

OPINION

On the competition for acquiring the educational and academic degree Doctor,
academic field *Film Studies, Film Art, and Television*

Professional field 8.4, Theater and Film Art

Candidate: **Tamara Valerieva Peshterska-Jordanov**

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The dissertation has 243 pages, including a preface, six chapters, a conclusion, an appendix, a bibliography of 109 sources, and a filmography of 219 titles.

Tamara Peshterska graduated in Film Directing from VGIK "S.A. Gerasimov" Moscow. For more than fifteen years she worked as a director, editor, and scriptwriter at BNT, bTV, TV7 and Bulgaria ON AIR. Director and screenwriter of the documentary "The Monument and its brother". Screenwriter of the documentary "Everything...Almost". Her research interests are in the field of documentary filmmaking.

I. Objective of the study

The dissertation aims to systematize and analyze the basic mechanisms and the various directorial methods of working with a specific object of film research in the creation of a documentary portrait film. The main key concepts are analyzed: credibility, authenticity, ethics, degree of penetration into the inner world of the protagonist, etc. The study also aims to trace the evolution of artistic means over time, as well as the changes occurring with the introduction of new technologies - from the introduction of video and synchronous cameras to today's digital means of image construction and its processing in the post-production period.

The candidate states the following main tasks of her research:

- To trace the historical dynamics in the development of documentary cinema.
- To systematize the different forms of documentary portraiture.
- To outline the changes in the director's view of the protagonist in the Bulgarian documentary-portrait.
- Analyze the practical approaches to image construction at different stages of film production and classify them.

- Outline the creative principles and trace the role of the director in the construction of the documentary image.
- Identify and trace the influence of the established works of the world documentary cinema on the work of contemporary Bulgarian filmmakers.
- To explore the methods of presenting people in documentary portraiture and their transformation in the digital age.

Tamara Peshterska traces the evolution of the genre "portrait" in the context of the historical development of society and the global trends in the construction of the image of man in documentary cinema since its emergence until today. Parallels and general regularities of the portrait and its specificity in different types of art are sought. Searching for the common denominator, Peshterska draws on the experience of authors who built the foundation of documentary cinema, such as Flaherty, Dziga Vertov, Grierson and Lenny Riefenstahl. A special place is given to the Bulgarian "pioneer" Zahari Zhandov. The connection between documentary cinema and ideology is noted with examples from totalitarian practice /Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and their Bulgarian epigones/.

II. Subject and object of the study

The main object of the study is the analysis of different directorial approaches to the protagonist in portrait documentary cinema, the evolution of the form, and the influence of specific historical, technological, and social conditions determining the parabola of social development.

The object of analysis is the transformations of film language that logically follow changes in societal conditions globally, as well as the impact of digitalization and the opportunities provided by the hybrid form. These changes have a direct impact on the evolution of film aesthetics.

The thesis explores the contemporary principles of structuring film narrative, their evolution leading to the formation of a fundamentally new cinematic language, as well as changes in the film process itself. The dissertation focuses distinctly on the intimate world of the protagonist, his inner impulses, and ulterior motives of action.

Particularly noteworthy is the analysis of concepts such as "objective reality" on the one hand, and the authors' subjective view of the specific object of study on the other. The evolution of the interpretation of the author's point of view and the filmmaker's right to declare his or her civic stance turns documentary cinema into an artistic fact with a polyphonic sound, commensurate with the highest examples of other arts.

III. Research Methodology

In the abstract, a part of the dissertation, Tamara Peshterska declares the application of a cinematic analysis combined with interdisciplinary methods including historical, sociological, cultural approaches to the documentary form - from the origins of

documentary cinema to the present day. The different filmmaking approaches of working with the object of study are traced and analyzed through an applied systematization and typology of the documentary-portrait.

The dissertation focuses on the specialized literature related to the topic, which concerns the development of the documentary form, both in Bulgarian documentary cinema and worldwide.

Retrieved are films, sociological and philosophical scientific works, reports, studies, and articles. Directorial opinions of the authors of the researched works of Bulgarian documentary cinema are analyzed and compared with prominent Bulgarian or world documentary filmmakers. Practices of image construction are compared, looking for common patterns and principal differences that form the authorial individuality of each of them.

An important detail is the research in the archives of the National Film Centre, the Studio for Documentary Films "Vreme" and the Bulgarian National Cinematheque.

The dissertation attempts to find the methodological key that will unite the interconnection between film studies, film practice and the closely related sociological paradigms that shape the image of a society.

Tamara Peshterska traces the different filmmaking practices in working with the object, with particular attention to the relationship between the author /writer, director, cinematographer/ and the object of study. Bozhidar Manov's definition that "portraiture is not only a comprehensive and precise factual study, but also an insightful psychology" is quoted. Practices of Bulgarian directors (Adela Peeva, Eldora Traykova, Stefan Komandarev) are mentioned, proving the thesis that the basis of future success is the director's perception and individual sense of proportion.

The dissertation analyses the different variants of the filming process: the method of continuous observation, the reportage filming, the use of the interview as a way of dialogue, the hidden camera in the new social conditions, the use of staged situations, the so-called "illustration" of the problem.

It also focuses on the frequent use of the voice over, considering that in the most recent Bulgarian cinema, it is rather the author's commentary that is drastically distinguished from the term "narrator" and increasingly becomes a "narrator".

IV. Contributions

1. The present study is the first one in Bulgaria to provide a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the characteristics of documentary portraiture. The evolution of key works in the film-portrait in the world and Bulgarian practice are traced.
2. The dynamics of the historical development of the documentary portrait in Bulgarian cinema within two periods - the socialist and the post-totalitarian - is

outlined. The paper concludes that contemporary documentary cinema has been increasingly successful in interpreting the inner, more intimate world of its characters without neglecting their social significance.

3. The directorial 'toolkit' through which the visual and narrative structures and messages of documentary portraiture are constructed is analyzed in detail. The range of relationships between documentary veracity (authenticity) and authorial subjectivity is commented on.
4. The changes that have occurred in the language of documentary filmmaking, resulting from global social changes, as well as the consequences of digitalization and the introduction of new technologies that condition the proliferation of hybrid forms in documentary filmmaking are analyzed.
5. The contribution of the text is an update in the commenting and interpretation of ethical issues, without which documentary cinema no longer functions in civilized and legal societies.

In conclusion, Tamara Peshterska - Jordanova demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the topic at hand. Her theses are logical and supported by convincing arguments. She possesses theoretical knowledge and professional experience in the field of cinema, handles skillfully the sources that are necessary to prove her thesis, and builds a coherent system of analysis of the documentary film - portrait.

For this reason, I support Tamara Peshterska-Iordanov's candidature for acquiring the educational and scientific degree of Doctor.

10.08.2023 г.

Sofia

/Assoc. Prof. Kostadin Bonev/