uses an ultra-kitsch style to emphasize its sentimental content. This filmic excess can even outshine the story itself, the story is then being told through form rather than content. There are two possible interpretations for the viewer; either the viewer sees the style as extravagant sentimental or as ironic. (Verstraten 193) The latter has according to Verstraten another consequence: 'Instead of an identification with

¹² Filmic excess was first mentioned by Kristin Thompson (1986) in *The concept of cinematic excess* and elaborated on by Peter Verstraten (2009) in *Film Narratology*.

¹³ For example series of shots that are short in duration, unexpected subjective shots, close-ups and compositions of almost abstract stylistic features such as extreme camera angles and too bright or too dim lighting. (Verstraten 23)

¹⁴ In some avant-garde, underground, independent and European art films style can become more important than content. (Verstraten 3)

the events the characters get caught up in, irony creates a buffer between the viewer and the emotion displayed on the screen. The viewer will watch Sirk's cinema with some critical distance and not be carried away by the tear-jerking content.' (193) Verstraten also argues that when you decide to see the melodrama in an ironic way this attitude becomes irreversible. (194)

In *Breaking the waves* (dir. von Trier, 1996) the filmic excess creates alienation from the blatantly sentimental plot. Von Trier uses what looks like a raw quasi-realistic documentary style complete with erratic movements, sudden shot transitions and greyish tones. The function of this style is to give credibility to the overly romantic and pathetic plot. (Verstraten 195) What von Trier also uses are static film shots of landscapes accompanied by chapter titles and popular songs. It is meant to show the artificiality of film, overshadow the documentary style and allow the viewer to form a new interpretation. (196) Verstraten elaborates on this as follows: 'In other words, the viewer needs to trace conspicuous stylistic elements in order to ascertain whether those elements are functional to the story or whether they have an alienating effect similar to that detected in melodrama.' (197) It proposes a new way of reading the film in which the filmic excess functions as a built-in-guide. (203)

Chapter 3

Complex storytelling in contemporary cinema leads to a new challenging form of spectator-engagement, that is no longer focussed on identification and alignment, but on solving narrative puzzles. A re-appreciation of immersion is needed therefore the effect of the novel on the reader will be looked at more closely. The aesthetics of reading has partially shifted from representation and immersion to that of play and interactivity. The most important change is the introduction of immersion as something that allows a critical distance and enables the viewer to form meaning and discover new interpretations by looking at the films narrative tactics and stylistic features more closely.

The mind-game film

Thomas Elsaesser (2009) mentions the increase of complex storytelling in contemporary cinema in his text "The Mind-game Film." Mind-game films have unconventional ways of storytelling¹⁵ that create puzzles for the audience. (19) In order to disorient and mislead the spectator, information is often withheld or hidden, these techniques are commonly used alongside plot twists and trick endings. (15) For the spectator, it becomes a challenge to constantly form meaning by doing reality checks to identify parallel worlds, revising cause and effect as well as the temporal sequences. (20) It can be seen as a new form of spectator-engagement. (16, 17) Elsaesser points out that '...mind-game films imply and implicate spectators in a manner not covered by the classical theories of identification, or even of alignment and engagement, because the "default values" of normal human interaction are no longer "in place," meaning that the film is able to question and suspend both the inner and outer framing of the story.' (30) The spectator has to pay attention, seek out clues and possibly do multiple viewing to be able to fully understand its content. (16) Elsaesser explains it as the new rules of viewing that '... favor pattern recognition (over identification of individual incidents), and require cinematic images to be read as picture puzzles, data-archives, or "rebus-pictures" (rather than as indexical, realistic representations).' (39)

To illustrate, the protagonist in a mind-game films often suffers from a personality disorder. These pathologies are connected to identity issues or past traumatic events that haunt the protagonist in the present. (Elsaesser 25) Character, agency and motivation no longer form a unity and there is a reboot of the consciousness and the senses. (24) In some cases motivations remain unknown and behaviour can only be observed. (28) It becomes harder to identify with the protagonist not knowing whether they are a victim or an agent. (25) Even though the characters with these conditions have a consciousness that is unreliable, their point of view is still privileged. (24, 25) The division between normal vision and the delusions of the character

¹⁵ '... single or multiple diegesis, unreliable narration and missing or unclaimed point-of-view shots, episodic or multi-stranded narratives, embedded or "nested" (story-within-story/film-within-film) narratives, and frame-tales that reverse what is inside the frame ...' (Elsaesser 19)

are not signalled. (26) Even when being made aware of the characters condition there is still no reference point. The viewer shares the discomfoting point of view of the character not knowing what is real, a memory or a delusion. With an unreliable narrator it becomes a game for the viewer to constantly question what is real by looking for clues and signals. (27)

Approaches

The Hollywood film production and other filmmaking nations are focused on the accessibility of film and allowing multiple entry points¹⁶. (Elsaesser 36, 37) However the mind-game film changed the rules of the game:

‘Mind-game films, we could say, break one set of rules (realism, transparency, linearity) in order to make room for a new set, and their formal features – whether we examine them from a narratological angle, from an ontological, epistemological, psychopathological, or pedagogical perspective... – represent a compromise formation, which is itself flexible, adaptable, differential, and versatile...’ (38)

The mind-game film is more about content and has a longer cultural and economic run. To make the film more profitable multiple-platforms are being used such as books, websites and video games. Multiple viewings might be needed to catch all the clues and there is a lot of para-textual information available especially online. There is ambiguity in the film on the level of perception, reception, and interpretation creating its own referentiality and allowing different analyses from different perspectives. (39)

Popularity of the mind-game film is due to its combination of being fun as well as relevant. The mind-game film has many fans that are especially active online resulting in different (fan) activities¹⁷. (Elsaesser 35) Elsaesser points out a peculiarity of these online fan communities ‘...the world depicted is taken as real: as if this is the rule of the game, the condition of participating in the postings.’ (30) For social commentary and high theory the mind-game film is functional and seen as symptomatic. It becomes a way to do philosophy by addressing issues of subjectivity, identity and consciousness. (36) Narratologist busy themselves with definitions and how certain effects are created. (35). Some humanities and film scholars have turned to game theory while new media theorist claim that the logic of storytelling is dependent on current technology and therefore historically specific. New forms of narrative such as alternative sequencing and linking is inspired by new media technologies and how its data is stored, retrieved and organised. (22)

¹⁶ ‘... multiple entry-point means: audiences of different gender, different age-groups, different ethnic or national identities, different educational backgrounds, but also quite literally, audiences that “enter” a film at different times during a given performance (on television) or at different points in history (the “classic” or “cult” film). (Elsaesser 37)

¹⁷ Popular are databases (often Wiki’s) with the aim to collectively collect, add and share as much canonical information as possible.

There are two types of approaches used for the narratological problems; either extend classical narratology by including cognitive psychology (deciphering visual cues and the functioning of mental schema, perception and identification) or assume that the video or simulation game structure is determining the narrative. (Elsaesser 21, 22) The first normalizes the special features of these intriguing and innovative films that play with temporality, causality, consciousness and identity. (21) The second assumes that the mind-game film is a transition form of cinematic storytelling placed between the classic narrative and a newer form inspired by the video game architecture and logic. (22)

Immersion

In his “The Political Impact of the Novel” (2015) Kees Vuyk explains that the power of the novel finds its foundation within the reading process itself. (211) While reading you imagine entering the textual world that is temporarily more important than the real world. (217) The reading experience is linked to your personal memory. (223) Vuyk states that: ‘Through reading and writing, man develops a new sense of self, independent though not separated, from the world in which he is embedded in everyday life.’ (219) Both Marie-Laure Ryan (2001) in her *Narrative as Virtual Reality* and Alex Reuneker (2011) in his “Crossing Ontological Borders in Cyberpunk” discuss what immersion entails. Immersion is a fundamentally mimetic concept and a mental simulation. (Ryan 15) Creating a fictional reality means constructing a setting with individuals and objects that serve as a potential for narrative action. (14, 15) For Reuneker immersion is: ‘trading one’s identity and environment for a represented identity and environment.’ (21)

Ryan has described four levels of absorption. It starts with *concentration* which means that the text itself is not immersive. Followed by *imaginative involvement*, which still allows contemplation. Next is *entrancement*, this is when the reader stops being reflective and the language disappears. (Ryan 89) The last one is *addiction* which is best described as compulsive reading. (89, 99) A special case of *addiction* makes the reader incapable to distinguish the textual worlds from the actual world. This phenomenon can even be identified with some literary characters themselves, such as Don Quixote and Madame Bovary. (Vuyk 215) What Vuyk brings forward about Ryan’s book is that it is all about immersion: ‘What happens in the process of reading is that the reader gets more and more immersed in the reading experience.’ (215, 216) Immersion is wrongly associated with a passive reader, because as Ryan mentions ‘... immersion requires an active engagement with the text and a demanding act of imagining.’ (Ryan 15) Immersion at worst is seen as something that prevents critical thinking and threatens the rationality of the reader, and at best an adventurous and an invigorating experience. (10, 11) It is linked with popular culture rather than with literature and is not often recognized as a complex mental activity that has the potential to expand the reader’s world and autonomy. (Vuyk 223) Ryan put emphasis on the requirements for the text to be immersive such as creating a detailed and intricate world that aims to match the real world in its complexity and therefore compels the reader to lose themselves in a book. In his *The rise of the novel* (2001) Ian Watt argues that realism in a story is not used to imitate reality, but aims for the story to be experienced as real. (216)

In his *Mimesis as Make-believe* (1990) Walton Kendall’s approach to immersion is similar to how children play a game of make-believe: we need to be involved in the representation in our imagination to be immersed. (Reuneker 22) We are always aware of the illusion and the representation does not need to be realistic although we will constantly look for similarities. (31) We need to make an active decision to temporarily turn fictional propositions into truths in our mind. (23) We reposition ourselves in order to be able to temporarily believe in the fictional and connect the representation to how we experience reality. (16) This mutual belief principle allows us to feel quasi-emotions during our game of make-believe in which we

emphasize with the characters. (16, 27) Our emotional involvement is influenced by the representation properties such as style, tone and narration. (28) Much like how we would react differently to a work of fiction than we would to a work of non-fiction. (45)

The text as game

With the 'text as world' metaphor, text functions as a mirror: you can look into its depths and see an illusion. (Ryan 192) In this context, words function as transparent signs that transport you into a fictional world. (193) The form is acknowledged as something that dictates the content. (194) The fiction is world-like and can have hidden depths, which is perhaps its attraction. (197)

Ryan suggests the 'text as game' metaphor. In the middle of the twentieth century the aesthetic program of literary authors shifted from immersion to interactivity. (16) The reshaping of literary conventions started, which resulted into a new aesthetic guideline that favoured fragmentation and incoherence. (176) Attention in literature shifted from representation to play, play doesn't need to have meaning or refer to anything outside itself. (188) For the reader and writer the text becomes interactive in a semantic way. (189, 190) No longer focussing on creating textual worlds, but playing with text and language and making the reader a player or a spectator. (16) It is not immersion that is needed, but instead a critical distance, which makes it possible to create interpretations and simultaneously reflect on what is read: '...the reader is not allowed to lose sight of the materiality of language and of the textual origin of the referents.' (193) Form is important, because it is part of the play such as having formal constraints. (194) With the text as game you need to be able to detect the rules of the game to really appreciate it. (195) This game-like approach is about simulation rather than representation, it does not reveal what something stands for. (197) Although the 'text as world' metaphor and the 'text as game' metaphor seem to contradict each other, they should be seen as complimentary: 'We must therefore immerse and deimmerse ourselves periodically in order to fulfil, and fully appreciate, our dual role as members of the textual world and players of the textual game.'(199)

About film

Vuyk makes a comparison between the novel and the movie, I would replace this movie for the mind-game film. The first point he makes is that the movie leaves less to the imagination than a book, however with the mind-game film you need to fill in the gaps yourself. Both the novel and the film are solitary experiences, even though you can watch a film together you still make your own personal references. The principle of intertextuality means that the same film can be understood differently, because everyone makes their own mental connections. It is argued that a book takes more of your time since it can occupy your mind when you are not reading and compel you to reread some passages. The mind-game film is a puzzle which might still occupy your mind after watching the film, you might look up theories online or discuss its content with friends

and in some cases even watch the whole film again or parts of it to look for clues you might have missed. (Vuyk 216) The last argument still stands: while reading you enter an individual world created by your own imagination while when watching a film you enter the world of the film created by others. Despite this, the mind-game format has challenged many of the standard assumptions about film. (217)

A viewer of a mind-game film is still experiencing immersion, the viewer may look at the film as a game in which everything has potential clues that can help to solve the film's puzzle narrative and lead to a full understanding of its meaning. This is much like the critical distance which was also needed to form meaning in the cinema of Godard as well as the mentioned melodrama's. In the case of the melodrama this led to an alternative interpretation stipulated by its use of stylistic features.

Part two

Chapter 4

The next part will look more closely at new media and video games. Furthermore new ways of analysing such as ludology and game theory will be introduced. Starting with the influence of the new media revolution on the different cultural traditions that now more strongly cross-influence each other. The video game is given as an example in which the especially the human-computer interface and the cinema as cultural tradition are represented. For academia video games are a relatively new and a unique subject, and has over the years seen an exponential rise in articles written about it. The video game is ‘threatened’ to be colonized by disciplines such as literature and cinema, but should be seen as a separate study.

New media

In his “The Language of New Media” (2001) Lev Manovich discusses the influence of cultural traditions such as the printed word, the cinema and the human-computer interface on the shaping of cultural interfaces. (79) When the internet in the 1990s rose in popularity the computer was no longer just a tool, but a universal media machine that has a large impact on culture and society. (75) A new media revolution where culture itself, its communication, production and distribution shifted to computer-mediated forms. (43) It affected all types of media and created new computable media data¹⁸. (43, 44) Next to the representation of media data as recognizable cultural objects the conventions of computer's organization of data has influenced the logic of media. (64) For example the traditional culture has dimensions for an image such as formal qualities, meanings and content while the computer has different dimensions such as file size, type and format. (63)

A cultural tradition records and represents human experience and memory, it is a mechanisms for social and cultural exchange. (Manovich 82) Important cultural traditions are cinema, the printed word and the human-computer interface (HCI) as a system to control a machine. (79) This includes not only their strategies for organizing, operating and presenting information, but also the experience of viewing information. (82) The HCI tries to find the balance between well-known computer interface conventions and the cultural interface conventions of older technologies and machines. Computer capacities such as its flexibility in displaying, direct manipulation of data and simulations are intertwined with the printed word traditions creating an flat information surface as well as the cinema traditions creating a window into a virtual space in for example video games and websites. (97) Computer language is a new cultural meta-language implemented in ever changing software and evolving hardware. (97, 98) A continuous transformation

¹⁸ Digital text, graphics, animations, sounds, spatial constructions such as shapes, spaces and whole virtual worlds, etc. (Manovich 43)

adjusting to new tasks, therefore it might never completely stabilize. (64) The HCI determines the appearance and functionality of (cultural) data and influences how we see the computer, a media object and even the world. (57)

An important effect postmodernism had was spatialization¹⁹. For the written word and the cinema it meant (with the aid of the computer) going from a hierarchal organization of information and a psychological movement of narrative to a flat image to look at or a landscape to wander through. (Manovich 86) The cinematic language is becoming more popular than the language of print when it comes to the language of cultural interfaces. (87) The rectangular framing of represented reality and the mobile camera are especially important. The latter is primarily used to interact with three dimensional data (models, spaces, bodies and objects) using operations such as pan, zoom, tilt, and track. (88) The user identifies the mobile virtual camera with his/her own sight. Interactive virtual worlds defy the restrictions of the frame as the frame becomes mobile. (89) Interactive virtual world software such as virtual reality modelling language (VRML) allows us to look around and change our point of view. (58) A VRML world can be looked at from either jump cuts or from different viewpoints between which we travel smoothly as though on a dolly. (90) Interactive virtual worlds can either be seen as the successor or as an extension to cinema, allowing us to enter the narrative space, interact and create narrative events ourselves. (89)

Video games

In video games the cinematic interface is implemented, the game industry is step by step encoding every aspect of the cinema to create complex interactive virtual worlds. (90) Cinema has become a set of abstract operations separated from its original material and historical contexts, in other words a toolbox. (92) Often game designers start with opening sequences to introduce the virtual world and in the game itself there is a combination of interactive parts and cinematic sequences. In the game industry this is either called cutscenes or cinematics. Cinematic techniques such as mood setting lighting, depth of field and expressive camera are used in all types of games. (90) A dynamic point of view after an action shows the movement from another angle or sometimes even in slow-motion. The mobile camera follows the avatar around and you can also switch between the points of view and in some cases adjust the position of the camera. (91) More specifically Hollywood's cinematography and editing conventions are used in virtual worlds to show for example interactions with other human beings (avatars) using classical filming dialog conventions. (92) As Manovich sums it up: 'Element by element, cinema is being poured into a computer: first one-point linear perspective; next the mobile camera and a rectangular window; next cinematography and editing conventions, and, of course, digital personas also based on acting conventions borrowed from cinema, to be followed by make-up, set design, and the narrative structures themselves.' (92)

¹⁹ '...privileging space over time, flattening historical time, refusing grand narratives.' (Manovich 86)

Cutscenes started with digital video of actors who were superimposed over a virtual background, this meant that all possible scenes had to be taped beforehand. (90) A great example of this is the video game *Command & Conquer Red Alert* (Westwood studios, 1996) where actors were used to create the cutscenes. In this real-time strategy game you get to choose a side: the Soviets or the Allied. Choosing either one meant you got to see another story unfold one mission at a time. This is an example of a branching type structure where in total there is about one hour of footage showing you a retelling of history and a battle in Europe between the Soviets and the Allied. (57)

Now computer designed characters are used that completely blend with their virtual environment. These characters are rendered in real time and can be programmed to move around and interact with their setting. (90) In video games artificial intelligences engines are used to control the characters making them simulate intelligences in a well-defined narrow area. (54) This works because of the codified and rule-based nature of video games as Manovich sums up: 'In short, computer characters can display intelligence and skills only because the programs put severe limits on our possible interactions with them.' (54) This AI is a form of open interactivity where the program responds to the users interaction generating or modifying data in real time. (78) With simulation all parts and even the structure itself can be dynamically produced of which only initial data such as procedures, conditions or rules have to be set up. Other examples are formal language systems and artificial life programming. With the latter simple elements can contribute to the creation of complex global behaviours that are unpredictable from the outset and therefore can only be obtained during its creation. (78) It is used for video games such as *Creatures* (Mindscape Entertainment) and loads of other strategy and/or simulation games. (79) The end product is the result of a collaboration between user and programmer.

Ludology

In his “Ludologists love stories, too” (2003) Gonzalo Frasca’s explains the differences between the narratologist, narrativist and ludologist and is about the development of ludology. The narratologist uses narrative theory independent of the medium they choose to analyse such as film and video games. (1) The narrativists are those who use literary theory as the basis and from that basis create the theory of interactive media. The ludologist indeed includes game structure, mechanics and gameplay in their analysis, but certainly can also see games as narratives and as a visual medium, which is often not acknowledged. (2)

The term ludology was first used in 1982, but only came to development to what it is now after 1999. In his “Ludology meets narratology” (1999) Frasca explains the purpose of introducing the term as following: ‘My article proposed using the term “ludology” to describe a yet non-existent discipline that would focus on the study of games in general and videogames in particular.’ (2, 2003) He sees it as new theory made especially for gaming, in other words: game studies should be called ludology. It does not dismiss narratology, on the contrary narratology is often used to complement ludology with as goal to fully understand gaming. (3) The term ludologist was first used in 2001 to describe game scholars²⁰, however a true narrativist²¹ can’t be identified. (2, 3)

Frasca mentions a colonialization issue, with which he means that the game territory is being claimed by cinema or literary orientated approaches. The ludologist however prefers an independent study that uses these approaches, but without being made part of for example media studies or sociology as a side topic. (5) There is a lack of consensus about what narrative entails leading to strongly different ideas of what games are while keeping these unclear and unspecific definitions in mind. Ludologists admit that there are similarities with narrative, but state that games are not primarily narrative. In order to further this debate we first need to expand the current definition of narrative for it to include the ‘new’ game phenomenon. (6)

Frasca adds as personal opinion that he finds that the characteristics of literature and cinema as representation of reality are not fully equipped to analyse games with and therefore prefers simulation as an alternative. (7) In his conclusion Frasca repeats that ludologists do not reject narrative and that ‘The real issue here is not if games are narratives or not, but if we can really expand our knowledge on games by taking whichever route we follow.’ (7)

²⁰ Ludologists: Markku Eskelinen, Jesper Juul, Gonzalo Frasca, Aki Järvinen and Espen Aarseth, although the latter never used the term himself. (Frasca 2, 3)

²¹ Henry Jenkins, Marie-Laure Ryan and Michael Mateas deliberately take the middle ground and Janet Murray is just mistaken for one. (Frasca 3)

Chapter 5

Analysing film by involving ludology and game theory has been done before and will be elaborated on by looking at the cinema of Lars von Trier. This analysis especially involves virtuality we know from new media. The TV series *The Wire* (David Simon) will also be analysed by using game theory and also its usage of serialized procedurals will be explained. The cinema of von Trier and *The Wire* include the characteristics of simulation. Von Trier gives attention to the players in the simulation game while *The Wire* is more concerned with the simulation model itself. Both show the same simulation rhetoric, the systems are too complex to understand for the players and therefore they remain stuck in their level.

Game theory

In his *Playing the Waves* (2007) Jan Simons proposes a different way of analysing film by using the aesthetics of new media, game studies and game theory. (8) Simons has studied the innovative cinema of Lars von Trier and concluding that classical, critical and contemporary film theory doesn't cover the essence of his work. (8) Simons explains the essence of the work of von Trier as the following: '...von Trier's cinema is firmly based in an emergent new media culture of virtual realities and, even more importantly, games.' (8) Simons also found three trends in von Trier's cinema related to new media: 'These features are virtual realities in his pre-Dogme films, modelling and simulation in his Dogme film, virtual realism and distributed representation in his post-Dogme films...' (8)

Game theory²² focusses on the decisions made by the players and their interactions. (Simons 184) Situations are carefully modelled and what makes the study interesting is that the players often have conflicting interests. Analytical methods and theoretical concepts developed for the study of games can be successfully applied to the von Trier film. (179, 180) Gaming is an inspiration source as well as a principle for von Trier, it is something that his films have in common. Simons sums up all the ways that von Trier uses the game as source: '...von Trier defines the practice of filmmaking as a game, he performs the founding of a film movement as a game, he builds the story worlds of his films as game environments, he models film scenes like simulation plays, and he treats stories as reiterations of always the same game ...' (8, 9)

²² 'Game theory assumes that decision makers or players act rationally, which means that they choose their actions consistently in accordance with their preferences (though these need not be rational). It also assumes that decision makers assume that other players also act consistently according to their preferences. It is, of course, crucial that the outcome of the choices of actions – the payoff – for a player is affected by the actions of the other players, just as the chosen actions of a decision maker affect the payoffs of the other players.' (Simons 184)

The games played by von Trier

The Dogma 95 manifesto was introduced by von Trier and consists of filming rules and restrictions for the professional filmmaker, which are arbitrary and meant as a challenge as Simons brings forward: 'Taken together the rules define, not a specified alternative aesthetic, but a set of wilfully self-imposed restrictions which force filmmakers to find creative solutions to the problems that these restrictions inescapably present.' (23) The most important point was to let professional filmmakers rediscover the practice of filmmaking by letting them play the Dogma 95 game. (37)

Dogma 95 is a reiteration of modernist film movements, all of them including Dogma 95 serve only as the medium for a virtual pattern. The Dogma 95 movement helps define the basis or the state space of the films. There is no hierarchy between the films, all of them are performances or actualisations of a game that has no original or referent. (30) The Dogma 95 manifesto describes the simple rules of the game, which is set up much like a game of emergence: challenging in each run and complex in its execution. (70) The game or film is set between reality and virtuality as Simons concludes: 'A simulation game creates its own reality, within which real moves are made that make a real difference to the players within the world of the game.' (31)

The films of von Trier can be seen as recordings of saved games with similar game environments. (123) In these new surroundings the behavioural codes of the people and the underlying logic have to be learned and understood by the player. (106) A reoccurring code is that these new hostile surroundings are dominated by material exchange. (108) A quid pro quo relationship is forced upon the player, which ends in an uncontainable situation making the player suffers greatly. (109) The player ultimately has failed to adjust, which disables them from ever advancing a level or even surviving in their new environment. (111) This is mainly because the protagonist tries to protect his or her inner personality, ideals or credulity against all odds and is too naïve or trouble minded to fully understand the situation. (93) This leads to conflict and in the end the player loses his/her mind or is physically harmed or both. (106) He or she ends up being used by the other players, which is easy since the player has to rely on them for guidance in their new environment. (112)

The dogme film is not a representation nor are its scenes a reconstruction of a situation, but instead the films are the actualisations of a game and the scenes are its cinematographic simulations. The model has a source system with rules that dictates its behaviour in a range of circumstances. To start the simulation, input is needed such as a certain stimulating circumstance. (43) The goal is to discover what behaviour the model will show: 'In the simulation approach, a scene is a model for which the director/algorithmist at most provides a few parameters, but who then restricts him/herself to observing the subsequent behaviour of the model, which takes place freely and without further intervention.' (149) All of the situations or events that occur under these circumstances is just one conditional expression of the source system. (45) It's one actualised sequence in the state space of the model, just a chance realisation of all the possible virtual sequences. (44) Discontinuity montage or rather sampling is one way in which von Trier shows that film scenes are just one actualisation.

In this filmic form the status of the sequence of events is reduced to that of contingency. The viewer is shown multiple trajectories of the simulations at the same time as an exploration of its virtuality. (50) Furthermore von Trier's stories take place in existing locations, however they are real virtuality, because he uses indirect sources such as films, photos and paintings to reconstruct these places. (137) The role of the director is reduced to game designer providing the algorithms such as the roles and events of the story. The process itself is too unpredictable from the outset and any event can have a large impact on the model, this is what makes them so complex. In its artificial environment feedback loops exist or in other words the model influences itself outside of the control of the filmmaker. (45) A scene becomes a cinematographic simulation, the filmmaker only provides the elementary data or conditions: a location and characters. (45)

The stories of the von Trier films can be seen as reiterations of always the same game: 'In spite of their differences in setting, period, and characters, von Trier's movies all follow a strikingly similar pattern. The protagonist in each of his films enters a world in which he or she is a stranger and where he or she is confronted with the task of finding out what laws, rules, customs, and conventions govern the behaviour of its inhabitants...' (188) In this new environment strategic decisions are made by the protagonist who is a nice player. (189) Even though the protagonist exhibits good faith and makes sacrifices, his or her efforts are not returned by the other players. (188) In game theory this means that instead of meeting the co-operation of the protagonist, which would be the most favourable outcome for all, it is met with defection, which is the most favourable outcome for those who defect and are met with co-operation. (190) Therefore: 'From a theoretical perspective, all of von Trier's films display an inexorable logic: nice players always end up as losers.' (196)

The Wire

In his “All in the game” (2009) Jason Mittell made a comparison between the TV-show *The Wire* (David Simon 2002-2008) and a video game. (3) The series follows the cultural logic of games and has ludic elements. (9) HBO’s *The Wire* is about the city of Baltimore, where each of the five seasons focus on a different institution while at the same time building on the previous storylines. The series puts emphasis on the story and the acting by leaving out any complex narrative strategies. *The Wire* is a realistic and authentic portrayal of urban life, society and politics with a style that can be typified as a minimized documentary aesthetic. (7) The crime drama is not about giving ideological closure by solving mysteries and serving justice. Mittell points out: ‘On *The Wire*, the ongoing investigations rarely close and never resolve with any ideological certainties or reassurances, heroic victories or emotional releases.’(8) Rather than being about relationships and emotional struggles, the narrative drive is focussed on the games²³ played by the competing systems. It is about finding out which institutional procedures will be most successful and what the score will be after each round, while never actually having a winner. (8)

David Simon and many others saw the TV series as a ‘visual novel’²⁴ in which an episode is a chapter, a season a book and the series itself an epic novel (1). *The Wire* is unique, because of the serialized procedurals where for example one case could last more than one season and influence multiple storylines. Not only do the characters remember what happened before, the audience needs to remember as well to be able to engage in the narrative. (7) The build-up of the series is much like in a novel: slow with a lot of attention to detail. It takes its time to introduce its storylines, themes and characters and requires your patience to let the story unfold. In contrast to most media entertainment, the individual does not rise above the institution, there is no human agency that prevails. (3) Instead we get a searing vision of the city presenting a cynical world view. (1)

Game analysis

Video games are able to represent interrelated and complex systems in a subjective way making the actual source system easier to understand. This is especially the case with simulation games, it informs the users that a small changed variable can influence the simulation model. The users learns by changing different variables during each run of the simulation. (4) *The Wire* can be seen as a combination of two simulation games: *SimCity*²⁵ (Will Wright) and *The Sims*²⁶ (Will Wright) where decisions and incidents can change the institutions operation model and influence the lives of the characters. The main characters of the TV-show

²³ For the viewer watching, *The Wire* is a spectatorial game and ‘the game’ is also a metaphor for the urban struggle. (Mittell 3)

²⁴ When reading you are able to learn about the characters motivations, thoughts and witness their growth. The interior of the characters in *The Wire* is only shown subtly through the gestures and motions they make. (Mittell 2)

²⁵ The lives of citizen are influenced by changing the city. (Mittell 4)

²⁶ The actions of the avatars are controlled. (Mittell 4)

continue to do the same, they are set in a particular way of acting within a system that remains unchanged. As described by Mittell: ‘The characters in *The Wire*, while quite human and multi-dimensional, are as narrowly defined in their possibilities as typical videogame avatars.’ (5) Even when a character decides to break the rules of the game, this only leads to a conflict that can’t be overcome. Mittell explains this as the following: ‘The characters with both the will and opportunity to change ... find the systems too resistant, the “boss levels” too difficult, to overcome the status quo.’ (5) With the simulation game you need multiple runs to experiment with the different variables, in other words you need replayability. Just like Mittell mentions about each season: “... we could view them as one play-through its simulation game.’ (4) Each season begins with slight differences in the start settings such as new characters, new rules, a different system, but the urban game is played each time. With each replay the end result is both unpredictable from the outset as well as inevitable. As we learn from *The Wire* reform by changing parameters still results into failure as the system itself is too locked-in to allow social change. The simulation rhetoric is that there are no solution to complex problems, Baltimore is a city in decay where every practice contributes to its demise rather than fights it. (5)

Mittell sums up in his conclusion: ‘In both *The Wire* and the realm of digital games, procedures are the essential building blocks of narrative, character, and rhetoric, the actions that are undertaken within the parameters of the simulation, the rules of the game.’ (9) All the institutions in *The Wire* have an underlying code and all players play by this code. When codes overlap this leads to conflicting actions proving that all institutions are interrelated and that a city has a complex social system, which *The Wire* tries to simulate in its series. (9)

Case Study

Chapter 6

To test the theory that films can also be more fully analysed by using ludology and game theory the film *Cloverfield* (2008) will be analysed. This is to detect if there are any similarities to video games in the *Cloverfield* movie as well as if we can see the influence of new media on the aesthetics of the film. We'll start with a short summary of the film, followed by an analysis of the film genre, the plot and its relation to 9/11. Although clearly a monster genre film the monster itself is not often shown in full nor do we get any conclusive information about it, the film is more about the narrative instead. The found footage documentary promises a more real and visceral experience. Its handheld camera technique might be used to give credibility to the plot and give critique on the disaster genre and its omniscient narration and the supposed honesty of the documentary in an ironic way. *Cloverfield* can be seen as a reiteration of 9/11, focussed on providing an authentic experience of the disaster. A visual text can be used as a cultural coping mechanism that gives meaning to disaster by offering reasserting narratives, however *Cloverfield* in contrast thrives on fear and uncertainty.

Cloverfield

Cloverfield (dir. Matt Reeves, 2008) is a monster/disaster film that takes place in Manhattan. The film pretends to be 80 minutes of footage on a Mini DV tape that is found in the rubble of Central Park and confiscated by the U.S. Department of Defence. Basically an unspecified creature that sheds parasites and presumably came from the Atlantic Ocean starts to destroy everything in his path with special attention to landmarks. The whole film is shot from the first person point-of-view with a video camera held by different amateur cameramen. A fun day with Beth (Odette Yustman) that ends at the Coney Island fair shot by Rob (Michael Stahl-David), the preparations of the goodbye party for Rob shot by Jason (Mike Vogel) and the party itself which quickly turns into disaster when Manhattan is attacked shot by Hud (T.J. Miller) the main cameraman. Mostly the actions of a group of young adults is followed, the group is formed after the initial attack and consist of Rob the main character, Hud, Rob's brother Jason, Jason's girlfriend Lily (Jessica Lucas), Hud's love interest Marlena (Lizzy Caplan) and later also Beth. When attempting to evacuate the city the group loses Jason when attempting to cross the Brooklyn Bridge. While the group tries to cope with his sudden death and the chaos around them, Rob receives a phone call that leads him to believe that his ex-girlfriend Beth is in severe danger. In his grief Rob decides to cross the city to rescue Beth who he still loves. Similarly to a horror movie all the characters except Lily get killed off one by one in their attempt to first rescue Beth and later escape Manhattan. Rob and Beth are the last to die during what is called the Hammerdown protocol where Manhattan gets heavily bombed by the U.S. army in a final attempt to kill the Cloverfield monster.

Film genre

In his "Evidence of Things Not Quite Seen" (2010) Daniel North comments that watching *Cloverfield* is like a game of 'hide and seek' (75). Normally with the disaster genre film the attention is drawn to visual deception. However the creature and the destruction of Manhattan in *Cloverfield* is only glimpsed at in an amateurish fashion. (75) It is similar to cinéma vérité with its unstable vision created with shaky camera movements that barely catch the action and often misframes it. (76) Although we do eventually get a too close complete view of the creature from a low angle, for the most part we only have an incomplete picture which creates a suggestive image. (84) As North explains: 'By simulating the impression that the monster is a chaotic agent not under the control of the filmmakers, not served up for viewing as a spectacular "pay-off," *Cloverfield* feigns the appearance of documentary, where events should not seem to be unfolding in patterns pre-determined by genre or commercial expectation.' (76)

Although the found footage documentary has been done before in the horror genre *Cannibal Holocaust* (dir. Ruggero Deodato, 1980) and *The Blair Witch Project* (dir. Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez, 1999) it has not been done in the disaster film genre: 'It sacrifices the omniscient narration of the traditional blockbuster disaster movie ... and promises a direct connection with the real, through its aesthetic similarity to authentic documents of events.' (North 86) Normally showing the creature creates a safe distance for the viewer, however in this format the viewer remains disorientated. (86) The actions and events seem that much closer, it becomes visceral rather than spectacular: 'Instead of floating around the action, free from its physical dangers, the camera here is emphatically embodied through this sense of its fragility.' (89)

Normally additional information about the creature and how to defeat it is released throughout the movie, but in *Cloverfield* the authorities are only marginally shown to be fighting a losing battle against this unknown threat that remains undefined throughout the movie. (North 79) Furthermore the film is not about the battle itself as North mentions: 'The battle against the monster happens around them, but the film's protagonists are not directly involved, and so learn little of the monster's origins and motivations.' (79) Instead of wanting to defeat the creature, their goal is to save Beth and survive the whole ordeal by avoiding the creature and its parasites as much as possible. The whole film is made to seem like an accidental occurrence hiding the fact that it is a studio production that has been carefully planned and pre-visualised. (88) It has a generic romantic rescue narrative that is easy to follow. The aesthetic of amateur found footage is in contrast with the fantastic narrative content. There is a unique dynamic between form and content that can also be seen as a commentary on the illusionism of spectacular cinema and the dishonesty of documentary. (86) Instead of subjecting the disaster to explicit visualisation it favours panic, chaos and confusion which are associated with disaster in real life. (87)

The plot

When looking more closely at the narrative it seems rather pathetic much like the melodrama's of Sirk and von Trier's *Breaking the Waves*. Rob has a long existing crush on Beth, but only spend one and a half day with her as a couple. The time between the date on Coney Island and the attack of the creature is spend ignoring each other. Rob believed that it made no sense to call, because he was leaving for Japan and saw no reason to continue the relationship. This results in a fight during the party to which Beth actually brought a date. Still Rob finds this relationship ample reason to do the inconceivable and face the creature and its parasites. Another motivation for Rob might be that during his last conversation with Jason, he gave him the advice to go after Beth romantically, because she is way out of his league and this might be the only chance he gets. This can be understood as Jason's last wish for Rob.

Hud, Lily and Marlina follow Rob during what seems like an obvious suicide mission. Although Hud is said to be Rob's best friend, he did not even know about Rob's changed relationship with Beth and reacts to it in an immature fashion. His motivations to follow Rob are unclear only his reasons for documenting are voiced. Lily just saw her long-time boyfriend get killed and is in a state of grief, which might explain why she chose to do the irrational and follow Rob even though she just witnessing the damage the creature does first hand when it destroyed the Brooklyn Bridge. The most surprising group member is Marlina a friend of Lily who has even seen the creature eat people and still decides to follow Rob even though she barely knows Beth or even Rob for that matter. She even mentioned her weakly motivated action to follow them in the film by saying "I'm not even supposed to be here" when they take refuge in a subway station. Although there is a logically structured plot the psychological motivations only applies to the main character. The conclusion of the film can also be seen as overly sentimental as Rob and Beth scream their last I love you's to each other. Perhaps there is a parallel between *Breaking the Waves* and *Cloverfield*, the former uses its raw quasi-realistic documentary style and intermezzo's as a way to create emotional distance and at the same time give credibility to the plot and the latter might want to give credibility to the plot as well with its handheld camera technique.

To support this theory you can state that the emotional scenes are indeed overly theatrical. However this would mean that there is an alternative interpretation to the *Cloverfield* film. The whole Rob-Beth love story is definitely a way to further the plot, but you could also argue that the handheld camera technique is a form of stylistic overkill and therefore filmic excess. (Verstraten 11) As a self-reflective film it could be a critique on the spectacular disaster genre that shows something that should not be that easy to capture or on the documentary and its supposed realism. It can be seen as a form of irony that the documentary style is chosen for something as impossible as a deep sea creature that attacks landmarks.

In his “9/11 on the Screen.” (2011) Thomas Riegler addresses mostly the Hollywood and televised representation of the 9/11 events. A visual medium is experienced more immediate than text, it shapes our historical memory. This framing is seen as a form of historicizing, which is a gradual process where perceptions and interpretations of historical events shift over time. Especially during crisis visual text is needed to simplify and provide moral uplift. (155) It is a cultural coping mechanism that gives meaning to suffering and sacrifice, guides emotions and aggressions towards the enemy and softens the blow of the disaster itself. (155, 156)

After four years popular culture addressed 9/11 by supporting the American myth of the individual rising to the challenge. (Riegler 157, 158) The U.S. was exposed as vulnerable, needing reasserting narratives to cover up the fact that the U.S. was humiliated and victimized. (157) Clearly focussing on eradicating any fear and uncertainty with these narratives. (162) Most of these productions took artistic liberties while claiming to be truthful and where overtly political while stating that it was not a political film. (158) There were also narratives serving as propaganda for George W. Bush and his administration that at the same time promoted the war efforts taken against terrorism, which was shown as a black and white issue. (160, 162) The most recent productions offered emotional human-interest stories about coping with trauma and loss. (161) These productions all add to the stabilization and legitimization of the current order. (162) Still the cinematic versions of the 9/11 events are not popular and seen as unsuited for entertainment: it is too recent and too close to home for the American citizen and moreover the conflict is not over. (163)

This is why the monster/disaster movie *Cloverfield* is the odd one out, although it was criticized it was still a box office success. (Riegler 162) American popular culture showed urban destruction in films such as *Godzilla*, (dir. Roland Emmerich, 1998) and *Armageddon* (dir. Michael Bay, 1998) making watching the actual destruction of the World Trade Centre on TV filmic and unreal. (163) Although there are differences between 9/11 and *Cloverfield*, such as the invader being a fantastical creature rather than an organised group of terrorist, the parallels are uncanny. The suddenness of the attack, the lack of warning signs and the targeting landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty. An even more painful fact is that the creature is seen destroying skyscrapers and the tower in which Beth is trapped has collapsed against another reminiscent the Twin Towers. The iconic imagery of 9/11 is reimagined: the people fleeing across the Brooklyn Bridge only for it to be destroyed by the creature preventing the people from evacuating the city. The rubble, dust and flying debris all add to the overall sense of panic, chaos and the feeling of being trapped in a place that previously felt safe, never knowing where and when the next attack might be. (162) There is a general lack of information about the creature, we don't learn where the creature came from, how to defeat it or what it wants. There is no silver lining: almost every single protagonist dies, making their sacrifices while fighting the creature and parasites worthless. The U.S. military is never in control and is shown fighting a losing battle, much like they could not

prevent the attacks of 9/11. In the end there is the complete destruction of Manhattan and whether it helped to kill the creature is never confirmed leaving us with a sense of doubt and uncertainty.

The producer J.J. Abrams explained his aim to create the Cloverfield monster as a national monster with a clear reference to 9/11. (Tull, "Document 01.18.08", 2008) *Cloverfield* can be seen as a reiteration of 9/11 or a critique on the other 9/11 films. It captures the chaos of the disaster perfectly; panic, confusion, the lack of information and the loss of control. It was a critique in the sense that generally speaking the other film presented a heroic narrative with the aim to restore hope and presents 9/11 as a black and white issue. However with *Cloverfield* the opposite is being done: our hero dies, Manhattan gets completely destroyed and even the creature itself raises more questions. Lead creature designer Neville Page describes the Cloverfield monster as a newborn that had just woken up from his deep sleep on the bottom of the ocean and now is disorientated in a hostile environment. (Bennett, "Cloverfield", 2008) It presents a cynical worldview where almost no-one survives and the bad guy is a creature that can't fully be understood. It was not really a reasserting narrative as it did not provide moral uplift or give meaning to suffering and sacrifice. Far from supporting the ideologies and beliefs that are presented to us by the other 9/11 movies this film can be seen as a counternarrative that takes a much more critical stance.

Chapter 7

This chapter is about the first person camera perspective and its link to identification, realism and tension. Although the test group recognizes themselves in different characters the character with whom they identify is Rob and only sometimes Hud. The intended realism is not achieved via the handheld camera technique: the test group became hyperaware of all the tricks used to make the film seem like accidental footage. The handheld camera style is similar to that of a first-person shooter game where the camera is pointed at the action and is used to explore its environment. In the case of immersion and tension the handheld camera technique helps for both the action scenes as well as the dramatic scenes.

Identification

In “De Ervaring van de First-person Film” (2011) Thibaut A. J. Niels documents the effects of the first person camera perspective on a mixed test group. This camera technique is in conflict with how identification normally works. A point-of-view shot is as a rule of classic cinema always followed by a reverse shot to explain to whom the vision belongs. It simultaneously shows the expression of the character with whom we are inclined to sympathize and identify. (Verstraten 97) With *Cloverfield* we do get glimpses of the person who holds the camera, but mostly we follow the other characters and register their expressions. (Niels 3) With *Cloverfield* it is hard to tell who the main character is. Hud seems the logical choice at first, because we follow his perspective. However we do not get any background information on him, he simply follows everybody around and he is not the one that pushes the narrative forward. It is more likely to be Rob: it is his goodbye party, Jason’s death arguably affects him the most and it is his crazy plan to rescue his ex-girlfriend. Therefore in this case we don’t identify with the focalizing character.

Some of the males in the test group recognized themselves in Rob and some in Hud the normal guy and the females of the test group recognized themselves in Rob and Marlana. Rob was chosen, because he remained cool, was determined and motivated by love. Marlana was chosen, because she was funny and as a character had the most distance from all the emotional distress. (Niels 10) When asked who they identified with the answer was Rob, because he loses his brother and he learns that his ex-girlfriend is trapped. We also often see his reactions to the events and we hear his thoughts when he explains that he absolutely needs to save Beth. The test group only identified with Hud during the action scenes when he for example had to flee in panic, this is when their vision truly aligned with that of Hud. This stops during the dramatic scenes, because you can’t see his reaction. (13) Some also answered Beth, because her situation is so hopeless and you absolutely have to feel for her. (13, 14)

Noticeable is that the one that the respondents recognized themselves in is not always the person with whom they identify. Identification is guided towards to the person who experiences the most stress and drama

during narrative events. This makes you feel for the character as well as hope for a more positive end for them. This is therefore in this case regardless of the personality of the character. (15)

Realism

Realism as style is shown in *Cloverfield* by leaving the mistakes and accidents in the film and by using the long take. A handheld camera fakes amateurism which is also linked to realism, this is emphasized with the shaky camera movements. (4) North explains how this makes the film experience feel more real:

‘It demonstrates immediacy through the concealment of all traces of its manufacture, seeming to offer viewers more direct access to the events depicted, and using its amateur style to situate the spectator in a continuous relationship with the characters and situations. At the same time, it displays hypermediacy by bearing all the traces of its mediation openly – the image might be time-stamped, the lens dirty or blood-splattered, the tape glitched.’ (88)

The film looks like it hasn't been edited in the studio leaving all sorts of ‘unnecessary’ images in the film and making it feel more like found footage and a report of real events.

However the handheld camera in *Cloverfield* made the test group more aware of the artificial character of film, always looking for proof that it is not just an amateur with a camera capturing haphazardly but a major film production that carefully stages its scenes. (Niels 28) Especially the scene on the bridge is mentioned by the test group, because it captures the disaster perfectly. (18) Another scene that stood out, which can be seen as proof that it is not found footage as well as an inconsistency is when the group walks on the subway tracks. At first we can see in the tunnel showing us the fleeing rats and part of the tracks as well. This scene is illuminated by the camera's light, however when the parasites appear and Hud points the camera to the tunnel again we see absolutely nothing. When Rob stands in front of the camera to turn on the night vision he is strongly overlit meaning that Hud did not turn the camera's light off. The underlit shot of the tunnel is therefore only used to increase tension.

North explains why the intended realism is not experienced by the test group: ‘It is crucial that viewers notice these technical facets, since it is through their presence that the film accents its impression of authenticity, but it is equally crucial that they suspend disbelief and attribute them to the diegetic equipment and crew (the camcorder carried by Hud), and not to the massive resources of 20th Century Fox.’ (88) The test group did not suspend their disbelief, instead the style simply made the test group more alert and sceptical. (Niels 19) The amateurism was overdone and experienced as forced and distracting. One of the participants even pointed out that the filmed goodbye party was too chaotic, especially because there was absolutely no reason for Hud to be this bad at taping. (24) The test group was irritated by the camera perspective, because of the unsteady camera movements, unnecessary zooming, missing the action and the diagonal frames. (24)

The film is so filled with mistakes and accidents such as out of focus pictures and the filming of feet, that it is in the way of realism moreover you risk losing the audience's connection to the film. (18)

Tension

According to Simons, Lars von Trier uses a point-and-shoot style that is similar to that of a first-person shooter game. The camera is used to explore and as a result the spectator watches through the eyes of someone who was there and this raises the level of immersion:

‘This alignment with an invisible and yet strongly present observer, who, like an innocent bystander, is continuously surprised by the events which unfold around them, contributes towards the immersivity of the Dogma 95 films ... in the same way that a computer game player or avatar, continuously alert to the presence of obstacles, surprises or threats, becomes immersed in the game environment.’
(Simons 151)

As mentioned the observer with the camera does not interfere with the story, which is different from the game player or avatar that does influence the series of events. Therefore the viewer should be compared to the lurker, someone who watches a game being played. (124) This is also the style used in *Cloverfield*. Hud can be seen as a game player or avatar who reacts to the events around him and reacts accordingly. The viewer becomes the lurker and the film itself a recording of a game.

This first person camera perspective is said to put you right in the middle of the action increasing immersion, which is cleverly achieved in *Cloverfield*. (Niels 2) Immersion is linked to the experience of tension. Tension can be felt through the character and tension can also be felt for the character when we know about the danger before the character does. Lastly, there is also direct tension, which is experienced when we believe that we as the audience are the target. (4) All three types of tension can be felt when watching *Cloverfield*, which is especially the case in the scene where Hud gets eaten, split in half and regurgitated by the creature. We hear Rob scream “Hud, what are you doing? Go!” making us aware that Hud is in danger. We don't know what the creature will do, but we fear the worse as the creature slowly turns his vision to Hud. Lastly, although we only identified with Hud during short action sequences, we still realise that he is the reason that the whole thing is being recorded in the first place. Arguable when he dies we stop seeing, making us feel vulnerable even though we are perfectly aware that the creature can't hurt us. (22) Tension in *Cloverfield* is mostly experienced by the males during the chaotic scenes and by the females during the dramatic scenes. Although there were complaints about the first person camera perspective, in the case of the experience of tension, it helps. (21)

Chapter 8

The viral campaign of *Cloverfield* is best described as an extended advergame. The viral campaign added to the Cloverfield mystery, created a buzz and gave the viewer the option to enter the narrative space. *Cloverfield* uses aesthetics from non-fiction and the fourth wall is often broken. Technical fragility is shown through the death of the cameraman and technical imperfections. Director Matt Reeves has a playful approach to filmmaking and in the film various video game elements can be identified.

Viral campaign

The viral campaign is a challenge for the spectator who has to gather clues about the film. The marketing campaign of *Cloverfield* started with the release of a teaser during the premiere of *Transformers* (dir. Michael Bay, 2007) and went viral afterwards. It was the first piece of the puzzle that only included a release date without the film title. North states that instead of a carefully timed publicity campaign done by a clear authoritative source, viral campaigns ‘depend on relinquishing control: releasing key pieces of information in carefully chosen places, in the hope and expectation that it will spread organically by through the target audience...’ (80)

In her "Gameplay Marketing Strategies as Audience Co-optation" (2011) CarrieLynn D. Reinhard uses *Cloverfield* as an example of marketing across websites. In her work she defines a specific marketing campaign type, which she calls ‘gameplay marketing’. Basically, some type of gaming structure is used in the advertisement to promote gameplay activities. Active participation is needed to for example get information about the media product by solving puzzles. (52, 53) Reinhard mentions that for the media producer ‘The goal is to generate and/or maintain buzz, which could be used to spread the message about the film or television series beyond the consumer/player of the game.’ (71)

Reinhard also links this specific type of marketing to the extended advergame. A digital game used to promote further engagement with the (media) product with as goal to create positive ‘brand’ awareness. (53-55) Multiple websites were made for the marketing campaign, these websites represented fictional companies and organizations. There were also fake news items from different countries and My Space pages for the characters of the film. Moreover ‘unofficial’ websites such as blogs, message boards, fansites and spoiler sites were dedicated to spreading the information needed to solve the Cloverfield mystery. (61-63) As a result not only the media producer, but also the consumers/players contributed to the campaign and overall buzz. (71)

Official publicity materials weren’t recognized as such and some of the materials were meant as a decoy, moreover they became mixed with other messages of the internet leading to many misinterpretations. However as North mentions: ‘... even these “unconfirmed sightings” work to expand upon the glimpses offered by the producers, as the public attempts to fill in the blanks and expand the base of available

information on the film.’ (83) It had created a community that had entered the narrative space of the film and occupied themselves with the competing interpretations trying to collaboratively construct its meaning. Even after watching the film, questions were left unanswered such as where the creature came from and if it was defeated by the Hammerdown protocol, urging the committed spectator to take up the role of investigator and put the film in its broader context by including the promotion materials. (79)

Instead of a revelation, the opacity of information remains, as North concludes: ‘the mystery *is* the monster, a manifestation of uncertainty, and even the ubiquity of images and eye-witness accounts cannot bring it into plain sight.’ (91) It remained in every way the obstructed spectacle combined with only partial knowledge. (91) North mentions that the film itself and the viral campaign ‘... create a seamless environment of obsession and confusion – the former, through its restricted imagery and narration; the latter through its web of impenetrable clues – denying the comfort of clarity to audiences and characters alike.’ (84)

Direct address

In her “Onwerkelijk Waar” (2010) Miranda van Gelder writes about non-fiction conventions in fiction films. (6) *Cloverfield* borrows aesthetics from the documentary, reportage and the home video. (15) Also it pretends to be found footage by showing recording information and claiming that the footage is property of the U.S. Departments of Defence. (19) Breaking the fourth wall²⁷ is done by letting an actor acknowledging the presence of the camera or by direct address. (13) When the audience is spoken to they are forced to actively listen. (14) Usually close-ups of actors are used to show the expressions as they look straight into the camera to make it more personal. (22) Furthermore there is the acknowledgement of the person that holds the camera and the camera itself. (14) In *Cloverfield* these various forms are used throughout the film. During the party Hud records goodbye testimonies for Rob. The partygoers acknowledge the presence of the camera and Hud himself: when doing the testimony they look straight into the camera to address Rob and afterwards look at Hud for confirmation. (27) The camera gets bloodied when the group fights the parasites in the subway and is later carefully cleaned by Hud. This is one of the few scenes in which we see the face of Hud, another time is when he stands in front of the creature. The camera gets dirtied again and we see Hud’s face when he lies in the grass after he has been spit out. The camera makes his own presence known as it shifts in and out of focus while lying on the ground showing us the scene from an odd angle. In the moments that the camera gets put down it becomes a character. Also when the camera shows us the old footage on the tape, which happens when Hud rewinds the tape, stops filming or when the camera is struck, it almost seems like the camera stubbornly wants to show this footage instead.

There is also a reference to the hidden camera reportage. At the party Hud is asked turn the camera off when Jason and Hud interrogate Lily about what has happened between Beth and Rob, Hud however keeps on filming. When the group arrives at the makeshift military hospital, images of badly hurt people as well as a dead specimen of the parasite can be seen. When Rob tries to get the military to help him rescue his ex-girlfriend they get into a fight. One of the men in charge turns to Hud and pushes the camera away stating that he is not allowed to film: “Turn that goddamned camera...” Hud however secretly keeps on filming from a low angle reminiscent of undercover reportages we know from TV.

There is a lengthy heart-breaking direct address near the end of the film done by Rob and Beth just after Hud has died. Remarkable with this direct address is that they try to speak directly to the rest of Amerika rather than their loved ones which was done in *The Blair Witch Project*. We know from a phone call received by Rob that he at least has contact with his mother, but he does not address her in his final moments. Rob starts by stating his name, the time, the date and what has happened followed by lines such as “If you have found this tape. I mean, if you are watching this right now, then you probably know more about it than I do”.

²⁷ The fourth wall is the illusion that with theatre there is an imaginary wall between the audience and the stage. Breaking the fourth wall is done to create interaction with the audience and include them in the performance. (Gelder 13)

They have accepted that they would die and that the footage if found would be valuable. They are doing a report, but in contrast to an actual reportage which are planned and stylised, they are unprepared and their faces are bloodied and pale. (Gelder 15) Although direct address is perhaps too often used in this film, in the final two scenes this does make a lasting impression. The goodbye scene in Central Park is followed by the scene on Coney Island where the film concludes with Beth saying “I had a good day” which is ironic just after witnessing the scene in which she has died.

Technical fragility

Technical fragility is shown throughout the movie with the death of the cameraman and what seems like technical flaws. (North 88) The death of Hud is perhaps the most impressive scene: not only do we finally get a steady full picture of the creature it also attacks our own vision by ‘...extinguishing the narration and leaving the spectator in the unsettling position of looking through a machine that is suddenly void of the operator whose perspective had acted as a surrogate for their own vision inside the fiction.’ (88)

There is rapid montage with jump cuts, there are grainy pictures, the sounds are not properly controlled and there is overall distortion due to lossy compression. (87, 88) The home video aesthetic comes with its technical shortcomings such as unfocussed images. These are all aesthetics we know from new media, but rather than showing it as technical perfection it is shown with flaws which attracts a lot of attention to the artificial character of film. Instead of transparency: making the mechanics of film invisible, the film choses foregrounding: revealing the make-ability of film. (Wollen 503) However this idea of foregrounding is not supported by the fact that the fantastic creature itself is perfectly created with the aid of state of the art computer-generated imagery and therefore it is clearly a fictional product. Instead these imperfections have been chosen to strengthen the sense of chaos and to create immediacy. Perhaps also to give a dystopian view of the new media society and its obsession with media content. This idea is supported by the film’s content: when the head of the Statue of Liberty is thrown onto the street we see people almost immediately taking photos with their phones. Shock is overwritten with the need to document everything, which is also being done by Hud.

Cloverfield as a video game

Director Matt Reeves reinvents the monster genre by challenges himself to use the handheld camera technique where it would be much easier to use the conventional filming techniques for the disaster/monster genre as the first person camera perspective proves to be a hard technique to pull off²⁸. (North 88) The viral campaign was a puzzle game that was continued in the film itself and was picked up again after the film's release. This all contributing to the playful and mysterious character of *Cloverfield*. (Reinhard 61) There is only diegetic music used in the film such as the music at the party and the elevator music when they reach Beth's apartment. There are hidden pictures²⁹ in the film as a homage to other monster films, which are barely perceivable and part of the fun trivia of *Cloverfield*. (North 85) All this can be seen as a playful approach to filmmaking.

What can be seen as a game in the film is the constant search for information. First the news report during the party, then the news reports on the TV's in the electronic store, the information we get from the soldiers in the makeshift military hospital and the overall inconclusive clues we get from other characters throughout the film who all seem incapable to really voice what they have witnessed. This is extra frustrating for those who followed the viral campaign and hoped to find the final pieces of the puzzle. Although what has been given is yet another clue in the final scene where we see an object falling in the ocean and because this was roughly three and a half weeks before the attack this might be a substantial clue. However for the most part a lot of questions remain unanswered, such as did the creature actually die during the Hammerdown protocol? This means the *Cloverfield* puzzle game was not over.

Most of the time the direct address in the film is either directed at Hud or at the camera itself with whoever finds the footage as intended audience. It can also be seen as acknowledgement of the player as many non-playable characters such as Rob, Marlena and Lily talk to the player. They can ask for help and demand certain actions. For example when the group comes in the crossfires of the military, Hud is asked to head for the subway to take cover. In this sense we become part of the game. It is as earlier mentioned much like the first-person shooter game. (Simons 124) Manhattan can be seen as a hostile game environment that surprises us with its random encounters with the creature as well as its parasites and the presented obstacles such as the apartment building of Beth being partially destroyed. (151)

When looking more closely at the narrative structure itself you can certainly find some similarities with a video game. All the old footage can be identified as the cutscenes of the video game. In his "In Defense of Cutscenes" (2002) Rune Klevjer describes cutscenes as '... cinematic sequences addressing the reader, putting the player on hold.' (193) Instead of seeing the cutscene as a mere interruption of the gameplay he

²⁸ Its first usage was in *Lady in the Lake* (dir. Montgomery, 1946) and this was not considered a success. This experiment was more or less forgotten until the success of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) which encouraged others to pick up the technique again, but without much success. (Niels 2)

²⁹ *King Kong* (dir. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Shoedsack, 1933), *Them* (dir. Gordon Douglas, 1954) and *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (dir. Eugène Lourié, 1953). (Reinhard 61)

also points to the functional uses such as the reward by entertainment and the offering of moments of release from intense action. (195) In *Cloverfield* both of these functions are relevant. The film starts with the old footage to establish the relationship between Rob and Beth as well as situating the story in Manhattan much like how Manovich describes the cinematic: ‘Games started featuring lavish opening cinematic sequences (called in the game business "cinematics") to set the mood, establish the setting and introduce the narrative.’ (90) Later in the film the old footage gets shown sporadically creating a fragmented narrative. Therefore it can be seen as a reward by entertainment. The film is full of sudden and chaotic action, which puts a demand on the viewer who needs to make sense of the shaky imagery. The old footage has a slow pace and is filmed much steadier, therefore these scenes also functions as release from intense action.

There are three missions to be accomplished: escape Manhattan via the Brooklyn Bridge, rescue Beth from the high tower and again escape Manhattan by reaching the choppers in-time. Unfortunately we mostly fail at completing our missions and even die at the end. Time and time again we are reactionary to the events and chaos around us without ever really having any control. As Simons explains: ‘Discovering the rules and patterns of a computer game environment is necessary not only to survive in that environment but also to escape from it and gain access to a new, higher game level, which will confront the player with new problems and challenges.’ (111) If *Cloverfield* is a game we need to be able to play the game again as Frasca points out in his "Simulation versus narrative." (2003): ‘In a game, going through several sessions is not only a possibility but a requirement of the medium.’ (227) This brings us back to the cinema of 9/11. As earlier mentioned the films about urban destruction before 9/11 made the disaster itself hard to understand (Riegler 163). Four years later Hollywood went back to the events of 9/11 with films like *United 93* (dir. Paul Greengrass, 2006) and *World Trade Center* (dir. Oliver Stone, 2006). Both aimed for a semidocumentary style and supported the American Myth as explained by Riegler: ‘... average citizens rising to the challenge, while political and military command centers fail to grasp the situation and the rest of the public passively watches the spectacle unfolding on TV.’ (158) This is also exactly how we could explain the story told in *Cloverfield*: Rob is motivated by love and against all odds tries to rescue Beth, while the U.S. Army is seen fighting a losing battle. Although, both die in the end they still got reunited. Similarly *United 93* ended with a black screen indicating that everybody died, but demonstrate the courage of the passengers of United Airlines 93 first. *World Trade Center* ended on the most positive note of the three films: the rescue workers that are trapped under the rubble are recovered. All three can be seen as simulation of 9/11 and as Frasca explains ‘Certainly you could play a game only once, but the knowledge and interpretation of simulation requires repetition.’ (227) Video games are able to create simulations of interrelated and complex systems in a subjective way, these reiterations can be seen as a way to make us understand the disaster itself. (Mittell 4)

Conclusion

Cinema is predominantly a storytelling medium where interpretations are formed as a result of interaction between the narrative agent and the viewer. (Verstraten 26) Identification is used to create emotional involvement and can be guided towards a character using narrative tactics such as internal focalisation. (91) The aim of dis-identification is to let the viewer keep their critical distance so that they are able to form new interpretations. Postmodernism changed literature and the postmodern narrative became interactive in a figurative sense: providing new reading strategies, alternative constructions of meaning and being self-referential. (Ryan 17) This free play can be seen as a disruption of all structures, meanings and directions, much like the postmodern conception of language itself. (186, 187). Elsaesser describes the mind-game film as movies that are playing games with the characters, the audience or both. (Elsaesser 14, 15) These films have puzzle narratives that require a new form of immersion where the viewer has to pay extra attention to details. (16) As a reaction to this change two approaches have formed one that extends classic film theory and one that sees this as a new type of film influenced by new media and video games. (21, 22)

The new media revolution created a playing field in which cultural traditions cross-influence each other more strongly than ever before. The video game belongs to the human-computer interface but shows strong connections to cinema. Ludology does not dismiss games as being narrative or a visual medium, ludologists however prefer to work from the perspective of the game as an interactive medium including for example gameplay and simulation in their analyses. (Frasca 2) Game theory is about decision makers or players who act in accordance to their preferences. The outcome or payoff is the result of all the actions taken by all the decision makers or players in the simulation model. (Simons 184) Both ludology and game theory can be applied to cinema and TV as has been done for the cinema of von Trier and the TV-show *The Wire*.

Cloverfield is an example of cinema that cannot fully be analysed by using the classic film theory. The film breaks with its genre conventions by using the first person camera perspective, has a game like viral campaign and shows lossy compression throughout the film known from new media. A few of the video game characteristics are: the hostile game environment Manhattan, the old footage as cutscenes and the escape and rescue missions. By using the new analytical methods a more complete analysis can be made. Game theory and especially ludology are a way to analyse aesthetics previous not included in the film theory, aspects that are introduced via new media and the video game in particular.

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