

Original Contributions - Originalbeiträge

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Stories as Gestalt and Cultural Self-Treatment: Using the Example of Morphological Analysis of the Feature Film “The God of Carnage” (Polanski, 2011)

“The soul understands itself, but if we want to understand what is going on, we have to change the medium” (L. Salber, 2023, p. 257, own translation). Stories are a medium predestined for self-awareness of humans. They come in many different forms and facets, as neighbourhood conversations, in the form of novels, feature films, podcasts, poetry, theatre or the written word. Stories, as will be explained later, reflect psychological processes and duplicate life in a peculiar way without repeating it one-to-one. Feature films are a mentally challenging entertainment medium that follow the logic of stories. Wilhelm Salber (1977) described them as “Seelenlandschaften” -landscapes, in which psychological processes unfold (p.234, own translation). Following the prescribed path of the film’s plot with its highs and lows, twists and turns, and unexpected events, the viewer wanders through this landscape within the framework of an one- or two-hour performance. The journey can also be accompanied by fears or – depending on the dynamics of the film – proceed in an exhilarating manner. The experience of a film is involuntarily, albeit unconsciously, linked to the life experiences of the viewers – this is what causes their emotional involvement. In turn, the shared systems of meaning and significance of a culture and its problems resonate in the experience and are processed (Blothner, 2003) – regardless of whether the film has a happy ending, a bad ending or an open ending. Films become “cultural media” when they succeed in “setting in motion a moving process of experience in which film, culture and the soul find an excellent medium of communication” (Blothner, 1993, p. 161, own translation).

The film chosen for analysis, “The God of Carnage” (by Roman Polanski, 2011) is an example of such a cultural medium that deals with a central cultural issue. From a coffee and cake situation in a living room, in which two sets of parents want to discuss a violent incident that took place between their two sons, a deeper and more complex conflict erupts. Centred around this confrontation, the ‘emotional landscape’ of the film forms into a veritable ‘battlefield’. The opening and closing scenes of the film are almost identical, but they are experienced as completely different as a result of the transformation that the viewer undergoes.

Nevertheless, a secret bond holds the beginning and the end together in the viewer's experience. In morphological film psychology, this unifying element is referred to as a complex. The term is originally associated with myth and refers to a complex image that attempts to grasp the whole – or, according to Aristotle, the 'general' of a mythological narrative/poem (Aristotle, 2022, pp. 29-30). It is thanks to this origin that not only films about one or more basic complexes can be understood in terms of their effectiveness, but stories in general.

This paper focuses on the morphological analysis of the film "The God of Carnage". It is based on the method of complex-development, which is explained in advance. The function that one or more complexes take on in a story first requires a definition of what stories are psychologically. Jerome Bruner highlights three criteria for stories and places them in an exchange with morphological film psychology. The two approaches are linked by an understanding of stories based on both Gestalt psychology and cultural psychology. The two-pronged analysis follows a three-step process and aims to describe the complex in its capacity as a Gestalt unit (1), its relevance to life as a general basic pattern of human existence (2) and its need for (self-) treatment (3). In relation to the latter, stories not only provide an update, but also address general human issues. The film analysis culminates in a cultural-psychological classification of the empirical results and a reflection on the 'added value' of stories.

I. The effectiveness of Gestalt principles in stories

Three criteria for stories according to Jerome Bruner

In his studies with children in the pre-linguistic stage, Jerome Bruner (1997) found evidence of a narrative structure in the experience of reality. He assumed that humans are narratively constituted, i.e. that they immediately understand individual experiences in narrative contexts. Bruner (1997) speaks of a "predisposition to cast experience into a narrative form" (p. 63, own translation). This intuitive interpretation of individual phenomena in the overall context of experience is the prerequisite for (later) storytelling. Stories require a specific focus in order to be coherent and recognisable as stories in the first place.

A related question is the difference between everyday stories and the stories told in films, theatre and novels. The idea that life is recreated (imitated) in a condensed form in the stories told can be traced back to Aristotle. Bruner (1997) points out that, according to Aristotle, mimesis should not be understood as a mere repetition of life, but as an elaboration and improvement of what has happened. For Aristotle, this 'improvement' also applies to tragedy, which does not reward us with a happy ending. Rather, it lies in working through and suffering through universal human destinies and their lessons for our own lives. Thus,

stories develop truthfulness not by following ‘true events’. A decisive criterion is the comprehensibility of the plot in terms of the overall configuration of the story and its relation to life. “We interpret stories according to their truthfulness, their ‘truthfulness’ or, more precisely, their ‘truth of life’” (Bruner, 1997, p.77, own translation).

This leads to another important function of stories according to Bruner, which is relevant in terms of cultural psychology. Stories provide a justification for deviations from canonical patterns. The category of the unusual includes all forms of transgression, including criminal offences. Countless stories tell how this came about, who became the perpetrator and who became the victim, and for what reason. Like the early mythological stories, which are well known to form the basis for cultural development, ‘modern’ stories (myths in a new guise, so to speak) also deal with the temptations of life, guilt and forgiveness, love and hate, and the many hybrid forms. They tell how boundaries of cultural expectations have been crossed and what consequences the actors can expect. In this way, the stories warn against ‘deviations’ and at the same time allow the forbidden and the desired to be tried out. They allow us to sympathise with the victim and create understanding for the perpetrator and the act. Bruner (1997) emphasises – contrary to the widespread belief that stories serve to convey the values of a culture (*cf.* Frey, 2017 versus Salber, 2018) – that stories create room for interpretation in relation to cultural regulations and thus make norms acceptable in the first place.

Bruner’s three criteria for stories – their gestalt-like centring of individual sequences into an overall configuration (1), their connection to reality/truthfulness (2) and their processing performance with regard to cultural deviations from norms (3) – lead to a gestalt-psychological and depth-psychological definition of stories in feature films.

Stories move basic complexes – in life as in cinema

According to Wilhelm Salber (1977), several “motivating complexes” (p. 38, own translation) are responsible for the centring of individual sequences into an overall configuration (Bruner’s first criterion). Each individual episode relates to these complexes, which give the experience a specific direction and hold a story together at its core. The holistic quality of the complexes is already announced in the first scene in the form of a seed form – also known in morphology as a pre-figurative character (Sander, as cited in Salber, 1977). Depending on the scope of possibilities and the gestalt logic of the complexes, stories develop a compulsion to move in a certain direction. “The decisive overall qualities run through the entire film, and certain scenes must necessarily be evoked by the metamorphosis of the experience” (Salber, 1977, pp. 52-53, own translation). The formation of the unity also refers to the coherence of a story in contrast to

the flow of life. While humans are entangled in diverse complexes in their lives without being able to fully overcome them, stories offer a clear beginning and end. The unity created by basic complexes can be further specified as a dialectic unity. In slight contrast to the psychoanalytic tradition, they do not refer solely to the problematic/entangled aspects of life, but fundamentally involve tensions that motivate life (Salber, 1977). Salber speaks of a “play with the ambivalence of mental content” (1977, p. 61, own translation). Building on this insight, Dirk Blothner (2003) has developed a pragmatic dialectical model of basic complexes for morphological film psychology, which is equally applicable to any other stories (plays, novels). Formally and conceptually, these are pairs of opposites. Their opposition creates the kind of tension in stories that captivates us: “In life, as in cinema, tension always arises when two opposing forces need each other or fight each other. Stability becomes important in times of destruction. The call for order arises from chaos, and the longing for commitment becomes a demand, especially in times of change” (Blothner, 2003, p.97, own translation). Salber (1977) speaks of a “towards-to” and “away-from” (p.35, own translation) as a movement that is characteristic of the film experience. The film thus unfolds as a complex development in which there are escalations, dramatic turning points and sudden reversals of the complexes at work within it. A basic complex is thus the unifying element that unfolds its scope for change in a story.

The second criterion in determining stories, their proximity to life/experience (2), ties in directly with these considerations in morphological film psychology. Salber (1977) says that films both “captivate” and “unleash”. The former refers to the sequence of events in the film, which the viewer cannot escape and cannot change. At the same time, the viewer’s own experience is “unleashed”. Closely following the plot of the film, it draws the viewer into a stream of experience, mingles with their own experiences and combines “an ‘external’ film narrative and an ‘internal’ development” (Salber, 1977, p. 40, own translation). A prerequisite for the viewer’s emotional involvement is that the story relates to their everyday experiences. In doing so, it touches on one or more basic complexes that also determine people’s everyday lives unconsciously. In fact, the difference between the viewer and the perceived reality on the screen seems to be completely eliminated (Salber, 1977). A basic complex is also a dimension of experience that has a relatively high level of abstraction and can be applied or transferred to many everyday situations. “In them [the complexes], one has, as it were, the fundamental problems and conflicts of human beings before one, archetypes and archetypal situations of human beings striving for realisation” (Salber, 1977, p. 58, own translation). Thus, the mimetic effect of films is not completely different for every viewer. According to Blothner (2003), stories do not leave viewers ‘cold’ because they translate collective human tendencies – promising beginnings, exciting developments and consistent endings – into vivid images, in narrative

contexts such as in cinematic fiction. The supra-personal nature of stories can be easily observed in a cinema screening, as a collective form of story reception. A mere observation of the moods in the cinema during the performance reveals that the experience of the feature film cannot be reduced (exclusively) to the personality structure of the respective viewers. Rather, it is an experience of tensions that build up and release, of collectively experienced sad and happy moments (Fitzek & Marlovits, 2016).

The third criterion for stories according to Bruner, the processing performance of stories regarding cultural norms or unusual events (3), can be formulated somewhat more generally from a morphological perspective and specified for the medium of film. Stories allow their listeners or viewers to savour the dialectic that accompanies the complexes of (everyday) life: love and hate, humiliation and triumph, consequence and arbitrariness, destiny and freedom (Blothner, 2003). Especially in film, which Salber (1977) describes as “eshaft” (p. 68) due to its visual logic and its proximity to daydreams and nightmares, the viewer experiences more unrestrainedly than in everyday life. Film allows us to identify with ambivalent sides, not just with what is culturally permissible and accepted: “One also overlooks the fact that in a film one is able to identify with both ‘one’ side and the ‘other’ side – and not only when it appears sympathetic – with the force of its destruction, with its power, its aggression.” (Salber, 1977, p. 56, own translation). According to Blothner (2003), feature films are a place where – from the safe distance of the cinema seat – early obsessions that are culturally highly restricted, including violence and sexuality, can be acted out. In a series of morphological film analyses, even dystopian longings, the desire to get rid of an overloaded culture in one fell swoop, were found in the collective experience of the audience. (Blothner, 2014, 2003). At first glance, this assessment appears to contradict Bruner’s (1997) assertion that stories open up the necessary degrees of freedom and scope for interpretation in relation to cultural demands, ultimately preserving culture by addressing its burdens and requirements. Although film is certainly one of the more regressive media among the carriers of stories compared to literature and theatre, and it invites a confusion of film experience and life (Blothner, 1995), it also involves cultural processing. Blothner (2003) emphasises that depictions of violence or sexual excesses in film are always subject to cultural limitations or justifications. Only when integrated into basic complexes does taboo violence or sexuality appear justified, which would be rejected outside the logic of the story (ibid.). At its core, however, the processing of complex psychological problems evokes the ‘big’ problems of culture or finds resonance in larger cultural contexts. “Enjoying films requires a combination of obsession and cultivation” (Blothner, 2003, p.76, own translation). This balancing of two or more conflicting tendencies in the film experience is based on the general processing power of stories in Bruner’s sense.

The method of complex development in the study of stories

How can films be psychologically examined as “Gestalt in the making” (Salber, 1977, p. 44, own translation) when the overall content changes from scene to scene? According to Salber, the “principle” that holds the individual sequences together into a whole must be determined by exploring the film-experience sequence to sequence. Since basic complexes take on this centring function in film history, the methodological task is to reconstruct their development from beginning to end.

The assumption of a complex-development underlying the film, which originally goes back to Wilhelm Salber (1960), was methodologically elaborated by Dirk Blothner at the University of Cologne in the 1990s. The study of stories – especially film impact research – draws on numerous analyses of feature films that impressively trace the ups and downs in the reconstruction of the experience in chronological order of the sequences (Blothner, 2003). While complex-development was considered specific to the reconstruction of film experiences (Salber, 1977; Blothner, 1995), the method has now also been transferred to an interpretative procedure for the written word in the analysis of narratives (Hodde, 2022).

In order to explore a story morphologically, it is necessary to divide it into sequences and explore them chronologically, sequence by sequence, by asking readers, viewers or listeners how they experienced each sequence. No sequences may be swapped or the order changed, as this would alter the overall configuration of the story (*cf.* Bruner, 1997). In two- to three-hour in-depth interviews, the method of expanding (Fitze, 2020) provides access to what remains implicit/unspoken in silent experience. Trained interviewers can also do this in the form of introspective self-questioning (so-called experiential protocols). It is important to use a ‘stop and go’ approach when exploring the individual sequences, as after watching a film for an hour or more, many things are no longer directly memorable. The exploration of the experience of a story in the chronology of the individual sequences leads to a unified description of the experience across all participants, in which – analogous to dream interpretation – the manifest aspects of the story’s plot are supplemented by the sometimes latent moments of experience. In accordance with the guidelines for psychological descriptions, it focuses on particularly concrete, experiential and vivid descriptions (Fitze, 2020).

The method of complex development as the core of morphological film analysis has now been integrated into a common evaluation procedure, the four versions of morphological object formation according to Fitze (2020). In version 1, the basic quality is extracted from the unifying description and named. In contrast to a complex, the basic quality in the film is a holistic quality that, in object-specific terms, most closely resembles what Wilhelm Salber (1977) described as the “style”

(p. 79, own translation) of a film. This is a sensory-visual characteristic that, together with the specific dynamics and rhythm of the film, forms an overarching quality of experience across the film. In morphological analyses, it is common practice to capture the basic quality in a visual metaphor (Fitzek, 2020). This is followed in version 2 by the naming of the main complex and, if applicable, the secondary complexes, which, like the basic quality, are taken from the empirical material. This evaluation step is based on a 100% criterion: the complexes must run through all sequences, as they form the secret thread of the plot. At the heart of morphological exploration is the description of complex development, as it makes the specific form of experience visible on the basis of the complexes in their escalations, twists, reversals, escalations and inversions (Blothner, 2003). Version 3 forms a metapsychological reflection of the story under investigation, which culminates in the derivation of the underlying transformation pattern. Stories reflect cultural problems – both culture-specific and general – and, in a secret way, the (developmental) challenges of the audience's everyday life. Wilhelm Salber (1977) described this characteristic as the “more” (p. 36 ff, own translation) of a film; it is reflected at the level of version 3. This is followed in version 4 by a typifying description, also across test subjects, of the specific ways of dealing with the basic cultural-psychological problem. These ways of dealing are characterised by the fact that they represent more or less suitable solutions that are never able to completely resolve the overarching transformation problem and occur in a mixed form in the life and experience of the individual (Fitzek, 2020). As in versions 1 and 2, they are taken from the interview material.

II. Morphological analysis of the feature film “Carnage”

Roman Polanski's 2011 feature film is an adaptation of Yasmina Reza's play of the same name (original title: *Le Dieu de Carnage*). The play was performed in German translation at 60 theatres during the 2006/07 and 2007/08 seasons and is one of the most successful plays of recent decades. Like the play, Polanski's film adaptation has also won awards. In addition to numerous nominations, the film won the Little Golden Lion and the César at the 68th Venice Film Festival.

A brief summary of the film's plot: The film begins with an argument between two children, which ends with one child hitting the other with a stick. The opening scene shows an idyllic image of Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York on a sunny day with children playing in the background. Filmed from a long shot, the camera slowly zooms in on the group of two children and their respective gangs. Apart from the final scene (same camera angle, same scene of children playing), this is the only outdoor scene in the film. Except for the final sequence, the entire rest of the action takes place in the apartment of the parents of the child who was hit by the other child. Neither of the children, the boy who was hit, Ethan

(Eliot Berger), nor the one who hit him, Zachary (Elvis Polanski), are present. The first scene in the flat begins with a report being typed by the mother of the victim, Penelope (Jodie Foster). Standing next to her is her husband, Michael (John C. Reilly). Also present are the parents of the ‘perpetrator’ child: Nancy (Kate Winslet) and Alan (Christoph Waltz). The first disagreement between the parents arises from Penelope’s statement that Zachary was “armed” with a stick. Still under the impression of distant politeness, Ethan’s mother immediately corrects herself to “equipped” in response to Zachary’s father’s objection. The tense situation does not end with the report. Throughout the film, the parents struggle to find a way to deal with the incident. In addition to the actual subject of the dispute, the parents also discuss an act committed by Michael: Michael recently abandoned his daughter’s hamster because he has an aversion to rodents. As the film progresses, the conflict between the parents escalates further and further, without those involved managing to resolve the situation. One person or party fuels the argument, while the other tries to settle it. Again and again, when they say goodbye in the hallway, there is a reason to invite Zachary’s parents back in for a cup of coffee. In this conflict, the differences within the couple’s relationships initially emerge subliminally, then more and more openly, with the coalitions shifting between male- and female alliances and then dissolving again. The viewer experiences in real time that no end can be found for over an hour.

The morphological analysis, now presented in four versions, is based on 16 descriptions of experiences by students of business psychology at the Business School Berlin, Hamburg Campus, in the subject of media psychology. For this purpose, the film was divided into 25 sequences, described one after the other and converted into a uniform description across all test subjects for each sequence.

II.1. Carousel ride of increasing escalation

The overarching quality of the experience dynamic can be summarised as a closed and endless circular carousel journey with increasing intensity and a growing risk of escalation. In the course of the film’s plot, the escalation reaches ever higher levels.

In the opening scene, the impression of intensification is created by the music (drums), which becomes faster, more dramatic and louder, accompanied by a zoom that shifts the focus from the idyllic park and playground setting to a conflict. The focus on the conflict and the musical accompaniment tear the viewer away from a feeling of childlike familiarity and playfulness, but also make the rest of the film exciting. The viewer is abruptly transported to the study of the beaten child’s parents and then witnesses the subliminal conflict tensions between the two parents for almost the entire duration of the film. This feels like being stuck. A consistent feature of the experience is the recurring circular movement

of a conflict that swells again and again until the farewell scene. The conflict tension usually reaches its climax when the parents say goodbye at the door or in the hallway, because resentment still erupts from one or the other of those involved and demands clarification. The hallway situations each herald the end of the merry-go-round ride and invite the viewer to get off. However, the exit is repeatedly cancelled, as a new attempt at rapprochement immediately follows. The respective continuation as a return to the flat is perceived by the test subjects as a new and pointless round on the merry-go-round. At times, the viewer also becomes enraged and feels affected by the emerging conflict. Together with the protagonists, the viewers experience that they cannot escape the situation. This is also noticeable as a feeling of spatial confinement/being locked up in the flat. The test subjects long for a quick and redeeming end, which seems possible only through a final farewell at the door, but not through a resolution of the conflict.

The increasing intensity keeps the experience tense despite the impression of a pointless “repetition loop”. As with a caterpillar ride, the emotional ups and downs of the movement are fun, as are the liberating impulses and breaks with norms. The escalation of the increasingly obvious conflict with its new twists and turns, e.g. in the shifting of alliances, keeps the tension high. As on a merry-go-round, the viewer feels excited, but soon no longer knows which way is up and which is down, and can hardly distinguish between the various levels of conflict interacting with each other. At these points, the merry-go-round turns into a kind of roller coaster of emotions. The subliminally perceptible philosophical content

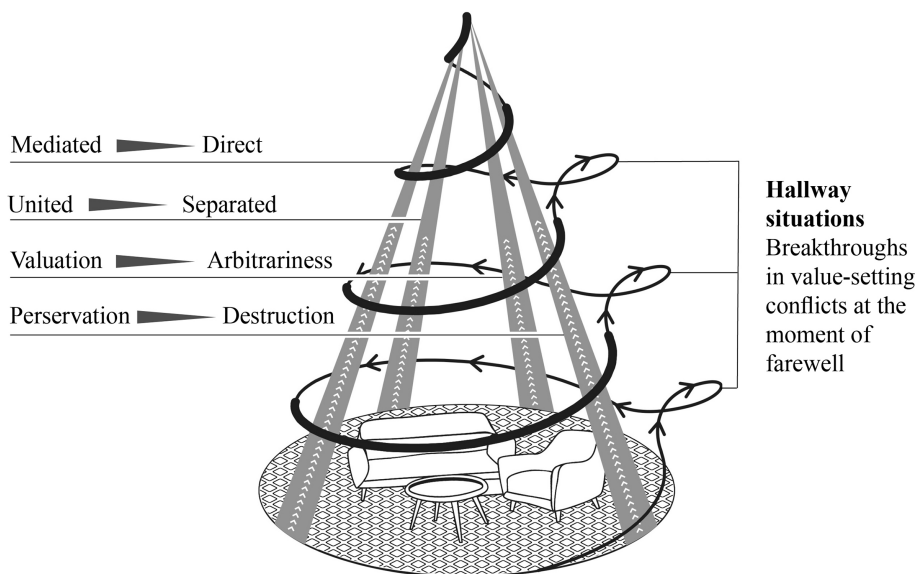


Fig. 1. Carousel ride of increasing escalation.

of the conflict being played out is perceived as meaningful and forms, so to speak, the framework of the merry-go-round. The viewer enjoys the unmasking of the attempts at cultivation and the breakthrough of directness in the conflict between all those involved. It is not only the circular motion that is carousel-like, but also the breakthrough of the childish sides of all those involved. This is shocking and unsettling, but is also experienced as humorous and ironic.

II.II. Figuration of a story of unmasking

The filmed stage play is about the unmasking of forms of cultivation in the resolution of a multi-layered conflict. Its story of unmasking is characterised by four complexes in terms of psychological dramaturgy, which underlie the complex-development outlined below: *direct-mediated*, *separated-united*, *arbitrariness-valuation* and *destruction-preservation*.

In the film, the *direct-mediated* complex leads from mediated manners to increasingly direct outbursts of aggression. The attempt to find a mature solution and agreement in the conflict turns out to be superficial. The viewers experience stress because the aggression is subliminally perceptible through the conventions of politeness – in hints, taunts, a fake smile or inappropriate small talk about trivial matters. This evokes the need for a more direct discussion and then also an end to the unpleasant situation. The audience demands that the protagonists finally speak their minds. On the other hand, discomfort is palpable as the conflict becomes increasingly direct. In the meantime, the audience is also grateful to those protagonists in the film who smooth the waters and insist on a mature and reasonable resolution of the conflict. However, the forms of mediation become ambivalent because they repeatedly prolong the four protagonists’ stay together and keep the parties in the uncomfortable situation (constant invitations for coffee

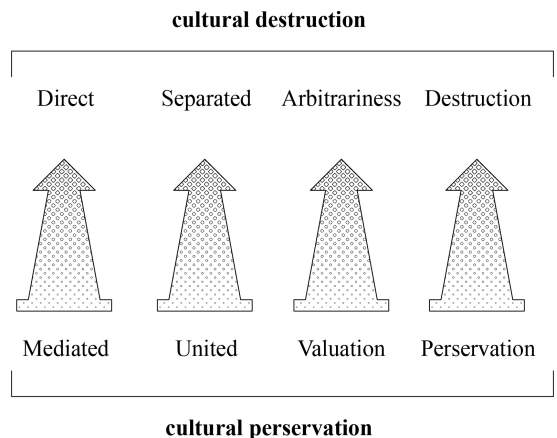


Fig. 2. Complex-development towards decultivation.

and cake). Thus, the forms of mediation – as provocative, feigned politeness or as subtle digs – each contain an invitation to continue.

Closely linked to this main complex is the complex *separated-united*. While the protagonists initially form clear and contrasting units in the parties of ‘perpetrator’ child and ‘victim’ child, the conflicts within the two marriages become increasingly apparent as the film progresses. Here, too, the forms of mediation initially conceal these tensions, which, however, become clearly perceptible to the viewer.

The **parents of the ‘perpetrator’ child (Zachary)** are particularly divided on the issue of maintaining form. It becomes clear in the course of the film that Nancy forced her husband to attend the meeting and show his presence as a father, even though he considered this completely unnecessary. Alan’s constant phone calls become a symbol of his disinterest. The prioritisation of his own (business) interests over family matters and the disregard for politeness become the main points of conflict between Nancy and Alan. In this increasingly apparent marital conflict, Nancy is often pitied by the audience. She ultimately comes across as a single mother who not only defends her son – unlike her husband – but also seems to be of little interest to her husband.

The differences between the **parents of the ‘victim’ (Ethan)** are more subtle at first, but then come to the fore with full force. The couple initially appear more united to the audience; however, the first signs of discord emerge when Penelope seems less than pleased that Michael claims she is a writer. He is essentially ‘peddling’ her. The audience anticipates how much Penelope will struggle with her husband’s ingratiation with the other side as the film progresses, while she remains completely unforgiving. The other side is to bear all the blame, and the categories of ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ must not be blurred. Much to Penelope’s chagrin, Michael tries to relativise this determination in his quest for harmony.

In addition to the discord, there are also temporary alliances, e.g. between men and women. While **Alan and Michael**, as men, nostalgically remember their boyhood fights in a gang and ultimately perform rituals of masculinity by drinking whisky and smoking cigars together, **Penelope and Nancy** initially engage in small talk about art and later show solidarity against the male coalition by also drinking alcohol. However, the alliances are never experienced as lasting – subtle differences are also identified here in relation to direct and mediated forms: while the women only appear to be getting closer on the surface, the men seem more direct and their attempts to get closer more credible. In addition to the ‘2 against 2’ alliances, a ‘3 against 1’ constellation also emerges in the meantime. This is the case with Penelope, who, by clinging to the victim-perpetrator categorisation while simultaneously experiencing betrayal by her husband, increasingly finds herself marginalised. A ‘3 to 1’ constellation can also be seen, albeit in a completely different way, in relation to Alan. Unlike Penelope, he is not disappointed

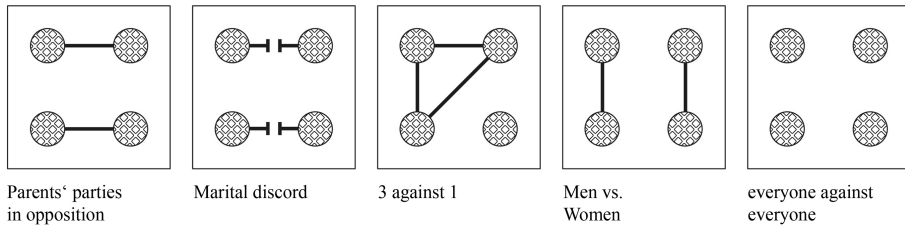


Fig. 3. Changing community constellation

and marginalised, but selfishly removes himself from the action again and again through his phone calls, much to the visible chagrin of the three other protagonists waiting for him.

The complex '*arbitrariness-valuation*' also runs like a thread through the film's plot. Each of the four protagonists has a value setting conflict with a different one, whereby the shift in coalitions (see *separate-united* complex) exacerbates the conflicts and transfers them into the direct regime. The value-setting questions relate to the conflict itself, to the question of the right and wrong way to deal with it, as well as to the relationship dynamics: What can be expected from a spouse? What is appropriate behaviour as parents in this situation?

Initially, the conflicts are still largely conducted under the rules of politeness, but they then become increasingly apparent in the opponents **Alan and Penelope**. While Alan tends to trivialise the incident between the children, locating it in the realm of childish naturalness, Penelope rises to become an advocate for violence prevention and a morally correct approach to dealing with the situation. Penelope's demands on the other parents are perceived as overstepping boundaries and interfering in their affairs, as well as a childish inability to engage with the other side. Penelope's passive-aggressive manner amusingly exposes her own moral standards. Alan, on the other hand, stands out for his uncouth behaviour: constantly talking loudly on the phone, munching on the host's cake. His lack of refinement, ignorance and constant evasiveness are perceived by the audience as both unbearable and a refreshing and amusing interruption of the tense situation. In contrast to Penelope's passive-aggressive nature, Alan's selfishness ultimately comes across as more direct and honest.

The value judgements regarding the marital relationship are decided very clearly in favour of Nancy, who, from the viewer's perspective, rightly demands more responsibility and participation from her husband and seeks to defend her son. **Penelope and Michael** find themselves in the midst of a conflict of loyalty, grappling with the question of whether one should 'keep quiet' in a marriage and to what extent private matters, such as conflicts, should be made public. The conflict of loyalty culminates in open accusations of mutual betrayal, with each partner giving in to aggressive impulses.

The three complexes described culminate in discord between the marital parties and in (symbolic) acts of destruction of objects (art catalogue, mobile phone, handbag, tulips), representing the protagonists' different values. Thus, the complex of *destruction-preservation* ushers in a furious end to the chamber play.

Penelope's art catalogue is not only a symbol of her interest in art and foreign cultures, but also represents an enlightened Western and bourgeois value system. When Nancy vomits over the catalogue, these values are threatened in two ways: the fact that Penelope is only concerned about preserving her catalogue, but not about Nancy, makes Penelope's morality appear superficial and false from the audience's point of view, at least at this point. Alan particularly shakes up these values by pointing out the realities of violence in African countries to Penelope, who loves Africa. This destructive attack on Penelope's values, according to the audience, almost causes the situation to boil over. It culminates in the speech about the 'god of carnage', in which Alan defends natural law against Penelope.

The symbol of **Alan's** selfishness, his lack of culture and ignorance is his mobile phone, which rings constantly. After his wife sinks it in the flower water, Alan appears visibly affected for the first time. The audience rejoices along with Nancy and Penelope at the picture he now presents ("a picture of misery"). Unlike with Penelope, however, Alan's disempowerment also raises concerns among viewers as to whether the malicious delight in their hysterical laughter is not exaggerated.

Nancy is perceived by viewers as chic and wealthy, and her handling of the conflict as an attempt to find a formal and quick solution. As Nancy becomes less and less able to maintain her composure – starting with vomiting over the art catalogue – she finds it increasingly difficult to hide her attitude towards the incident and her antipathy. At the end of the film, she hits Penelope's most sensitive spot by demanding that Ethan should be partly to blame for provoking the conflict. After Penelope angrily throws Nancy's handbag towards the exit door, Nancy also lapses into childish behaviour and mourns her broken make-up.

In the complex of *destruction and preservation*, **Michael** takes on the role of the cooperative one, often in a sympathetic way. The audience appreciate how much he goes to great lengths to save the art catalogue and to dry Michael's mobile phone with a hairdryer. Conversely, his excessive need for harmony becomes a burden for the audience. His accommodating nature and sharing of overly private details often seem exaggerated and inappropriate. It is particularly distressing that his constant invitations (each time when saying goodbye in the hallway) prolong the unpleasant situation. His sympathetic and cooperative attitude is exposed as a weakness by the fact that he increasingly speaks rudely to his mother on the phone and expresses his antipathy towards Penelope more and more openly, while continuing to ingratiate himself with the other couple. Nancy's destruction of the tulips is seen as an attack on his misguided desire for harmony.



Fig. 4. Four stills from the feature film *The God of Carnage* (2011), directed by Roman Polanski.
Note. © 2011 Constantin Film. Used under quotation exception (§51 UrhG) for academic analysis.

Each protagonist and each party move in different ways from mediated forms to direct forms, and the viewer experiences an unmasking/destruction of the respective values. Because the four protagonists embody one pole of the complexes, the dramatic upheavals/outbursts each lead to an experience of reversal: Penelope's values turn out to be unrealistic and idealistic, and come into conflict with her own hostile and unforgiving behaviour. Michael's striving for harmony proves inappropriate to the situation and, in his flirtation with the other party, ultimately leads to his betrayal of his wife and a rift between them. Nancy's strict formality tips over into a loss of form, beginning with her vomiting. Alan's uncouth and blunt directness, with which he often sets the tone in the situation, turns into powerlessness when his mobile phone was thrown into the water. This development of the protagonists is partly frightening, but in its increasing openness it is also relieving, truthful and amusing. In or during the destruction (symbolically of objects), each of the four protagonists ultimately reveals their "true" face/their concern. In the destruction and the heightened moments of destruction of the objects, it is exciting for the viewer to observe how new parties are formed and established parties become fragile. This also brings the complex *separated-united* to bear across the film. Paradoxically, the underlying conflicts that come to light are about the dispute over the right or wrong way to deal with conflict. They appear increasingly unsolvable, and the ways of dealing with the conflicts inadequate.

In relation to the conflict between the parents, the hallway functions as a revolving door for the decision to keep trying or to give up. The failure or overcoming of the mediated forms in the course of the conflict breakthrough, which leads to destruction, is both feared and longed for by the viewer. The original conflict, the violent act of one boy against the other, is completely overshadowed by the force of the conflicts that come to light during the parents' attempts at reconciliation, and with it the dysfunctionality of the supposedly 'adult' forms of dealing with the situation. The final scene with the credits appears particularly humorous and liberating against the backdrop of the basic quality of a carousel-like escalation. Not only is the hamster abandoned by Michel alive and well, but the viewer is also happy that it is back in nature (i.e. in freedom) and not locked up in the apartment of the parties stuck in conflict. The final scene repeats the long shot of the opening scene and shows the children playing in the background again, as if nothing had happened. The themes of guilt, the act of violence by one boy against the other and the 'hamster murder' thus take on an ironic twist and are invalidated. The message of the film can be seen in the fact that culturally overlaid conflicts and mediating attempts at resolution may be more destructive than immediate – if you will – natural tendencies towards aggression in the face of their explosive repression dynamics.

II.III. The God of Carnage in dialogue with Freud's cultural-anthropological text *Civilisation and Its Discontents*

As explained at the beginning, plays, novels and films are small replicas of the stories we know from everyday life. Compared to everyday life, they exhibit a special form of condensation and, on a subconscious level, make the basic complexes that determine our lives visible – and they often provide answers to overarching cultural issues (Blothner, 2003).

The filmed play deals with the necessity, but also the reversals, that cultivation can encounter. This ambivalence of culture is at the heart of the story of "The God of Carnage" and can be easily linked to Sigmund Freud's cultural-anthropological text on the uneasiness in culture (Freud, 1930/2000b). The structure of the essay leads to an analogy between ontogenesis (the development of the individual) and phylogenesis (the development of humanity). Freud describes the development from child to adult and, in parallel, the transformation of primitive man into civilised man. This transformation was necessary in prehistoric times in order to ward off the central sources of suffering for humanity. Prehistoric man discovered that he could have a longer and safer life if he no longer viewed his fellow men solely as competitors and rivals for the necessities of life but instead joined forces with them in a working community. In this sense, cultivation is inextricably linked to the establishment of communities, which, however, requires – and here

Freud describes a source of unease – individual aspirations to be subordinated to the rights of the community. “The end result should be a right to which all – at least all those capable of community – have contributed through their instinctual sacrifices and that protects everyone – again with the same exception – from falling victim to brute force.” (Freud, 1930/2000b, p. 226, own translation).

The film “The God of Carnage” uses the complex *separated-united* in miniature form to show how difficult it is to reach consensus and how fragile even existing communities are. Both in the marriages of Alan and Nancy and Penelope and Michael, it becomes clear where the common ground lies and where concessions are necessary in order to maintain the marriage. In both marriages, there is considerable friction in different ways. The film shows us that, in addition to the existing fragile units of the two parental parties, new alliances are constantly being formed in the short term (such as men’s and women’s coalitions), but these can compete with each other and at the same time only last for a short time. This constant dissolution and reformation, which the viewer witnesses, points to the fragility of communities. Alan is the one who most strongly violates the cultural prerequisite of maintaining community through appropriate codes of conduct by constantly avoiding joint conversations through phone calls and giving clear priority to his personal interests. Sometimes, cultural demands give rise to indignation that Alan should stay and take responsibility; at other times, this egoism is perceived as a relief, allowing the viewer to briefly step out of the tense situation of the four protagonists. The ambivalence felt by the viewer is based on what Freud describes as the uneasiness in culture. With Alan, there is a refreshing easing of the basic cultural tension that is classically inherent in the suppression of id demands and destructive aggression under the dictates of the superego – while the drive energies persist.

Drive control, in turn, requires a form of value setting (ethics) as a guideline and foundation. It can be easily related to the basic complex of *value setting and arbitrariness* that is effective in the film. For culture needs specific value settings in order to form communities. In the film, these emerge as different ways of life (of the two married couples) and ultimately compete with each other: at first, the two parties are diametrically opposed, but then each of the participants repeatedly turns out to be a lone fighter. Keeping quiet to protect the marital union turns into betrayal of the community by expressing incongruous views in front of others (Michael and Penelope). Behind role-conformant guidelines, arbitrariness, self-interest and ignorance emerge (Alan and Nancy). A kind of culture war breaks out on a small scale.

This leads to the *main* subject of the filmed play: the figuration of a story of unmasking, as staged by the “God of Carnage”, leads in an escalating movement from forms of *mediation* to an increasingly *direct* exchange of blows between all

protagonists (everyone against everyone). This movement points to how thin the layer between primitive and civilised man is and how endangered the preservation of the community. Accordingly, aggression can break through at any time and throw cultural demands overboard. “The existence of this tendency towards aggression, which we can feel in ourselves and rightly assume in others, is the factor that disrupts our relationship with our neighbours and forces culture to expend (energy)” (Freud, 1930/2000b, p. 241, own translation). The expenditure of energy described by Freud is evident in the laborious cultivation efforts of the four protagonists in dealing with the multi-layered conflict. In the process, the viewer also increasingly feels the effort associated with this. The cultural forms of mediation become almost unbearable in the character of Penelope due to her passive aggression; in Michael’s case, they are perceived as a pointless and inappropriate prolongation of the unpleasant situation.

According to Freud, cultural effort is based on a complex principle of preserving and shifting emotional impulses. In his analysis of his cases, Freud found that something that has formed in the psyche cannot simply be cut off or negated – even if it contradicts cultural norms (Freud, 1930/2000b). It remains preserved in the psyche in a peculiar way and develops substitutes and compromises, such as symptoms that contain remnants of the repressed drive and require psychoanalytic treatment to be retranslated back to the original repressed drives. In fact, Freud describes here a Gestalt principle that states that there is no complete dissolution without remnants. Applied to cultural development, this means that the stages of development do not completely merge into the next higher ones. In other words, primitive man persists in civilised man, just as childish aspects accompany adult life. In the process, the various stages of development or layers of the psyche can come into conflict with each other (id demands versus over-demands). On the one hand, remnants of the uncultivated remain, while on the other hand, forbidden (primitive or childish) aspirations seek other avenues of fulfilment (*cf.* Freud, 1915/2000a). One form of displacement or transformation is the sublimation of the original drive energy into culturally acceptable forms. Aggressiveness can thus manifest itself in direct physical violence or be disguised as skilful irony.

The film “The God of Carnage” presents a panopticon of various forms of communication aggressive impulses distributed among the four protagonists. The various forms of restraint (Nancy), appeasement (Michael), suppression (Penelope) and rationalisation (Alan) do not lead to an improvement in the situation. The aggressive tendencies at work within them increasingly emerge from the mediation as the film progresses, eventually striking with the full force of directness.

The basic quality of the film, “a carousel ride of increasing escalation”, makes the endlessness of (human) conflicts that cannot be completely resolved palpable in

the circular movement. In the film, Alan becomes the mouthpiece of directness, which the other protagonists gradually follow. His failure to adhere to norms of politeness (cultural imperatives) means that the fundamental cultural tension surrounding him is relatively low. As a result, his statements often seem precise and apt, as they do not carry the burden of cultural overlays. Despite all the outrage at his uncouth behaviour, he repeatedly allows the viewer to breathe a sigh of relief, smile or laugh. He experiences the same thing with the other protagonists, who increasingly step out of the mediation process. In addition, as all those involved revert to a primal, childlike state, Alan's statements prove to be true. As if caught in the act during the dispute resolution in the bourgeois living room, we see destructive forces at work in disguise. Thus, Alan's speech about the "god of carnage" becomes a kind of truth speech, which ultimately also provides the title of the film. The film concept anticipated by the viewer thus strikes at the heart of Freudian cultural theory. Freud refers to an aspect of human nature, its fundamental tendency towards aggression, which, according to Freud, humans themselves do not want to know about. He explains that humans are not initially inclined towards other humans but compete with them for resources in the struggle for existence. "Homo homini lupus", Freud quotes Plautus (p. 240, own translation). In "The God of Carnage," Freud's description of humans as "prosthetic gods" (p. 222, own translation) also resonates. Spurred on by divine fantasies of omnipotence, humans remain stuck in their fallible human constitution despite their technological development. This includes overcoming their constitutive tendency towards aggression, which always threatens to destroy culture. Several times in the text, he describes overcoming or taming the tendency towards aggression as a crucial question for ensuring human survival. "The question of destiny for the human race seems to me to be whether and to what extent its cultural development will succeed in overcoming the disturbance of coexistence caused by the human drive for aggression and self-destruction" (Freud, 1930/2000b, p. 270, own translation).

In the film, the feared unleashing of the "god of carnage" is simultaneously longed for. For the subliminal nature of aggression in mediated forms is often harder to bear than aggression itself. At the same time, the cultural burden of mediated forms increasingly pushes viewers to the side of directness. This addresses the complex of *destruction and preservation*. It moves towards a destruction of alliances, forms of mediation and various values – a movement that is experienced by viewers with both horror and pleasure. The pleasure lies in temporarily shedding the cultural burden and attributing oneself to the regime of the direct. In this sense, an increasing intensity accompanies the emotional rollercoaster ride with relish. At the same time, it is throttled by the desire to get off the dynamic circular motion. Thus, the desire to preserve, as a counter-movement to the destructive

escalation in the experience, has not completely disappeared, but is clearly subordinate to the unleashed will to destroy. Destruction here means above all bringing about a quick end in order to escape from the absurd coffee and cake situation of the quarrelling parties. The final image, which also frames the film's plot, is seen at the end of the film as an image of both liberation and acquiescence. It shows the harmlessness of the children's quarrel in comparison to that of the adults.

II.IV. Dealing with the fundamental conflict of culture

The film-experience moves the ambivalence between joy at the loss of culture in the liberating breakthrough of directness and concern about the complete breakdown of community as the basis of culture. This analysis raises the following psychologizing question: How do viewers manage not to lose their footing and orientation while watching the film amid the destructive rage?

Four supra-individual forms of solution could be identified in the descriptions of the experience. The dramaturgical and conceptual use of the four protagonists forms a sounding board for these ways of dealing with the conflict. Solution types can be seen as more or less successful attempts at coping, but they are unable to completely solve the construction problem (here: the fundamental conflict of culture) and each also lead to downsides (Fitzek, 2020).

Polarising/positioning: One way of dealing with the conflict is to take the side of one parent and show solidarity with them in the emerging marital conflicts. The temporary alliances between men and women also offer a platform for positioning. The advantage of this type is that it offers direction in the midst of the carnage. By identifying with one party, the spectator finds support and at the same time can actively participate in the exchange of blows and experience it as a competition in which they cheer on their favourite(s). The downside is the one-sidedness that this type falls into. Out of a strong identification, it threatens to rigidly hold on to one point of view – which also carries the risk of not taking important aspects into account and to fail.

Harmonising/aligning: A type that is contrary to polarising/positioning seeks to solve the construction problem by not choosing either side and allowing all positions to coexist on an equal footing. In doing so, they attempt to avoid becoming involved in the conflict so as not to lose their footing. However, there is a downside to this, as they move into a kind of neutral observer position and, at the same time, without a given direction, are in danger of being overwhelmed by the conflict. With this type of approach, the carnage is not experienced more intensely, but for longer. Of all the solution types, this type is most overwhelmed because it allows all positions to remain equally balanced in the pursuit of harmony. In contrast, the polarising type may also ignore aspects in favour of their role

models, depending on the position they have chosen. However, the harmony-seeking type also suffers from a form of detachment from reality because, in their efforts to achieve harmony and equality, they do not adequately take into account important differences in the dispute.

Formalising/rationalising: This type of solution seeks a rational, sober approach to the dispute. In this way, it protects itself from excessive emotionalisation and gains security. This type experiences the conflict between Nancy and Penelope (as well as the conflict between Alan and Penelope) particularly intensely. They develop a strong resistance to Penelope's emotionality, which involves them sufficiently and intensifies the experience. Otherwise, they suffer from a lack of emotional involvement, which sometimes tips over into boredom and superficiality. In the truest sense of the word, he finds the film as a whole too long – arguing that the conflict could have been resolved long ago in a matter-of-fact manner.

Ignoring/blocking out: This type of solution seeks to withdraw from the conflict at times. He experiences the enjoyment of intensification in a kind of on-off mode. Switching his emotions on and off protects him from becoming too involved in the carnage in situations of strong emotional involvement. The downside of this type is the temporary withdrawal as such, which also creates gaps in the whole and leaves behind a bland feeling of not really participating. This means that, of all the types of behaviour, they get the least out of the film experience. In addition, their (temporary) non-participation makes them feel excluded from the action and, with it, a special form of cultural loss.

III. Answers to questions of culture against the backdrop of film analysis

Building on the morphological analysis in the four versions object formation, the question arises as to what the viewer gains from participating in a conflict that erupts and is played out in the film "The God of Carnage". What is the value of the filmed play in terms of its relevance to everyday life and culture?

"The God of Carnage" demonstrates first-hand how threatened cultivation is when cultural norms and forms of communication become too strict and unleash direct manners. In Penelope, as the representative of ethically correct behaviour, we can observe how the strictness of moral standards promotes a shift to open aggression. Even the attempt to hide aggressive emotions in order to maintain decorum fails when, as in Nancy's case, the pressure of one's own emotions becomes too strong. The marital conflicts show how even the smallest cultural unit of two people in love breaks down when individual-egoistic aspirations are either enforced too strongly against the spouse (Alan, Penelope) or suppressed too strongly by them (Nancy, Michael).

In order to survive, a culture needs not only the norms that regulate life in a community, but also a delicate balance between direct and mediated forms of emotional expression (*cf.* Freud, 1930/2000b). In concrete terms, this means a willingness to compromise in the assertion of individual aspirations, a balance between decisiveness and permissiveness, between open expression and restraint.

This is a demanding task that, in view of contemporary culture, seems increasingly difficult for individuals to fulfil. Talk of social division and polarisation is an indication of this. As a defence mechanism, polarisation/division brings with it the psychological advantage of simplification by devaluing or negating one side. In terms of Gestalt and cultural psychology, it can be understood as an attempt to divide the world into two opposing sides that in reality belong together and give each other a *raison d'être*. In society, the relationship between direct expressions of emotion and highly regulated forms of communication currently appears to be divided between different groups of people. On the one hand, there are the so-called “politically correct”; on the other hand, there is a group of people who rely on traditional, outdated images, who want to expel migrants and close borders, and who deny climate change. The aggression regime also appears to be divided here – and with it the complex of *direct and mediated*: while some practise restraint, tolerance and openness and uphold cultural forms of communication, the self-proclaimed “Wutbürger” („angry citizens”) and co. insist on setting boundaries and express openly aggressive emotions. The authors Mau, Lux, and Westheuser (2024) point out, on the basis of an empirical study of inequality conflicts, that a cut-and-dried positioning of the two camps is itself an expression of polarisation that negates the shades of grey. In his research on resentment, Jürgen Große shows how much emotional sensitivity has gripped society as a whole and how, across camps, for example under the guise of emancipation movements, aversive emotions are legitimised (Große, 2024). The arguments for legitimisation as such are decisive here. The expression of emotions is sometimes rejected by society as ‘hatred and incitement’ and sometimes valued and fuelled as an expression of open and honest feelings in the service of a just cause (*cf.* Große’s discussion on ‘Affektbejahung und Männerhass’ [Affection Affirmation and Misandry], 2024, p. 202, own translation). In a recent structural analysis of the public sphere, Jürgen Habermas highlights how much the so-called opinion bubbles repel each other aversively due to their emotional charge, disrupting overall public discourse. According to Habermas, the mutual fuelling of emotionalised expressions of opinion leads to an echo chamber effect that hinders genuine, society-wide exchange on important political issues (Habermas, 2022).

The connection to the film “The God of Carnage” arises from society’s handling of aggression, which – as in the film – is met with attempts at appeasement and calls for social solidarity. Under the guise of this apparent emotional relief, however,

people today are subtly confronted with rigid values and prohibitions on certain ways of thinking. Under the dictates of political correctness, not only aggressive impulses are severely restricted, but at the same time constructive forms of assertiveness, conciseness and determination. Stefan Grünewald (2006) has called this the “secret terror of political correctness” (p. 59), which, as a substitute for religious guidelines, fills a vacuum in post-secular societies but leaves unanswered the fundamental questions of human beings about the meaning of life and life after death. Approximately twenty years after this diagnosis, under the influence of numerous global and national crises, a ‘pent-up energy of expression and movement’ (Grünewald, 2025, p. 104) in contemporary humans is causing a longing for radical assertiveness and impulsive liberation.

According to Freud (1930/2000b), the regulation of aggression is a central task of cultural development par excellence. As explained above, however, aggressive tendencies cannot simply be cut off but must be channelled in other directions. With this task – which, structurally speaking, is essentially a communal task – people today are very much left to their own devices. The extent to which aggression is prohibited is also decisive in determining the viability of cultures. Comparable to a pressure cooker, the severity of cultural norms and the alienation of aggression in the form of mediation provoke even stronger impulse breakthroughs.

The film “The God of Carnage” shows that such mediation can even intensify the actual conflict. Thus, the final image of children playing in the park, with reference to the opening scene in which violence broke out between them, seems far more harmless than the carnage among the parents. Playing and letting things be, as the filmed play teaches us, can be a solution.

IV. A brief conclusion and a plea for stories

In “The God of Carnage”, the protagonists and, with them, the audience undergo a transformation towards directness. However, it would be wrong to interpret the effect of the film as a de-civilising of the audience and to classify it as harmful.

Experiencing and (in some cases) enjoying violence in stories should not be understood as a licence to act out this violence in everyday life (as in the story). Nor should it be confused with pure catharsis, after which we would go through life peacefully again, our urges satisfied. Rather, what matters in stories is their reference to the fundamental complexes and transformation patterns that are recounted in infinite variations. Stories have a secret connection to the challenges posed by life and culture. It is only in this confrontation, beginning with the early mythological stories, that humans become cultural beings.

The special feature of stories is that they are both forms of representation and treatment. In them, everyday figures break down and become visible in a

condensed, gestalt-like way. The representation of stories in films, novels and plays should not be confused with statements of opinion – even if stories reveal the intentions of the author or director at certain points. Stories do not generally fall within the realm of what is socially desirable (*cf.* Bruner, 1997). Rather, they are necessary forms of treatment and secret rehearsals for the temptations that life holds in store. Accordingly, they are full of murder and manslaughter, jealousy, greed, deceit and imposture – whereby the punishment scenarios that such transgressions entail are also recounted and take many twists and turns. When we look deep into the soul of a murderer with Dostoevsky, this process of understanding (how did the murder come about? What happens as a result?) does not at the same time legitimise the crime. Currently, numerous authors and directors find themselves in a difficult position when they portray misogyny, anti-Semitism and the devaluation of disabled people on stage. The devastating confusion between staging and commentary leads to harmful censorship. Of course, it depends on the type of staging, but not on the representation of what is in the world and requires processing/reappraisal through stories.

And another added value of stories: stories are attributed to the world of fiction. In fact, they are true depictions of our inner lives. In contrast to the historical logic of life in its constant progression, they give us a clear beginning and end.

Zusammenfassung

Geschichten sind Ablaufsgestalten, die im Gegensatz zum fortlaufenden Lebensfluss mit einem klaren Anfang und einem Ende beschenken. Sie imitieren das Leben, ohne es eins zu eins zu wiederholen. Dass Geschichten tragende Grundkomplexe des Lebens einer spezifischen Bearbeitung unterziehen, soll beispielhaft am Spielfilm „Der Gott des Gemetzels“ (Polanski, 2011) gezeigt werden. Die morphologische Analyse des verfilmten Theaterstücks wird gerahmt von der Darlegung methodischer Richtlinien zu Erlebnisexpositionen von Geschichten und einer anschließenden Erörterung des Mehrwerts von Geschichten im Kontext der Gegenwartskultur.

Summary

Stories are sequences of events that, in contrast to the continuous flow of life, have a clear beginning and end. They imitate life without repeating it exactly. The fact that stories subject fundamental complexes of life to specific processing is illustrated by the feature film ‘The God of Carnage’ (Polanski, 2011). The morphological analysis of the filmed play is framed by a presentation of methodological guidelines for exploring the experience of stories and a subsequent discussion of the added value of stories in the context of contemporary culture.

Keywords: Morphology, Cultural psychology, Psychoanalysis, Film impact research, Narration, Complex-Development, Jerome Bruner, Wilhelm Salber, Roman Polanski, Yasmina Reza

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