

Review of thesis **“Conveying Meaning Through Movement:
Using Handheld Vs Steadicam In Moving Point Of View Shots In Feature Films”**

written by student **Abraham Joseph**, CINKK, katedra kamery, FAMU 2017/18

This thesis is trying to understand the difference in meaning and resulting feeling of two different camera movement technologies: handheld vs steadicam.

Abraham obviously studied quite some literature and gives us a rather acute historical overview of technologies development, always keeping in mind the purpose of trying to reach an emotional impact in the audience.

I think he could have been a little more radical in bringing technical achievement into correspondence with the resulting development of a new style. Equivalent to impressionistic painters, who went to paint outside into nature, for the simple reason, that the preparation of colours wasn't a elaborated process of mixing pigments anymore but reduced itself to ready-to-use easy-to-transport tubes.

We find some examples of handheld use in the silent film era, but I surely missed some description of the visually extremely elaborated style of for example Carl Theodor Dreyer. In the end of the silent era movies were at a visually height, for the simple reason, that films had to be understandable by visual terms only. The following early years of "talkies" logically reduced the need of visual storytelling, as moviemakers and audiences concentrated on the new possibilities of sound and dialogue; plus the cameras had to be plimped, resulting in huge and heavy machines.

Abraham correctly notes the introduction of small and lightweight cameras, like the arri 3, but I couldn't find anything on reportage style POV's during the big wars, which surely formed a generation of cameramen? And Italian neorealism, as a predecessor of nouvelle vague; didn't it influence the audience's acceptance, and/or the film auteur's tools how to tell stories?!

Very interesting I found the notions of the Steadicam inventor Garrett Brown, who points out what was the idea behind his invention: our human vision is "stabilized", so the use of shaky handheld shots, especially for POVs is more of a cinematographer's convention than representing reality.

Some incorrect or vague statements could have been corrected in the preparation of this thesis:

-standard BNCR-type lens follow-focus gear?

- "...The Steadicam made its debut in Hal Ashby's film *Bound For Glory*...": what about Kubrick's *Paths of glory*?? This milestone movie for camera movement and POVs is not even mentioned

- Kubrick's *The Shining*: there is a description of the use of sound in the iconic scene with the boy riding his three-wheeler in the endless corridors: what about the camera? Or the equally iconic final scene in the labyrinth: it's not even mentioned, even the use of POV's there is an absolute masterpiece.

- what happens with the eyeline in POVs?

- weird statements like: ...No painting is objective, but he wasn't naive to argue that photography is free of such subjectivity...

The final "analysis" of the films *Son of Saul* and *Elephant* are very short and seem to reflect more Abraham's personal, surprisingly very critical opinion, than an analysis.

I found it sympathetic that Abraham seems to cherish the minimalism of Robert Bresson and that he, as he repeatedly states, tries to find the right equilibrium in adopting various filming techniques. I wish he had gotten into this topic before planning his "colour etude".

I recommend to accept this thesis for the graduation commission's consideration and would suggest to evaluate it with a grade "B".

MgA. Klaus Fuxjäger



23.9. 2018