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## **Anthropological-Morphological Analysis of a Film as Film Studies Practice**

In the chapters devoted to the films *Pharaoh*, *The Wedding* and *Mother Joan of the Angels*, the author uses the original methodology of anthropological-morphological analysis of a film. This procedure allows for a detailed examination of the elements that make up a film and shape its character and structure (Kuśmierczyk 2014: 13–34; 2015: 11–27).

At this stage of the work, the analysis covers the detailed use of individual means of expression and the relationships between them in specific fragments of the film, that is, shots or scenes. The network of meanings presented in the work is related to explicit analytical planes, which are the basic categories of the presented world. At the same time, the main aspects of the film's structure are also read as anthropological categories: space, time and people are perceived as film characters in the analysis phase.

### **The Cinematographic Work Deserves Attention**

The anthropological-morphological analysis of a film aims to obtain detailed information in the process of consecutively performed analytical tasks. This combined methodology makes it possible to transcend the superficial reception of the work and facilitates the formulation of interpretative proposals. This is achieved by using the information obtained during the data analysis and situating the film in external systems of meaning.

The findings gathered during the analysis, together with the proposed interpretative contexts, allow us to search for meanings at 'higher' levels of understanding, with particular emphasis on anthropological interpretative horizons. Here, I present the findings based on the analytical work carried out on the film, both following it and embedded within it.

This analysis aims to reveal the details of the film's fragments as accurately as possible and then provide insight into the entire film. The methodology used allows us to see the full network of meanings constructed by detailed perceptions, thus enabling us to formulate a justification for our proposed understanding of the film and its interpretation.

The use of anthropological-morphological analysis allows the users to adopt a receptive attitude. They are receptive and sensitive, open to accepting the entire spectrum of information coming from the analysis of individual fragments of the film, while simultaneously co-creating a view of the work as a whole.

Interpretations related to a cinematic work should not be expected to draw conclusions solely based on strict and logical reasoning. By their very nature, they cannot be purely discursive. Phenomenological approaches play an important role, and, as such, interpretations should be derived from material containing argumentation that is created by following defined analytical rules.

The aforementioned objective method, which refers to the classical art of analysis and interpretation, is contrasted with intuitive or impressionistic approaches and ephemeral fashions within the humanities.

## 'Thick Description' in Film Studies

The methodology underlying the analytical studies presented in this volume is similar to that of 'thick description' used in cultural anthropology. Its formula was proposed by the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle, from whom it was adopted and transferred to the field of cultural research by Clifford Geertz. A 'thick description' focuses the anthropologist's attention on what a given human action, even if small and ephemeral, expresses in a particular situation and what meanings it brings to that particular situation (Geertz 1973: 3–30).

The anthropological-morphological analysis looks for meanings articulated by employing film expression used in a specific way, at a discrete moment. At the same time, it examines the 'networks of meanings' created in the film in relation to selected analytical planes related to the film work, along with their cultural meanings introduced in the film. The analytical work is characterised by meticulousness concerning the means of expression used by the individual.

The result of the analytical work carried out in this way, which is a kind of ‘thick description’, can, referring to the terminology used by Geertz, be opposed to ‘thin description’ (Geertz 1973: 7) when the treatment of the film is superficial. A ‘thin description’ does not analyse the use of cinematic means of expression and does not refer to them in the interpretation. Nor does it consider the interconnections that exist between the various means of expression and their relation to the levels of interpretation. A superficial approach even overlooks many of the elements that co-create the film image; it does not acknowledge their existence.

It should be noted here that the interpretative findings formulated by reflecting on the information gleaned from the application of anthropological-morphological analysis of a film work do not claim to be the only nor the final interpretation. They exist alongside other proposed interpretations, which, however, may be challenged by more precise findings. The method of detailed analysis of a film serves to enable its interpretation that “takes us into the heart of that of which it is the interpretation” (Geertz 1973: 18).

## The Principle of Syzygies

Anthropological-morphological analysis was born at the intersection between scientific research, film studies and academic teaching practice. Resulting from a specific, legitimate need, it became a kind of implementation of the still valid proposal formulated in 1984 by Alicja Helman:

Analytical proceedings, the sequence of necessary activities, the course of the analysis itself and the method of consolidating its results are all matters that can and should be normalised. The point is not to restrict the researcher’s free initiatives and create rigid rules for analytical activities, but [...] a certain accepted metalanguage, a basic canon, formulas and models of analysis are needed. If only for didactic purposes, because film analysis [...] is a subject that we teach at universities. This complex of issues, its examination and ordering, belongs to the so-called pressing problems that must be solved first if film studies are to develop further as a university discipline and its scientific nature is to be unquestionable (Helman 1984: 22).<sup>1</sup>

The first methodological proposal, co-creating the presented research concept, is the ‘principle of syzygies’, which is a solution that prevents the occurrence of the most common and negative consequences of deficiencies in analytical and interpretative work. One of the most frequently repeated and, at the same time,

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1 Translated into English by Maciej Żurawski.

most significant mistakes is the omission of aspects of the form of a film during analysis and interpretation.

The methodological approach called the 'principle of syzygies' formulates four pairs of specific thematic areas relating to the film. The areas forming each pair are closely linked, a connection that can be described as a 'syzygy' (Greek *syzygos* – 'yoked together'). In each pair, one area that is usually included in the analysis is combined with another area that is often overlooked or forgotten in film studies practice. This allows researchers who undertake analytical and interpretative tasks to acknowledge both areas and, at the same time, to notice the relationships between them and the meanings derived from these relationships.

The first pair (and unity) comprises the content and form of the film work. The second pair consists of space and time, two concepts that are distinct yet unified. In the humanities, the category of space-time has not been sufficiently recognised to date, contrary to the separately considered categories of space and time. Therefore, in analytical and interpretative practice, space and time are subject to separate analyses. While conducting these analyses, however, it is necessary to notice the ties between both categories, as well as their original unity.

In the third pair, the image and audio layers of the film work are combined. The world of sounds present in the film and its co-existence with the image must always be considered during this analysis. Thanks to the use of digital technology, the possibilities for creating the sound layer in a film have increased significantly, resulting in the enhanced role of sound. This is a dynamically developing field of contemporary cinema.

The fourth pair involves the protagonists of film stories. In a film, the character is embedded in the surrounding screen reality, but the film image refers to the real world with its cultural regularities, which are internalised by the character and, at the same time, projected onto the outside world. A person acting as a film protagonist gives the film world its fullness of being. It also accommodates their spiritual experience, which is paired with the reality that surrounds them.

## Analytical Proceedings

Due to the specificity of the film as a medium, the viewer's perceptual abilities are not sufficient for them to be able to simultaneously, consciously and attentively perceive all of the visual and auditory means of expression and their functions in every fragment of the film and the entire work, together with the connections existing between them and the changes taking place. During analytical work,

the film must therefore be watched in an orderly manner multiple times. Moreover, there is a need to formulate rules of conduct (Kuśmierczyk 2014: 13–34).

The film work should be divided into fragments that will be watched and analysed in turn. The shots and scenes create a division inherent in the film.<sup>2</sup> The scope and sequence of perceptual-analytical tasks should be established. This is essential for the analysis to be accurate and effective. The analysis of morphological elements should be carried out focusing on a specific analytical plane – space, time and characters – that is, it should be concerned with the way they create their presence and shape in the film image. This is a multi-stage work involving all morphological elements, respectively.

As the work progresses – in parallel, as it were – the dependencies and connections between the various means of expression emerge, constructing meanings precisely due to their co-presence.

A very important element of this methodology is the description created during the performance of all analytical tasks. These are working notes, a record of the arrangements resulting from the work. This process should be the least onerous, but the functionality of its form – due to the need to develop the collected information, thus enabling its full use – should be as wide as possible. The description should provide simultaneous access to all notes, enable the introduction of annotations, and allow for any grouping of the collected material and its selection according to the needs (Kuśmierczyk 2014: 25–27).

It is also very helpful to keep an up-to-date list of new tasks that need to be performed during the analysis. This involves, for example, noting a detailed formal arrangement, which is relevant to the idea behind the examined fragment of the film. It is therefore necessary to check the presence of this arrangement and its possible evolution over the course of the film. Such situations occur very often throughout the analysis.

The description allows the analysis to transcend the linear nature of the course of the film. It enables a quick and detailed insight into any part of the film and a comparison with any other part.

After completing the description, it is possible to proceed to the next stage of the work, which is an analysis of the connections, interpermeability and fusion existing between space, time and characters within the analysed fragments

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2 During the work, selected frames are also analysed, but the smallest useful unit is the shot, which records the passage of time, movement and changes taking place in the on-screen reality. It is only in a shot that sound may appear; a frame has no audio equivalent.

of the film, as well as a juxtaposition and analysis of the functions performed simultaneously by the various means of expression on these planes. In this way, it is possible to have a detailed and in-depth insight into the entire film, its composition and structure. Moreover, this analysis permits us to inscribe the story of humanity contained in the film into anthropological interpretative horizons, into the cultural order that human beings experience and in which they exist.

## Anthropology and Poetics

The screen reality of the analysed film refers to the real world. The film's means of expression act as a bridge between the objectively existing reality, with its cultural ordering, and the film image, which, despite all of the differences, maintains this kind of ordering. Space, time and characters, thanks to the technical and artistic transformation given to them by the filmmakers, co-create the world of the picture that carries information about people and the world around them. The film becomes "the essence and sublimation of real human space-time" (Dragovič 2012: 41).

All of the chapters devoted to films in this book are the result of research combining film analysis and film studies methodology with anthropological knowledge and sensitivity.

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## Analiza antropologiczno-morfologiczna dzieła filmowego jako praktyka filmoznawcza

### STRESZCZENIE

Rozdziały poświęcone filmom *Faraon*, *Wesele* i *Matka Joanna od Aniołów* wykorzystują autorską metodologię analizy antropologiczno-morfologicznej dzieła filmowego. Pozwala ona na szczegółową, wyprowadzaną z obrazu filmowego analizę elementów współtworzących poszczególne utwory filmowe. Analizie zostaje poddane konkretne użycie filmowych środków wyrazu oraz istniejące pomiędzy nimi zależności – obecna w dziele filmowym sieć znaczeń – w odniesieniu do określonych płaszczyzn analitycznych, którymi są podstawowe kategorie świata przedstawionego, a zarazem główne aspekty struktury dzieła filmowego odczytywane w tej koncepcji także jako kategorie antropologiczne: przestrzeń, czas i człowiek postrzegany w fazie analizy jako postać filmowa.

Zebrane w trakcie analizy drobiazgowo ustalenia wraz z proponowanymi kontekstami interpretacyjnymi umożliwiają poszukiwanie sensów na „wyższych” poziomach znaczeń ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem antropologicznych horyzontów interpretacyjnych.

Metodologia zbliża się do stosowanego w antropologii kulturowej „opisu gęstego” i jest przeciwstawiona powierzchownemu, mało wnikliwemu podejściu do filmu. Jednym z jej elementów jest „zasada syzygiów”. Tworzy ona cztery pary określonych obszarów tematycznych odnoszących się do dzieła filmowego. Obszary umieszczone w każdej z par są ze sobą ściśle powiązane. Pozwala to osobom podejmującym pracę analityczną pamiętać o obu obszarach, a równocześnie dostrzegać występujące pomiędzy nimi związki i wynikające z tego faktu znaczenia.

Pierwszą parę, a zarazem jedność, tworzą treść i forma dzieła filmowego. Para druga przypomina o jedności przestrzeni i czasu. W trzeciej parze zostały połączone warstwa obrazowa i warstwa audytywna dzieła filmowego. Para czwarta łączy rzeczywistość otaczającą bohaterów z ich światem wewnętrznym.

Metodologia powstała jako efekt indywidualnej pracy naukowo-badawczej i filmoznawczej akademickiej praktyki dydaktycznej Seweryna Kuśmierczyka.

W rozdziale omówiono podstawowe założenia postępowania analitycznego: sposoby uporządkowania pracy oraz zasady analizy elementów morfologicznych w związku z przestrzenią, czasem i postaciami filmowymi. Przedstawiono



też konieczność prowadzenia opisu analitycznego i jego zasady. Kolejny omówiony etap pracy stanowi analiza wzajemnego przenikania się i zespolenia istniejącego pomiędzy przestrzenią, czasem i postaciami w obrębie analizowanych fragmentów filmu oraz zestawienie i analiza funkcji pełnionych przez poszczególne środki wyrazu na wszystkich tych płaszczyznach równocześnie. W ten sposób pojawia się możliwość szczegółowego i pogłębionego wglądu w całe dzieło filmowe, w jego kompozycję i strukturę, wpisania zawartej w nim opowieści o człowieku w antropologiczne horyzonty interpretacyjne, w ład kulturowy, którego człowiek doświadcza i w którym istnieje.

Wszystkie zamieszczone w książce rozdziały poświęcone filmom są efektem pracy badawczej łączącej metodologię analizy dzieła filmowego i wiedzę filmoznawczą z wiedzą i wrażliwością antropologiczną.

## Antropološko-morfološka analiza filmskega dela kot filmološka praksa

### POVZETEK

V poglavjih, posvečenih filmom *Faraon*, *Svatba* in *Mati Ivana Angelska*, je uporabljena izvirna metoda antropološko-morfološke analize filmskega dela, ki omogoča podrobno analizo elementov, ki soustvarjajo vsak film in izhajajo neposredno iz filmske slike. Metoda se posveča analizi konkretne uporabe izraznih sredstev in razmerij med njimi – mreži pomenov, ki je prisotna v filmskem delu –, in sicer z vidika specifičnih analitičnih ravnin. Te ravnine predstavljajo osnovne kategorije predstavljenega sveta in hkrati glavne vidike filmske strukture, ki so v okviru pričujoče metode razumljene kot antropološke kategorije prostora, časa in človeka, pri čemer je slednji v analizi obravnavan kot filmski lik. Metoda je rezultat individualnega znanstvenega in raziskovalnega dela Seweryna Kuśmierczyka ter njegove akademske prakse na področju filmskih študij.

V postopku tovrstne analize filmskega dela raziskovalec zbere podrobne informacije in opažanja, ki skupaj s predlaganimi interpretacijskimi konteksti omogočajo iskanje smisla na »višjih« pomenskih ravneh, zlasti znotraj antropoloških horizontov interpretacije. Metoda je podobna »gostemu opisu«, znanem iz kulturne antropologije, in je nasprotje površinskemu in nepoglobljenemu pristopu k filmom. Eden izmed njenih elementov je »pravilo sizigijev«. Ta določa štiri pare izbranih tematskih področij, ki se nanašajo na filmsko delo, področji v vsakem paru pa sta medsebojno tesno povezani. Tistim, ki se lotijo analitično-interpretacijskih nalog, to omogoča, da ne zanemarijo posameznega elementa, hkrati pa upoštevajo povezave med njimi in iz njih izhajajoče pomene.

Prvi par in hkrati celoto tvorita vsebina in oblika filmskega dela. Drugi par spominja na enotnost prostora in časa. Tretji par združuje vizualno in zvočno plast filmskega dela, četrti par pa združuje resničnost, ki obdaja filmske like, z njihovim notranjim svetom.

V poglavju so opredeljena osnovna izhodišča analitičnega postopka: načini načrtovanja in organizacije dela, izhodišča za analizo morfoloških elementov, povezanih s prostorom, časom in filmskimi liki. Predstavljena sta tudi nujnost analitičnega opisa in njegov potek. Drugi korak je analiza medsebojnega prepletanja in povezanosti prostora, časa in likov v izbranem odlomku filma ter primerjava in analiza funkcij, ki jih posamezna filmska izrazna sredstva na teh ravninah opravljajo istočasno. Ta pristop odpira možnost podrobnega in poglo-

bljenega vpogleda v celotno filmsko delo, njegovo kompozicijo in strukturo ter možnost, da v filmu predstavljeno pripoved o človeku povemo z antropološkimi obzorji interpretacije v kulturno ureditev, ki jo človek doživlja in v kateri obstaja. Vsa poglavja te knjige, posvečena filmom, so rezultat raziskovalnega dela, ki metodo analize filmskega dela in filmološko znanje povezuje z antropološkimi kategorijami.