Audiovisual Interpretation of Reality

Prof. Martin Štoll, MA, PhD.

Institute of Communication studies and Journalism Faculty of Social Sciences

Charles University Prague

Programme of Course

- 1. thematic range: **Autenthicity – the main value**

- 2. thematic range: **Components of Audiovisual Language**

- 3. thematic range: **Between two Poles: Reality and Piece of Work**

- 4. thematic range: **Between Two Poles: Objectivity and Author´s Subject**

- 5. thematic range: **Observational Mode**

- 6. thematic range: **Forms of Representation and Birth of Stereotype**

Proccess of permanent comparison with

Your experience of spectator
(formal frame and method of expression)

Your experience of human
(senses, psychology, internal life)

WHEN DO WE BELIEVE IT?

IF OUR EXPERIENCE

(emotional, knowledge, intellectual)

EVALUATES IT
AS CONVINCING

WHEN DO WE BELIEVE IT?

IF ALL USED ELEMENTS OF LANGUAGE ARE EVALUATED AS CONVINCING

MEASURING SCALE OF LIFE AND ART IS

A MAN (HUMAN)

(size, passing time, speed, photo fidelity, emotion…)

Comparison allows us identify with characters and allows us to spend it.

SENSE OF ART

We spend situation which as if involve us, we know them intimately, but in fact it doesn´t involve us exactly.

(Clarity of life, we do not know it.
Behaviour of characters is clear.
Shakespeare and his commentator)

Spectator knows
more than
acting characters.

(Principle of detective-stories...)

Kino–pravda X cinema–vérité

TRUTH?

What kind of thruth?

Kind of

MANIPULATION

Thesis 1:

ALL TYPES OF COMMUNICATION IS A KIND OF MANIPULATION

(rules, necessary)

Thesis 2:

KNOWLEDGE OF ELEMENTS OF AUDIOVISUAL EXPRESSION THE REALITY IS THE **SPACE FOR MANIPULATION**, CENSORSHIP AND PROPAGANDA

CENSORSHIP:

prevental
follow-up
auto-censorship

The picture doesn´t exist.
Picture is putting together in the mind.

Power of film. Power of television.

Danger of film. Danger of television.

a) **AUDITIVITY**

b) **VISUALITY**

c) **AUDIO-VISUALITY** (relationships)

AUDIO

What kind of material is it?
What material do we have?

Atributes:

– Mechanical vibration

– Frequency (height of tone)

– Volume

– Dynamics (principle of contrasts),

(Way of expression)

AUDIO
(auditivity)

Values of it:
- Space for creativity
- Space for imagination
- Kind of intimity – closeness of microphone
- Possibility of concentration
- Possibility of free activity
- Authenticity…..stylization

AUDIO

Sound is not only music!

Sounds of everyday life

(sound avantgarde-era in 10th-20th of 20 th Century, experiments)

Golden Era of Radio (1923-1960)

Intimate a trustworthy friend, mass broadcasting

VISUALITY (IMAGE)

What kind of material is it?
What material do we have?

Atributes of photo:

- Size of frame
- Size of picture
- Light dynamics (contrast)
- Perspective (color or linear)
- Focal distance
- Depth of sharpness

SIZE OF PICTURE

Extreme long shot (EXL)
Long shot (LS)
Medium long shot (MLS)
Medium shot (MS)
Medium close-up (MCU)
Close-up (CU)
Extreme close-up (ECU)

VISUALITY

Values of it:

- Space for creativity
- Space for imagination vs. concrete
- Kind of intimity
- Necessity of concentration
- Totality of viewing (percepction)
- Authenticity (credibility)......stylization

VISUALITY (MOVING IMAGE)

What kind of material is it?

What material do we have?

Atributes of moving image:

- Size of frame
- Size of picture
- Light dynamics (contrast)
- Perspective (color or linear)
- Focal distance
- Depth of sharpness

VISUALITY (MOVING IMAGE)

What kind of material is it?

What material do we have?

Atributes of moving image:

- Movement (horizontal, zooming…)
- Dynamics of movement (calmness)
- Relationship to next shot in editing composition (Battleship Potemkin)

VISUALITY

A MAN PERCIEVES 80-90% OF WORLD BY EYES

- Sightless people
- Fascination of moving image
- Unjust victory of television
- Visual studies (era of visuality)

VISUALITY

When did auditivity and visuality meet?

(in history)

Golden era of Silent Film

1895–1927 (1935)

First sound film

Jazz Singer (1927)

Last silent film

by Charlie Chaplin *Modern Time* (1936)

AUDIO–VISUALITY (IMAGE):

SEEKING THE PERMANET RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUDITIVITY AND VISUALITY

- Identical (corresponding) – extreme (why to use it?)

- Opposite (audiovisual poetry, or missunderstanding)

AUDIO–VISUALITY (IMAGE):

SEEKING THE PERMANET RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUDITIVITY AND VISUALITY

- Contrast – „contrapunkt"

sound ECU/picture ELS

sound forte/picture „pianissimo"

sound dynamics (editing)/picture flat, calm (one shot)

AUDIO-VISUALITY (IMAGE):

SEEKING THE PERMANET RELATIONSHIP
   BETWEEN AUDITIVITY AND VISUALITY

- Picture developes (or make stronger) sound
- Sound developes (or make stronger) picture

(in: rythm, using contrapunkt, ideas…)

IRONY, HUMOUR, METAPHOR….

AUDIO–VISUALITY (IMAGE):

SEEKING THE PERMANET RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUDITIVITY AND VISUALITY

SEEKING OF THE SHAPE
- Composition of all elements
- Composition of relationships and developing them (themes, motives…)
- Ditching of all that shape doesn´t need

SEEKING THE SHAPE
MEANS

PERMANENT
ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL

ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL

Infinite variations

(length, next to...

...all expressing possibilities in time....

...parallel (audio, video, levels, planes ...)

What should we use and what shouldn´t?
What does belong to the shape and what doesn´t?)

ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL

What do we want to express?

Whom do we want to tell it?

(Role of producer, author, distributor, spectator)

What tool (device) do we want (need) to use?

CREATION IS A PERMANENT SEEKING OF ADEQUATE TOOLS FOR EXPRESSING AND THEIR IDEAL PROPORTION

PERMANENT SEEKING OF ADEQUATE TOOLS

Not only in the end with filmed, written, photo-taken material.
It starts in the beginig of creation.

REALITY IS THE MATERIAL.

We must seek in it. To collect. To select. To choose. To pick out. To throw away.
Depending what we want to express. To tell. To say. To shout!

PERMANENT SEEKING OF ADEQUATE TOOLS
OF EXPRESSING THE REALITY:

PRINCIPLES OF CREATION PROCESS

MAIN QUESTIONS:

WHAT?

WHY?

HOW?

FOR WHOM?

If you do not have an answer to one of these questions,
it makes no sense to do it.

The only one determinant (physics): run in time.

From this fact basic composition elements derive.

They can be in many levels, next to each other or above (under) each other

Audiovisual composition has common principles to music.

Changing the rythm, factual x emotional, forte and pianissimo = dynamics

THE REASON FOR USING. EVERYTHING MUST HAVE ITS ROLE.

Each of the tools:

Size of the take, lenght...

Punctuation: fade-out, dissolve, title (text)

Special effect: each of them (speeding up, stoptrick, color movement – home video)

Music: what kind, when begins and ends, volume...

Characters, actors, stage properties, developing of themes, setting etc.

ADEQUATE TOOLS

„If there is a gun hanging on wall in the 1ˢᵗ Act, the gun must shoot, at the very latest in the 3th Act."

Anton Chekhov

IF NOT – IT MUSTN´T BE THERE.

IT IS USELESS.

IMPORTANCE OF THE END:

The end is the most important part of composition!

1. The good end, everything is good.
2. The end: point, where every elements of composition is aimed.

IMPORTANCE OF THE END:

If we „find" the end, we know what was is about.

MY RECOMMENDATION:

First step of creation – find the end.

Immediately we know, what doesn´t belong to it. That is relief, alleviation!!!!

IMPORTANCE OF THE END

- What motives (themes) do end?
- Are all questions answered?
- Was there used everything what was exposed?
- Is the end logical? Is it logical outcome? Logical and nevertheless unexpected?

What is the end about?
=
What was the film about?

IMPORTANCE OF THE END

Film must finish, not leave off!!!!

‣ REALITY IS THE MATERIAL

- Reality is not only real World we can touch
- (objective factual)
- An emotional World inside a human IS THE REALITY.
- An experience IS THE REALITY.
- A dream IS THE REALITY

- Imagination
- CAN CREATE A REALITY

TWO POLES:

REALITY……………………FILM REALITY

IMAGINATION
TRANSMISSION
TRANSFER
SHIFT

TWO POLES:

REALITY...................FILM REALITY

TRANSLATION

TWO POLES:

TRUTH…………ART TRUTH

TRANSLATION

TWO POLES:

REALITY……………………FILM REALITY

TRANSLATION
AUTHOR´S OBJECT

Translation of reality and its phases:

- Preproduction
- Production
- postproduction

Translation of reality and its phases:

- Preliterary
- Literary
- Preparing of production
- Shooting
- Editing
- Postproduction
- PR a releasing
- Feedback

TWO PROCESSES:

ANALYSIS

vs.

SYNTHESIS

- Preliterary
- Literary
- Preparing of production
- Shooting

- ----------------------------------

- Editing
- Postproduction
- PR a releasing
- Feedback

- **Point of view of communication theory:**

  - **Transfer (linear) model**

- **TRANSMITTER ……………………RECEIVER**
  - **Interference**
    - **Technical**
  - **Shifting the meaning, sense**
  - **Filter of imagination, author´s point of view**
    - **Manipulation**

RECORD……………………….POETRY

- ## RECORD

- ### Main role of technical principle of shooting
  – Quality of lenses of camera
  – Quality of material – film or size of chip, quality of digital compression
  – Quality of screening – broadcasting, quality of reciever – size of screen, HDxFULL HD…)

- ### Main aim to „just record" reality, let it be as it is
  – Minimalising the using other technical tools during recording and postproduction
  – Minimum of stylisation
  – Minimalising the Author´s Point of View (excluding the imagination)

RECORD..........................POETRY

- ## RECORD

  - Minimalising „translation" of reality, to transmit it as sharp as it is possible

  - Minimalising the shifting from „truth" to „art truth"

  - Minimalising the shape. Shape (with composition) is not required (in some cases)

RECORD........................POETRY

- RECORD

- **The aim of recording:**
- Archive (instituion, family…)
- Education (medicine, nature sciences)
    - Sometimes special kind of shooting (high-speed camera etc.) – not art stylisation, but penetration „under" the seen reality
- Research (antropology, etnography, oral history)

-

RECORD.............................POETRY

- RECORD

  - Headword of recording

  - # DESCRIPTION

  -

RECORD...........................POETRY

- RECORD

- Question of „objectivity"

  - Is it objective (non-manipulated) record?
    - (only technical limitation?)

  - Is there any kind of stylisation?
  - (bxw, lenght of shoots, position of camera, the idea of shooting from the boat....)

  - Is there any author´s contibution?

RECORD.........................POETRY

- RECORD

- Documentation..............Documentary

- When the author enters the material, putting a purpose, it become DOCUMENTARY.

RECORD…………………….POETRY

▸ POETRY

▸ **Maximalising the Author´s Point of View**
- Imagination as a tool of translation reality into new one.
- Construction of new reality (even independant to the factual reality)
- Maximal shift from truth to „art truth".
- Maximum of stylisation (technical: colors, movement, speed, FX…)
- A wide spectrum of genres, using reality and participation of reality
  - documentary, docudrama, reality show, feature according to real events, feature inspired by reality (love stories, psychological cinema, westerns, detective-stories……), sci-fi, Apocalypse, abstract cinema (experiment)
- Shape (and composition of it)

▸ **Technics „only" as a tool of creativity**
- Maximal use of technical possibilies in recording and postproduction

RECORD…………………….POETRY

▸ POETRY

▸ PRESENTATION:

▸

– Art cinema
– Video art
– Experimental cinema and video
– School excercise
– Special distribution, festivals, shows
– Theatre
– Commercial occations (videomapping, light design…)

RECORD………………….POETRY

▸ POETRY

▸ THE AIM:

▸

– to touch not only intellect, but MAINLY SENSES and EMOTION
– to provoke mood
– to hook up the spectator (emotional cooperation with material-shape)
– to show totaly new point of view, new kind of interpretation of reality, to inspire spectator

RECORD........................POETRY

- POETRY

- Headword of recording

- # EXPRESSING

- Before the creative process:

  - To choose relationship to reality.

- To take a stand to
  - Reality
  - Process
  - Topic
  - Character (concrete person)

TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

‣ RESPONSIBILITY TO

- Myself
- Producer
- Spectator
- Profession
- Character (in non-fiction)

MODES (by Bill Nichols)

1. **The Expository Mode** (voice of God) – commentary, adresses the spectators directly
2. **Poetic Mode** – stresses the lyrical, rhytmic and emotional aspects of reality
3. **The Observational Mode** – observing the reality, non-commentary
4. **The Participatory Mode** – involves the object to filmming
5. **The Reflexive Mode** – expressing the contexts, original reflextion of author
6. **The Performative Mode** – demonstrations of reality, prepared situations

Observational Mode

- The most direct
- way to reality.

- Author is a spectator
  - of the world.

Observational Mode

- Many possibilities of using this method:
  - (60th od 20. century)

- France: cinema vérité
  - Etnography
  - Film-inquiry
  - Pioneers of authenticity

- Directors:
  - Jean Rouch
  - Chris Marker

Observational Mode

‣ Many possibilities of using this method:
  ‣ (60th od 20. century)

‣ United Kindgom: free cinema
  − New topics
  − Revolt to tradition
  − Conservative aproach

‣ Directors:
  ‣ Tony Richardson
  ‣ Lindsay Anderson
  ‣ Karel Reisz

Observational Mode

▸ Many possibilities of using this method:

   ▸ (60th od 20. century)

▸ United States of America: cinema direct

–   Totally non-interventional methods of shooting

–   Topics of public interest (relationship of individual and the systém)

▸ Directors:

   ▸ Robert Drew

   ▸ Richard Leacock

   ▸ Frederic Wiseman

Observational Mode

- Many possibilities of using this method:
  - (60th od 20. century)

  - cinema vérité
  - free cinema
  - cinema direct

Observational Mode

- Many possibilities of using this method:
  - (60th od 20. century)

- Film-pravda
- (from Russian)
- heritage of
- **Dziga Vertov**
- (1896-1954)

▸**Character is:**

- the **real person** with his/her life
- is co-operative **to show** his/her life (even very intimate parts of it)
- gives his/her time
- gives his/her **confidence**
- he/she has his/her **relationships in his surroundings**

‣ **<u>Ethics border</u>**
‣ are determinated by the relationship of the author to his/her character.

‣ If we behave to him/her in one way and aour aim is opposite one, we must answer the **question of conscience**.

- ▶ To use observational mode means make these decision:

- – What exactly is my topic (not to shoot „everything" and „nothing" in the same time)
- – Who/what will be the bearer of the topic (institution?, person?...Will it be willing to co-operate with me for longer time?...)
- – How to manage it (technicaly, production, financing….)
- – How to organise material (not to be drowned in it)

- To use observational mode means make these decision:

  - – When to start shooting at all
  - – When to start and to stop camera running during the shooting
- – When to stop/finish shooting at all
- (question of topic, cooperation of all people the character included, or patience)

  - Dramaturgical decision.

Helena Třeštíková (1949)

- Classics of observational or
- long-term shooting film.

Helena Třeštíková (1949)

- *Marriage Etudes* (1980–2005)
- *René* (1987–2007)
- *The Private Space* (1974–2011)

▶

▶ REALITY

▶ x

▶ MEDIA

REALITY vs. MEDIA

- multidimensional

  - two-dimensional

- never-ending

  - exact limitation

-

  time, space

- Exists without dependence of a human

  - Totally dependence of a human

    - principles of communication
      - market rules
    - technical limitations
    - political-social order (?)

REALITY vs. MEDIA

- Thesis:

- THE REALITY DOESN'T GET (FIT) INTO THE MEDIA

REALITY vs. MEDIA

- **Choosing something** from reality:

  - According to **rules of the media**
    - (photo, audio, video, tv, film…)

  - According (due) **to creative process**
    - (rules of telling and „translation")

  - What is **the most important**
    - (main question)

REALITY vs. MEDIA

IMPORTANCE:

▸ What **depicts the substance** of the topic.
  ▸ (very complicated process)

▸ What **represents** the substance of the topic.

REPRESENTATION

- *Nanook of the North* (1922)
- Robert Flaherty

REPRESENTATION

▸ What he has chosen?

▸ Family of real Nanook.

▸ He observed them for 1 year.

▸ He has showed them in „typical situation":

‒ Building the igloo

‒ Fishing, hunting

‒ Travelling

‒ Visiting the market, conflict with the technique (record)

‒ Women is chewing the man´s shoes (to make them soft)

REPRESENTATION

▸ **What „typical situation" represents?**

– Building the igloo:

▸ **style of living**, connection with nature

– Fishing, hunting:

▸ skills (of generations), power, ability to survive in cruel conditions

– Travelling:

▸ ability to take changes/to keep traditions, ability of improvisation, **all the time on a way for looking the food**

– Visiting the market, conflict with the technique:

▸ **limits of his world and perception of it**, no-experienced life,

▸ a kind of limitedness (+ and -)

– Women is chewing the man´s shoes:

▸ **patriarchal model of life**…

STEREOTYPE

▸ „Something conforming to a **fixed** or **general pattern**."

▸ „A **standardized mental picture** that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment."
  ▸ (Webster)
    ▸ (the *stereotype* of the absentminded professor)

STEREOTYPE

▸ Eskymoo – Inuits:

– having one identical look (physical)
– paddling kayaks
– traveling by sleigh and huskies (special transport)
– living in igloos (special buildings)
– going fishing with a harpoon (special was of hunting)
– Eskimo kissing and borrowing women (special intimacy)

– Men are called Nanook

STEREOTYPE

▸ Stereotypes of mentality and culture!

▸Phenomena of
▸„national characteristics".

STEREOTYPE

- Stereotypes of groups of people:

  - Blond girls
  - Homosexuals
  - Women having maternity leave
  - Policemen
  - Politics
  - Old people
  - Foerigner (stranger)
  - Islamists

STEREOTYPE

▸ Xenofophobia grows mainly from the stereotypes.

▸ Mistruth grows mainly from the stereotype and fear.

▸ Supporting the stereotypes is the source of misunderstanding between people.

STEREOTYPE

▸ As the products of popular culture **directly participate** on creating of stereotypes,

▸ that power **can be used even to destroy** the stereotypes.

Thank you for attention.

M. Štoll