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HUMAN AND NATURE IN DOCUMENTARY FILMS

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^a Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine**Keywords:**documentary film;
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sound**Abstract**

The purpose of the research is to study the interaction peculiarities of man and nature in documentary film, to establish separate dramatic techniques and features of the author's documentaries on environmental topics using the examples of the creative work of leading masters. **The research methodology** includes comparative, factual and historical analysis. Films were chosen for observation, in which the author's concepts of creating a documentary film on the topic of interaction between man and nature were most clearly manifested. The historical-comparative method expands the search for sources to create an objective historical picture and the time in which the events took place. The problem-chronological method of studying the historical reality made it possible to compare the documentary chronicles of different years, as well as to trace the consequences of its socio-cultural and ideological influence on the consciousness of people. **Scientific novelty.** The author analyzes the dramatic techniques and features that are, to one degree or another, relevant and relevant precisely in films on the topic of interaction between man and nature. In films on the chosen topic, a kind of cinematic space and a complex, multifaceted image of a hero, who is not necessarily a person (nature as the main character), is formed. All these abilities and techniques require special analysis and comprehension. **Conclusions.** The director's desire to go beyond the traditional chronicle perception of a screen document, to turn it into a metaphorical sign, to create a purposeful author's monologue, by manipulating screen signs – hieroglyphs, is analyzed. Editing techniques are considered – a sequential conclusion from the automatism of the screen material perception through the removal of some image techniques: the expression of the angle, the paradoxical composition, the choice of the size of objects, the change in the shooting speed, tonal and colouristic accents.

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Problem statement

The topic of ecology, as an interethnic and global one in terms of geographical coverage, has become in demand in world cinema in recent years. It is commonly known that cinema is a significant part of modern culture and influences our world perception. Environmental protection issues occupy a special place in cinematography. There are “environmental” dramas and comedies, animated films, feature films and, of course, documentaries. In some of them, the topic of ecology is barely noticeable, while in others, on the contrary, environmental problems of current influence are acute. The environmental issues are reflected in various genre forms, in particular, in film journalism that talks about the emergency condition of the environment, pollution of rivers, seas, air; films about animals living in the natural environment; there are films about men and animals’ interaction; stories about human life and nature, etc. However, it should be noted that this subject arrangement by genre is conditional and reflects common environmental problems.

The best world documentary filmmakers, one way or another, address the problem of human-nature interaction. For our research, the author’s documentary raising the issue of human-nature interaction is of the greatest interest. It is the director’s work on the film that demonstrates the unusual approaches to the collected material and artistic decisions’ originality. It is, first of all, about the creation of expressive audial and visual images, and their compositional and montage alignment.

Recent research and publications analysis

In our research, we relied on the theoretical work of world theorists and documen-

tary filmmakers, including S. Eisenstein’s collection “Nonindifferent Nature” (2006), which presents theoretical studies of editing and filming of documentaries. In the work “My Cinema” by film director A. Peshian (1988), there is an article “Remote editing or distance theory” where the author explains the content of the editing method and its difference from the well-known concepts of “film-eye” and “film-fist” Dzyga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein. The method of remote editing has been successfully used by the director in a number of his films.

The works of applied nature are most widely spread in our country, which can help to solve practical problems and talk about the technologies of screen documentaries production: Sh. Bernard (2007), M. Rabiger (2008), A. Rosenthal (2000). Theoretical understanding of modern Western trends in the film industry is presented in the work of L. Grindstaff (2005).

The researcher H. Prozhyko (2011) studies the history of a foreign documentary film based on the interaction of figurative and analytical methods of argumentation, offering her own scheme of existing documentary genres. Note the article by Ye. Trusevych (2010) “Drama Features of Documentary” analyses the artistic motivations that prompt the world’s best documentarians to turn to this subject (Werner Herzog, Godfrey Reggio, etc.), as well as dramatic techniques that are more characteristic of an environmental film.

Some young Ukrainian scientists study documentary cinematography. Thus, the article by M. Turkavi “Documentary film: history of the issue” (2014) examines the evolution of documentary film from the standpoint of its demand in society and the peculiarities of film distribution and exhibition system. Its place in the present and prospects of development are anal-

ysed. Problems of spectator perception of a documentary film on the example of the film by French documentary filmmaker Emmanuel Gras "Makala" (2017), are revealed in the article by A. Bezuhlyi (2018) "Space of senses in documentary cinema". The author deals with issues related to the perception of the audience, the communication of the documentary with senses and signs, and the role of the author/director in documentary cinema.

Full-fledged domestic research in the field of documentary cinema is generally few. As for the work on the narrow subject of ecology, and human-nature interaction, they are totally absent. However, this direction of filmmaking already has a set of its own dramatic techniques. Given that the documentary dealing with this subject went beyond a simple thematic designation, there is an urgent need for its special consideration. First of all, there is a need to analyse the work of those documentarians who are the founders of this type of film production.

Thus, the *relevance* of this problem is to remove the following contradictions between the actualization of interest in modern documentaries on the subject of ecology and the small number of modern works on this issue.

The purpose of the study is to study the peculiarities of human-nature interaction in documentary cinema; to find out certain dramatic techniques and peculiarities of the author's documentary film on environmental issues.

Main research material

Analysing documentaries on the nature-human interaction, we drew our focus toward the artistic endeavour of the world documentary filmmakers. The works by directors creating films on the nature-

society interaction are diversified. The author's works reveal the commonality of compositional solutions and montage rhythm based on the unified laws of nature and art, which was substantiated by the practitioner and theorist, the classic of world cinema Sergei Eisenstein (2006, p.22): "The organic unity of a work, arises when the law of the construction of this work corresponds to the *laws of the structure of organic phenomena of nature.*" (emphasis in the original).

Let us turn to the work of the creator of the original editing method A. Peleshyan, who for a long time followed the method he substantiated in his scientific work, but he made his last films in other rhythmically organized editing compositions "The End" (1992), "Life" (1993).

The director first demonstrated his editing method in his early works "The Beginning" (1967) and "We" (1969). A characteristic feature of the director's style is his author's concept which combines sound (music, noise effects) and images. (Note that the predecessor of this method was the Canadian animator Norman McLaren. In his jazz improvisation "Musical Fantasy" (1952) he managed to achieve extraordinary expressiveness in the combination of sound and image) (Peleshyan, 1988, p.138). A. Peleshyan theoretically substantiates it as a method of remote editing: "...I try not to knock two basic frames together that carry an important semantic load, but to create a distance between them. <...> This helps to achieve much stronger and deeper content than with direct splicing. The film's expressivity thus becomes more intense and its informative capacity takes on colossal proportions." (The method of remote editing is used in the documentary film "Soul of the World" (1992) by American director Godfrey Reggio).

The barbaric extermination of animals leading to the reduction of biological diversity on the planet is described in the film "Inhabitants" (Belarusfilm, part 1, 1970). The director collects/constructs the work, partly based on archival films. As a rule, A. Peleshyan uses in his works three/two repetitions of frames of the same content, which carries an important semantic load. The film features footage of a macaque monkey clinging to the bars of a cage and a lot of wild animals rushing wildly from the chase. Documentary, philosopher and "poet" A. Peleshyan builds a visual work (to the music of Paul Mauriat and sound and noise track) that becomes clear that not only sympathizes with living beings but also calls to protect their right to life.

A. Peleshyan's film "The Seasons" (3 parts, 1975), is edited to folk and classical music (Antonio Vivaldi's pieces) where shots of rescuing domestic animals are repeated three times. The script of the film reads, "In a duel with the raging streams of water, they (shepherds – author's note) caught sheep, but fell down again, slipping off the rocks", and further, "hands picked up the drowning sheep, passed them to each other, threw them ashore, caught them again, not allowing them to drown" (Peleshyan, 1988, p.41). For the third time in the script, the lines of the first episode are repeated, "In a duel with the raging waters..." (Peleshyan, 1988, p.43). A. Peleshyan implements the plan quite accurately: at the beginning of the film, the shots are repeated over and over, as if emphasizing the difficulties of overcoming a mountain river. A montage fragment in the middle confirms that the meaning of the episode is preserved, but now a crossing has been arranged to save the animals: shepherds on horseback pass the sheep from hand to hand, and when the animals fall into the river, they

are caught in wild water. And finally, in the last minutes of the story, which poetizes the difficult peasant work, people with animals in their arms go down a steep slope and catch them over and over in a mountain river. In the film with a lyrical title, the author spiritualizes the routine work of a stock-breeder associated with the risk of life. According to M. Lampolski (1988, p.65), in this film "the same scenes appear either as a chronic essay of harsh mountain life, or as a poetic metaphor." Of course, the works of A. Peleshyan are similar to poetic works, where frames-rhymes that repeat three times add substance to the visual expression.

In the late 20th – early 21st centuries, the world documentary filmmaking is undergoing serious evolutionary changes. Their meaning lies in the polarization of the author's ambitions. On the one hand, it is the desire to participate in the social progress of society and, as a consequence, the development of a journalistic analytical form of screen document. On the other hand – the need for the author's poetic understanding of life processes and expression of their thoughts in a clearly subjective monologue structure. The second direction brings over the author's personality to the fore – his concept of the issue studied and, of course, individualized cinematic form. The main developmental lines of this thesis in line with the work of American documentary filmmaker G. Reggio are worth considering in more detail.

G. Reggio's work on his first film, "Koyaanisqatsi" (1982), lasted more than seven years. At the heart of the author's search was the desire to combine images of the real world and technically transformed civilization into a single stream of visual impressions and musical rhythm. The acquaintance with the composer Phil-

ip Glass, the author of numerous operas and avant-garde opuses, became fateful for the director. After all, P. Glass not only wrote the soundtrack for Reggio's film but also sought a solution to each episode with him. Their collaboration created the impressive form of the film that ensured the director's success. The director's and composer's collaborative work continued in the following films of the "Qatsi" trilogy: "Powaqqatsi" (1988) and "Nakoyqatsi" (2002).

Working on the trilogy, G. Reggio created a powerful screen poster to protect the ecology of the planet "Anima Mundi" ("Soul of the World") (1993), which collected images of more than 70 representatives of the animal world of the Earth. The author's position is stated in a quote from Plato's "Timaeus" that the Earth is a living being and has a soul; the quote was repeated in all world languages.

Life attitudes focus on universal moral issues, and the search for a special language of communication with the audience determined the semantic aspects of G. Reggio's screen message, an unexpected form of "nonverbal cinema". This formula, implying the rejection of direct wording in words, has repeatedly emerged in documentary filmmaking in artistically sharpened films, usually poetic in structure and aesthetic pathos.

G. Reggio's method is most transparent in his first film "Koyaanisqatsi". The dramatic structure of the film is quite transparent: the collision of the Creator's world and the ant fuss of people who are busy adapting the world to the pragmatic needs of their endless consumption. These two worlds are placed in different episodes of the story manifesting in a specific screen concept, combined with a simple "ring" image of cave paintings. They drive the viewer away to apocalyptic prophecies

that the memory of the Hopi Indian tribe preserves. It was their language that gave the film its name, enchanting the viewer with its incomprehensibility, which in turn made the author's text irrelevant. According to the director's plan, the translation of the title, as well as the texts of the prophecy appear only at the end of the film, their meaning unequivocally implies a quick apocalypse. The soundtrack of the film takes over the functions of the direct author's focus, and it is not just a rhythmic "canvas" that dictates the emotional palette of image perception.

When the film was released, it was recognized by many critics and viewers as innovative. There is both true and false opinion in this statement. It will be recalled that from the moment of realization of its artistic potential, the documentary film, shown in the variety of authorial interpretive development of reality, included extreme forms of poetic transformation of an adequate picture of life, consolidating the screen text in the category of metaphorical sound. The most famous examples are D. Vertov, A. Peleshyan and their followers.

The essence of this direction is the strive to go beyond the traditional chronic perception of the screen document, to turn it into a metaphorical sign, to create a purposeful author's monologue, manipulating screen signs – hieroglyphs. Therefore, the directors were required to consistently withdraw from the automatic perception of screen material through the use of certain image techniques. Here is the expression of the angle, the paradox of the compositions, the choice of object size, the change of the shooting speed, and light-tonal and colouristic accents. And, of course, an attractive, usually montage context, which further enhances the autonomy of every symbol on the screen.

The human theme is perceived by the author on two levels. The first is the ant fuss, the kaleidoscopic nature of human faces, carried by rapid currents, which are “urged forward” by the rhythm of music and the speed of shooting. The second is static portraits of seemingly random passers-by. However, it is important that these portraits arise against the background of the incessant hectic movement, which takes the form of a vague lack of focus. This atmosphere combines isolated portraits of that faceless mass that “runs in and out” of doors and stairs of escalators with incredible speed. Here we finally get the usual convergence of the shooting camera and the subject. Moreover, in some cases: the pilot of the plane, the girls from the casino, the people who openly look at the camera – the level of contact is established, which transforms the author from an outside observer to a specific person with whom his characters communicate.

The remarkable thing is that modern information technologies, for all their diversity, remain primarily screen ones, preserving the tradition of the screen display of reality, both in pictures of reality itself (photographic line) and in the montage-symbolic message (message line).

As a result of getting to know the work of documentary filmmakers at the turn of the century in the field of artistic development of reality, it becomes obvious that the autonomous vector of screen documentary, which can be called author's, acquires new original forms supported by multimedia technology.

Following G. Reggio, the leading cameraman of his first films, R. Fricke, shot his own films “Chronos” and “Baraka” (1993), reproducing G. Reggio's metaphor. But, unlike him, R. Fricke, especially in the film “Baraka”, seeks to influence the viewer not by montage-rhythmic power, but

by meditative contemplation of the view of the world through the duration of contact with the screen. Colbert in his “Ashes and Snow” (1998) also focuses on the entertainment potential, where animals and people in shots taken by a famous artist-photographer with exquisite skill, become part of the holistic harmony of nature. And the film “Into Great Silence” (2006) directed by P. Gröning (France, Switzerland, Germany) depicts a leisurely story of the monastery life away from the worldly bustle, and is perceived as a real plastic metaphor.

Conclusions

Thus, attention to films that reflect the interaction of man with nature is not accidental. The human attitude to nature is a test for the stability of their ethical positions. In the author's films involved in the analysis of the nature-human relationship, the position of the creators is unambiguous. All of them use figurative means to speak about the value of nature for a human, about the sensual communication with nature necessary for a human. Nature declares itself a clear tempo-rhythmic pattern of living beings' movement, their life cycle. Nature lives by certain laws. The artist, director, and human-creator perceive these laws and rely on their stability and cyclicity.

Knowledge of the laws of cinematic language, discovered and described by the classics, their practical development and acquisition contribute to the creation of impressive works. Documentary material is organized on the basis of universal laws of nature, which are included in the list of methods of creating works of art. Although this does not mean such methods should be brought to the level of canon. Cinematic language is evol-

ing, and this is facilitated by experiments that few dare. Sensing/understanding rhythmic construction, as well as knowledge of the laws of art, the laws of nature is the key to creating works that have

the power of influence. Such films encourage you to obey their magical currents, immerse yourself in the rhythms set by the artist, and feel the spiritual effect of co-creation.

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ЛЮДИНА ТА ПРИРОДА У ДОКУМЕНТАЛЬНОМУ КІНЕМАТОГРАФІ

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Анотація

Мета дослідження – дослідити особливості взаємодії людини та природи у документальному кінематографі; встановити певні драматургічні прийоми і особливості авторського документального кіно екологічної тематики на прикладі творчості провідних майстрів. **Методи дослідження** включають порівняльний, фактологічний та історичний аналіз. Для спостереження були обрані кінострічки, у яких найяскравіше виявилися авторські концепції створення документального кіно на тему взаємодії людини та природи. Історико-порівняльний метод розширив пошук джерел для створення об'єктивної історичної картини та часу, в якому відбувалися події. Проблемно-хронологічний метод вивчення історичної дійсності дозволив зіставити документальну хроніку різних років, а також простежити наслідки її соціально-культурного та ідеологічного впливу на свідомість людей. **Наукова новизна:** проаналізовано драматургічні прийоми та особливості, які тією чи іншою мірою актуальні та релевантні саме у фільмах на тему взаємодії людини та природи. Встановлено, що у фільмах на обрану тематику формується своєрідний кінопростір та складний, багатоплановий образ героя, який не обов'язково є людиною (природа як головний герой). Всі ці можливості та прийоми потребують спеціального аналізу та осмислення. **Висновки.** Проаналізовано режисерське прагнення вийти за традиційне хронікальне сприйняття екранного документа, перетворити його на метафоричний знак, створити цілеспрямований авторський монолог, маніпулюючи екранними знаками – ієрогліфами. Розглянуто монтажні засоби – послідовне виведення з автоматизму сприйняття екранного матеріалу через відсторонення деяких засобів зображення: експресія ракурсу, парадоксальність композицій, вибір розміру об'єктів, зміна швидкості знімання, світлотональні та колористичні акценти.

Ключові слова: документальний фільм; авторське кіно; аудіовізуальні образи; природа; людина; монтаж; звук

