

Opponent review of Master thesis „Expanded Cinematography“ by Vladimir Dimoski

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Expanded Cinematography by Vladimir Dimoski is an attempt to address an emerging question in the circles of cinematographers that could be simplified to „Is it still cinematography, when so much of the image is actually not captured by a camera?“. It is a question about the role of the cinematographer – the person responsible for the image in the process of making a film. Essentially, it is a question of authorship of the image from a philosophical point of view, when tools for creating the image become so complex that they require a whole battalion of specialists to be used. This could lead to many questions and interesting debates, if they would be correctly and precisely formulated.

The thesis frequently mentions two terms – „expanded cinematography“ and „virtual cinematography“. The first is once briefly addressed by citing two cinematographers – Vilmos Zsigmond and Yuri Neyman who coined the term. Nevertheless, one would expect further elaboration in a more analytical and insightful manner, considering the term is the title of the thesis. The latter term – virtual cinematography – has its own chapter. Yet the explanation of the term remains unsatisfactory too. Instead of an explanation, the author simply gives a few examples of use of new technology, on three films of his choice. The examples alone are quite vague and general, considering the author is an aspiring cinematographer, leaving the reader wondering at moments, if the text is targeting the general public or motion picture professionals. The intention to explain a term by using examples is quite clear, yet what the text lacks is a convincing and clear generalising explanation, or author's own view that would sum up the examples.

The author claims he wants to „try to convey how the DoPs have used the new skills to help support the dramaturgy of the screenplay“. The attempt is unfortunately blurred by the above mentioned vague and general descriptions of procedures related to filmmaking in general (and not cinematography specifically) mixed with interpretations of the films or their scenes. The lack of a deeper insight from a cinematographer's point of view could be caused by the fact, that the author does not reflect on the fact that many visual aspects he mentions are not entirely up to the cinematographer, but are strongly influenced by directors.

On the formal side, the thesis could deserve a little more attention. Frequent overuse of the definite article when not necessary, occasional wrong prepositions and a few awkward formulations, that require repeated reading to understand the intended meaning stain the thesis unnecessarily. A few

other mistakes like „deathly space“ (deadly space), „life actors“ (live actors), or confusing the words „other – another“ could have been avoided too. Typography is another aspect that could be improved. The mistakes are predominantly aesthetic in character, like using spaces instead of tabulation, most visible in the Table of contents, creating a visually unpleasing flow. Also, ever since the introduction of hypertext, underlined text is not accepted in regular texts (not even in headings), because it implies a hyperlink. The repeated wrong use of hyphens and dashes is not a major issue, except a few instances, where it could lead to misunderstandings, if understood literally – „ Also, while creating the hand - held inspired movement...“, or „bullet - time photographing“.¹

Overall, the thesis is not fully convincing in defining key terms. The author’s reasoning of why expanded cinematography is an evolutionary step is more of a popular description of some of the technology involved in the process of making films mixed with interpretations of some of the visuals. A little surprising is that the author chose three CGI intense films of which two are stereoscopic – Life of Pi and Gravity. Surprisingly, there is not a single mention of this fact in the thesis, considering both films are stereoscopically extraordinary aesthetically as well as technologically.

I strongly hope the author tried to contact Emanuel Lubezki, Claudio Miranda and Bill Pope in order to get their insight on the filmmaking process of the discussed films. The absence of interviews with these cinematographers can be only excused by the fact, that they did not have the capacity to write back. Nevertheless the text contains all formally required elements and with a page count of 43 pages², it passes the 40 page minimum required for a Masters thesis.

In spite of all the mentioned shortcomings, I recommend the thesis to be defended and as it is, my recommended grading is C.

Vidu Gunaratna
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¹ „hand-held“ and „bullet-time“ are correct.

² 1 page = 1800 characters including spaces. Body only, excluding Abstracts, TOC, Bibliography etc.