Screenwriting, Empathy and Multi-cultural ethics

Patrick Cattrysse

1Universiteit Antwerpen - Université Libre de Bruxelles

April 03, 2019

Abstract

This paper argues that to adopt a “naturalized morals” perspective, and to match it with narrative studies, may help advance the study of empathy and its relation to multi-cultural ethics within the larger study of audience involvement. Firstly, different texts may convey different morals, and therefore require different audiences adhering to different morals in order to obtain a preferred or negotiated reading. This invites us to reconsider some old concepts (e.g. anti-hero) as well as some newer ones (e.g. the “bad fan”). Secondly, if studies of empathy tend to focus on character (dis)liking, narratologists generally adopt a wider view, involving multiple narrative agents including real makers, implied makers, narrator(s), narratee(s), implied audience(s) and real audience(s). Adopting this wider view allows for a more refined study of empathy that may play (or not) as a more diversified phenomenon at multiple levels. Thirdly, empathy is not the only player in this game. A brief introduction to phenomena such as prank culture and hate reading/watching suggests that a study of empathy needs to look also at some competitors in the field of audience involvement.

Hosted file