

AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE IN POETRY FILM: A STUDY OF CHARLES BUKOWSKI'S "BLUEBIRD" POEM AND ITS VISUAL FORM ADAPTATION BY MICHAEL STENZEL

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ABSTRACT: *This paper is divided into two parts; the first aims at investigating how poetry film fuses spoken word poetry with visual images and sound to create meanings, connotations and associations stronger than those produced by each genre on its own. The paper studies the stream of consciousness flow of images and nonlinear narrative style as the main features of that genre in addition to the editing/montage aesthetics and the spatio-temporal continuity. It also highlights William Wees' notion that in the cinema the union of words and images strengthens the film's ties to realism and sheds light on the Russian film-director Andrei Tarkovsky who developed the filming strategy poetic logic and made poetry assert the potential of the cinematic image as a form of artistic expression. In the second part the paper explores Charles Bukowski's poem "Bluebird" (1992) and Michael Stenzel's short film "Bluebird" (2017) by analyzing the verbal and visual forms to prove whether the filmmaker has succeeded in transferring the poet's message and feelings or not through various tools and techniques.*

KEYWORDS: Aesthetic Context, Color Psychology, First-Person Narration, Montage, One-Take Shot, Poetry-Film, Visual Film Structure

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

The current study is considered a breakthrough in the interdisciplinary field of poetry film since not so many studies have so far investigated this genre thoroughly. The study examines Charles Bukowski's poem "Bluebird" and its visual form adaptation by Michael Stenzel illuminating the contribution of the visual work to the themes and feelings the poet wants to deliver to his audience. In the field of poetry, the present study sheds light on the interdisciplinary field of poetry film and thus encourages researchers to deal with other poems of different ages and to probe new meanings, viewpoints and interpretations that can enrich the literature and become more relevant to contemporary life in light of different social and cultural circumstances. Besides, such a study contributes to the genre of film making by contributing to the genre poetry film.

Poetry-film: Definition, Development and Main Features

Poetry film is a subgenre of film that fuses spoken word poetry, visual images and sound to give a stronger interpretation of the meaning being conveyed. William Wees was the first to call this combination "Poetry-film." In his essay, "Poetry Film and Film Poems" (1999), Wees

exclaims, “a number of avant-garde film and video makers have created a synthesis of poetry and film that generates associations, connotations and metaphors neither the verbal nor the visual text would produce on its own.”

Film is mainly a visual language and including poetry within it affects the actual picture. So, poetics should be incorporated into the very visual nature of the film in a kind of collaboration between the poet and the filmmaker. The filming of poetry has various categories and one of them is the “unabridged reading of a poem by the poet, or another, over a film that attempts to combine the poem with visual and audio elements in what is considered an “embodiment of Wees’s Poetry-film concept” (Cook). This is the case under study in this paper.

In one of the most significant essays “Poetry Film: a Historical Analysis,” Fil Ieropoulos assumes, “The poetry-film is interested in the fine line between text as word or image, spoken voice as words or sounds and the question of whether image or concept come first in a human mind.” A piece of film achieves success when it truly embodies the poet’s emotions and conveys his feelings to the audience bringing the poem to a higher level that may be more attractive to the audience. This is achieved when the filmmaker’s skills allows the poet’s voice to be seen as well as heard. The filmmaker can see the poem differently and the two visions can fit together in the poetry-film. Hence, poetry-film is “a cleaving together of words, sound and vision. It is an attempt to take a poem and present it through a medium that will create a new artwork, separate from the original poem” (Cook).

The film-poetry genre appeared in 1920s at the hands of the French Impressionists Germaine Dulac, Louis Delluc, Man Ray, Hans Richter, and others. In the mid-1960s and early 1970s, it was further explored by the Beat Generation poets Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg, and Herman Berlandt. Stream of consciousness flow of images and nonlinear narrative style are the main features of this genre. Dulac claims that “a real film can’t be able to be told, since it must draw its active and emotive principle from images formed of unique visual tones” (33).

Man Ray was the first to discuss a film poem or cinepoem as a generic construction suggesting that it is “a series of fragments” with “optical sequence” that “makes up a whole” (“Emak Bakia” 43). This whole is still a fragment. Susan McCabe compares the work of Ray to that of the poet Gertrude Stein saying: “The kinship between modern poetry and film ... hinges upon the subordination of plot to rhythm,” and also “upon a montage aesthetics that privileges the fragment and its abrasion of other fragments” (431). Thus the fragment becomes essentially important. This is closely related to Dulac’s notion that a film is primarily visual and Maya Deren’s notion of “verticality” in poetry (“Poetry” 56). For Ray, the poem is the scenario of the film (“Manuscript” 208).

For the Russian Formalists, and particularly Boris Eikhenbaum, a cine-phrase is a shot “whose montage can be lengthened or shortened” (23). The long shot has the same impression of a “long, slowly developing phrase” (23). Eikhenbaum develops the analogy between shots and phrases further explaining that a cine-period in filmic terms is a spatio-temporal linking of shots/phrases. He says, “The movement of frames, once started, requires a meaningful linking according to the principal of spatio-temporal continuity” (24). He also highlights the internal speech of the film in relation to the symbolic and metaphoric language of the poem. Visual metaphors or cine-metaphors become important for filmmakers, however Eikhenbaum believes that they become feasible only if “supported by a verbal metaphor” (30).

The most significant formalist filmmaker in the history of avant-garde is Dziga Vertov, who describes himself as a film-poet: “I am a writer of the cinema. I am a film poet. But instead of writing on paper, I write on the film strip” (182).

Another important figure in the film poem genre is the German experimental filmmaker Hans Richter who wrote on the poetic nature of film in 1920s. His writings were later considered as writings on film poetry and were republished in 1950s when the notion of film poem gained much importance in the American avant-garde film movement. Richter talks about the lyrical nature of film. He deposits, “I have always been especially fascinated by the possibilities of the film to make the invisible visible: the functioning of the invisible subconscious, which no other art can express as completely and as drastically as the film” (144). He emphasizes that the film poem is a process that has a certain direction, an aim and a meaning. However, the material that accumulates while shooting to contribute to a certain aim can at the end assume a new meaning. Richter also believes that shots are like words or phrases that can be used in different ways to create various meanings. The footage for Richter helps make the visual dictionary. Thus, montage is “the essential poetic element of cinema” (Ieropoulos).

In the same context, David Finch says, “Film montage and language metaphor use some of the same mental processes. ... Metaphor in both film and language can produce a third thing from the combination of two elements, an image not producible in any other way” (63). Thus, “film montage is the equivalent of putting together two phrases for metaphorical effect, as it happens often in poetry” (Ieropoulos). Richter mentions that the symbolic language of a film poem has more interpretations than the novelistic entertainment film and he urges the audience to freely think of whatever interpretations of what is presented (Ieropoulos).

For Deren, the central aspects of film are the camera visual elements and montage. She believes that poetry is similar to film and likens the “capacity of the camera to represent a given reality in its own terms, to the extent that it is accepted as a substitute proper for that reality” (“An Anagram” 30) to the “verbal logics of a poem” that are “composed of the relationships established through syntax, assonance, rhyme, and other such verbal methods” (“An Anagram” 48). Deren assumes that poetry is distinguished by its construction that is “vertical” in its depiction of a situation representing “what it feels like or what it means” (“Poetry” 56). Since Film is essentially a montage, it “seems ... to be a poetic medium” (“Poetry” 59).

In analyzing the work of Barkhage and the American Avant-garde of the 1960s, Adam P. Sitney refers to the “Lyrical Film” and explains that the lyrical film considers the filmmaker behind the camera as the first-person protagonist since the images he presents are what he sees and provides them to the viewer in a way that emphasizes his presence (142). On the other hand, a lyrical poem is a short poem that explains the thoughts and feelings of a particular speaker.

If poetry-film is considered as a cross-discipline genre, it bridges the gap between the characters portrayed and the outer world. Wees suggests that in the cinema, the “union of words and images strengthened cinema’s ties to realism and narrative. By closing the spatial-temporal gap between characters speaking and the words they spoke, it eliminated a nagging reminder of cinema’s artifice, its technological mediation between the spectator and the ‘world’ of film” (“Introduction” 10).

Using the poem as words that appear on the screen along with the images enhances the poetic qualities of the film. However, if they are used as a further projection from the image, they will be redundant. Hence, it better that they appear on a different level adding another dimension

relating to the film and combining both genres. Thus, poetry-film provides more possibilities for visual/conceptual connections and more meanings of visual metaphor.

Poetic Logic in Andrei Tarkovski's Poetry Films

An eminent figure of poetry-film is the Russian film-director Andrei Tarkovsky who has developed a filming strategy called poetic logic. Tarkovsky's films are analyzed from the viewpoint of the poetic logic in its different applications. Poetic logic is not metaphorisation, but rather a larger concept, which has other purposes and focuses. The poetic logic appears in methods and techniques of work such as:

naturalism of images and sounds, rejection of film music and its replacement for other sound forms, observing or contemplation of an object, building associative links, and one of the most important, quoting visual and audio objects belonging to non-cinematographic art-realities: pre-existed music, historical painting, and verbal works. (Shpinitzkaya 385)

Tarkovsky employs the poetic logic in the realistic cinema. All of the poetic logic tools help to design life in a shot that is close to reality form. At the same time, it helps show on screen man's inner world and mental life as represented in his dreams, memories, visions and imagination. This is because the "poetic logic leaves the question of meaning open, suggesting polysemanticism of the filmed images" (Shpinitzkaya 385).

Tarkovsky is inspired by his father's poetry for his cinema. He considers poetry to be one of the highest forms of art that is able to "inspire a state of rational and irrational bliss through language" (Turner), so he wants to use it in his films. Tarkovsky's aim is to make poetry assert the potential of the cinematic image as a form of artistic expression. Hence, analyzing both visual and narrative poetry in his films explains the reason behind the success of these films.

Creating a poem is a process that takes over the poet through the succession of language and images into a new place he did not imagine to visit. Tarkovsky believes in the irrational method of poetry creation, which focuses on the emotional side, then intellectualizes it. He applies this to the cinema and the visual images he uses. In this case, it becomes visual poetry, not linguistic poetry (Gerke). Some of the techniques adopted by Tarkovsky are applied by the filmmaker of the "Bluebird."

It has thus become obvious that poetry films fuse spoken word poetry and visual images to create meanings and connotations stronger than those suggested by each genre alone. Stream of consciousness flow of images and nonlinear narrative style are the prominent features of poetry films. The poem becomes the scenario for the film where long shots represent long phrases and the cine-period is the spatial-temporal continuity. Both the poet and the filmmaker become the first-person protagonists. Having the poem as words that appear on the screen and the poet's voice narrating the poem himself strengthens the poetic qualities of the film.

Analysis of the Written and Visual Forms of the "Bluebird"

Aesthetic Perspective in Charles Bukowski's "Bluebird"

In his essay, "What Fame Is: Bukowski's Exploration of Self," Andrew Madigan refers to Larry McMurtry's discussion in *Film Flam* (1987) about the different media, namely film and poetry. In that book, McMurtry demonstrates that there is no "exact cinematic equivalent of literature"

and says, "Like the translation of poetry from one language to another, the transcription of ideas from written words to the visual-aural mosaic of film involves substantial alteration" (Madigan 450). He believes that turning literary works into screenplays is both "exasperating and liberating." He adds, "Exasperating, in that the art of literature cannot always be communicated through the medium of film, or not in the same way. Liberating, in that the screenplay, as brought to life through the language of film, can articulate that which words alone cannot." The two media "require different artistic techniques and temperaments" and "creative acumen in one does not guarantee success in the other" (Madigan 450). Consequently, writers sometimes become frustrated when film makers do not transfer their ideas successfully to screenwriting. The audience of both media is different and certain aesthetic tools have to be employed to attract it.

Many of Charles Bukowski's (1920-1994) works have been transferred to screenwriting. His poem, "Bluebird" has been turned to the film industry with various filmic and animated versions. This paper sheds light on the feelings, symbols and meanings conveyed by Bukowski in the written version of his poem and on Michat Stenzel's filming of the same poem to explain that "shift from writing imaginative literature ... involves a corresponding shift in aesthetic context" (Madigan 456).

Bukowski was a German-born American poet, novelist, and short story writer. His father was a soldier who believed in strict discipline and used to beat Bukowski a lot for trivial reasons. Bukowski had an ugly complexion due to scares left by severe acne when he was a teenager and thus he was rejected by the opposite sex and bullied by other boys. He was introduced to alcohol when he was thirteen and he thought it is some kind of escape from his misfortunes. He was known for his "self-destructive isolationism, along with his rampant misogyny and sexual degradation" (Winter).

Bukowski believes that writing saves man from despair and madness. He aims at expressing "the harsh realities of everyday existence rather than any romantic quest for the sublime" (Bigna). Bukowski's writings deal with the lives of the poor, downtrodden, lonely, wretched, and angry Americans. As a writer he is simple, angry, brutally direct, and extremely violent. Stephen Kessler states, "Without trying to make himself look good, much less heroic, Bukowski writes with a nothing-to-lose truthfulness which sets him apart from most other 'autobiographical' novelists and poets" (qtd. in "Charles Bukowski"). Bukowski's works deal with themes of desolation, death, absurdities of life, drinking, sex, gambling, and music.

In the same context, Paul Clements states that Bukowski is a social realist who describes the "poverty, repression, brutality" as the "true nature" of the world (99). As an outsider, he lives in social exclusion and writes about "struggle, woe and misfit" (99). In his introduction of Bukowski's *Absence of the Hero* (2010), David S. Calonne expounds that Bukowski's transgressive sexual writing begins with "The Rapist's Story." Though it was published in *Harlequin* in 1957, Bukowski had actually submitted it to *Story* in 1952, thus predating Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) by three years (xiii). Bukowski's cycle of stories about violation of which "The Fiend" (1970) is a later example, replay his own terrorized childhood at the hands of his violent father (xiii). He also demonstrates his sympathy with the victims of child abuse in his unpublished essay, "Ah, Liberation, Liberty, Lilies on the Moon!" and he experiments with "explicit erotic themes" in "Notes of a Dirty Old Man" columns. Thus he sympathizes with the downtrodden in the society as will be explained in his poem "Bluebird."

Bukowski's "Bluebird" (1992) (poemhunter.com) from his collection *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* speaks of innermost torment and represents his sensitive soul that he suppresses with drinking, smoking and maintaining a tough attitude. It portrays his endeavor to conceal this side of his character to be able to deal with the harsh realities of life and to protect himself from disappointment and pain. Critics often referred to Bukowski as "being a heartless, brutal drunk" ("Full Analysis") and he accepts this description and finds comfort in people seeing him as strong and masculine. His writing acts a shield that protects him from "the sadness that truly leaked inside of him" ("Full Analysis").

In "Bluebird" Bukowski describes the social stigma surrounding man when he says at the end, "men do not cry" depicting the hardships man faces and the prison he is trapped into because of the harsh and judgmental society that does not accept man's tears. Tears are a sign of weakness and vulnerability. In the first lines, Bukowski shows the strong image of man as if he is wearing a mask to hide his rough childhood and his sensitive feelings from the outer world. His true self is revealed when he talks about his fears and vulnerability as represented by the bluebird.

The bluebird is the main image/symbol in the poem to describe the poet's suppressed emotions. The bluebird is an American songbird that is native to North America where it has been revered by people and many indigenous cultures for centuries. The mythology of the bluebird dates back to hundreds of years. Generally, it is the symbol of "cheerfulness, happiness, prosperity, hearth and home, good health, new births and the renewal of springtime" ("Full Analysis"). It is sacred to Navajo Indians "because its feathers are the color of the sky" and "are representative of the southern direction." It also heralds the "rising sun" which is a "supreme image of God" ("Full Analysis") as the Navajo Indians believe that two of these birds stand at the door of the house where God dwells. Bluebirds usually sing just before dawn and before the sun rises. This directly refers to Bukowski's symbolism of the bluebird as he lets the bird sing only when the sun is down.

The bluebird is symbolic of the sensitivity, vulnerability, softness and tenderness of the poet's soul. In the first lines, it is depicted as a part of him that is kept as a secret, unrevealed and untold to anybody. Since the bluebird is a fragile bird with frail feathers, Bukowski symbolizes his heart as vulnerable and his emotions as soft and tender: "there's a bluebird in my heart that / wants to get out / but I'm too tough for him / I say, stay in there, I'm not going / to let anybody see / you" (1-6). He adds, "but I pour whiskey on him and inhale / cigarette smoke / and the whores and the bartenders / and the grocery clerks / never know that / he's / in there" (9-15). This part refers to the fact that Bukowski is an alcoholic and smoker. He spends time with people belonging to the lower standards of the society, but still keeps his soft part unrevealed (Basu).

The connotation of the bluebird as an innocent creature that sings melodiously and represents happiness is distorted since it is used to delineate the tormented human soul with its suppressed emotions as a result of the harsh society. This image of the tender bird is negated by the image of "pouring whiskey on him" and "inhaling cigarette smoke," with allusions to "whores and bartenders," who are related to "vice and a decadent lifestyle" (Adam). The metaphors Bukowski uses of alcohol, prostitution and smoking are all metaphors of escapism shedding light on the inner struggle he is facing.

The themes revealed by the poem are alienation, depression and loneliness. However, Bukowski accepts this sentimental part of his character and releases his bird, or suppressed

emotions, from time to time. He says, “but I’m too clever, I only let him out / at night sometimes / when everybody’s asleep / I say, I know that you’re there, / so don’t be / sad. / then I put him back, / but he’s singing a little / in there, I haven’t quite let him / die / and we sleep together like / that / with our / secret pact” (28-41). On the other hand, he is too tough and restrains that bird: “But I’m too tough for him, / I say, stay in there, I’m not going / to let anybody see / you” (3-6). Thus, the “Bluebird” is “dominated by a tone of despair and loss of self” (Laheisler).

At the end, he denies “weeping” and addresses the reader by the question: “and it’s nice enough to / make a man / weep, but I don’t / weep, do / you?” (42-46). Here he allows the reader for self-reflection. The last phrase emphasizes that the poet “preserves his bitterness” (“Full Analysis”) and his not crying becomes a symbol of dignity. The end of the poem is sorrowful, the last question is “rhetorical and ironic,” and the mood is “cynical” giving a “sense of frustration” (“Full Analysis”). The poem is thus a combination of contradictory feelings; anger, arrogance, depression, dread and fragility inside man’s thoughts (Ortiz).

The word “Bluebird” is repeated many times because the little, tiny bird is the hero of the poem. The color blue symbolizes gloominess, sadness, melancholy, despair, grief and loneliness. Bukowski uses the bluebird as a reflection of the vulnerability of all humans and depiction of the weakness as well as the innermost torment inside every person. The bluebird is actually the “last trace of decency and hope” (“Charles Bukowski and Walter Robinson”), yet Bukowski drowns it in whisky and cigarette smoke. Consequently, his last glimpse of hope in this harsh world finally vanishes. It has thus become clear that Bukowski describes a deep human truth: that all humans are vulnerable to the core. They only wear a mask to hide their true selves, but the bluebird represents who they really are.

Russell Harrison deposits that Bukowski’s poems “are often first-person narratives which include the narrator’s subjective reaction to an ordinary incident, the core of which would be too slight to even qualify as incident were it not for the narrator’s reaction” (48). Bukowski’s poems involve a struggle between the narrator and society where each tries to define the other. The narrator distances himself from society and defines himself as cynic (Woolley 116-117).

Thus, it has become clear that the poem “Bluebird” is a wonderfully created piece of art that describes the human emotions hidden deeply in Bukowski’s heart, yet seek to come out. Man suppresses his emotions to the best of his abilities. However, he realizes that the image of the harsh outside world cannot correspond to the vulnerability and the tenderness of his heart. Man pretends to be strong, whereas in fact he is not. He only releases his emotions at night when no one is there. He lives in a state of denial of his true self because of the strong image the society gives to man. Finally, the poet’s flow of images following the stream of consciousness technique and the nonlinear narrative style adopted by the poet enhance the poetic aesthetics of the poem.

Aesthetic Perspective in Michat Stenzel’s Visual Form of “Bluebird”

The short film “Bluebird” was directed by the Polish filmmaker Michat Stenzel in July 24th, 2017 and can be found on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4p7IQ44IMhM&feature=youtu.be>. Stenzel uses the poem’s expressive form and implicit meaning to create a narrative structure according to his artistic vision. In his short film, Stenzel’s conspicuous, poetic scenes employ very slow motion camera movements and evocative music with no dialogue and a powerful aesthetic imagery.

In a messenger interview held on September 2, 2018, the researchers asked Stenzel about his point of view while directing the short film "Bluebird." He highlights that Bukowski's poem is one of his favorites and says, "I consider it as a very simple but touching existential piece of art." He further explains that he does not direct a film about what the poem really is, because if he does so, it will not make much sense since the picture will only show what the readers already know by reading the poem. So, he says, "it wouldn't bring any new quality for either poem or the movie" ("Interview").

Stenzel adds that if this poem is read in a literal way, it can be interpreted as a confession of a female abductor who hides his victims in his basement: "let's them out at night sometimes when everybody's asleep," pours whiskey on them and inhales cigarette smoke, etc. They become his bluebirds as he puts blue dresses on them. He explains, "I knew that this interpretation is quite radical but I thought that now it's worth making a movie." Stenzel decides to mislead the viewer by showing a girl in a bar who has some relationships and internal issues. Then the viewer realizes that the film is not about her, but about the man who first showed in the film and who later became the female abductor. This is what Stenzel has in mind, but he declares, "I leave the discussion open" ("Interview").

Raphael Federer, Stenzel's best friend and a distinguished cinematographer, wanted to make the short film a one-take film, but had no budget. Yet, at the end, the film had two shots and the second one is an epilogue to show what the film could really be about. The film did not appeal to Bukowski's readers claiming that the poem is not about that story depicted by the filmmaker. However, Stenzel emphasizes that, "it wouldn't be poetry or even an art if it had only one clear interpretation" ("Interview").

Stenzel uses the poem's expressive form and changes it into a narrative structure according to his perception and artistic vision. In the narrative structure he includes all the elements of the narrative curve in short duration. He uses the poet's voice while narrating the poem and wrote the verses on the screen to show the implicit meanings in the film as one of the cinematic language tools. The implicit meaning is what lies below the surface of the movie. It is the inference, association, or connection the viewer makes based on the explicit meanings available on the surface of the movie.

The content of any work of art is its subject and the form is the methods and techniques adopted to express that subject and present it to the audience. The form presents the content in a particular way and enables the artist to shape the audience's experience and interpretation of that content. In the world of films, form is the cinematic language. In directing the "Bluebird" visual in a different form, Stenzel expresses his point of view, while the audience gets the meanings from the symbolism of the narration or Bukowski's poem.

Talking about the narrative curve, the narrative structure used by films is somewhat similar to the way novelists or short story writers organize events. Most structures have a beginning, middle and end and each part has a significant narrative task. Just like the story that has an exposition, there is also a visual exposition. The story exposition defines the characters, the story situation, the location, and the time period. It sets up the basic story elements. On the other hand, the visual exposition defines how the basic visual components are used to support the story. The visual exposition can set up the visual structure for all the basic visual components. Any emotion, mood, situation, or character trait can be assigned a visual component, which can also be defined in the exposition. All the visual rules defined in the exposition are used to guide those involved in the production. In other words, the visual

component choices for space, line, shape, tone, color, movement, and rhythm help make a decision on the correct lenses, camera angles, locations, and design elements for film production and give unity to the whole work (Block 222).

It is apparent that Stenzel bases his narrative structure on the implicit meanings and gives a new message by using the words of the poem and relating with the development of the visual structure. So, he introduces a new narrative structure in a poetic form.

Furthermore, Stenzel employs the bluebird poem as a narration which explains the thoughts and feelings of the characters. This narration of the poem functions as the external narrator of a story who presents it from the perceptual and experiential point of view of one or more characters. Thus, the filmmaker does not judge the events of the story, but reports the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of the character. On the other hand, the visual scene is brilliantly used to provide film moments that are insightful, poetic and profoundly moving.

Screen duration

The story duration indicates the time that passes during the story, whereas the plot duration shows the actual amount that passes from the beginning of the narration to the end. To construct a film's story from its plot, the filmmaker sets the chronology, duration, and frequency of events. This implies that time is an important component that the filmmaker can compress, stretch and run either forwards or backwards in what is called screen duration. Screen duration thus can expand or contract relationships or remain faithful to story time or real time.

In his short film, Stenzel makes the plot duration equal to the screen duration; namely, the screen duration takes three minutes and the actual incident happens in just three minutes which is the plot duration. This is also the actual duration of the poem narration. Consequently, the viewer feels that the real emotions and the messages behind the words of the poem are related to the implicit meanings in the short film as one of the cinematic language tools. Like spoken language, the cinematic language is not made up of words, but of myriad integrated techniques and concepts that connect the viewer to the story, while deliberately concealing the means by which it does so.

Narration can manipulate the depth of the audience's knowledge based upon how deeply it delves into a character's perceptual/psychological states. Films that focus the audience's knowledge of the character on that character's external behavior are said to be objective. This conceals certain information about the character's perceptions, feelings, and thoughts. However, when a plot reveals what a character sees and hears (e.g. point-of-view shot), it gives perceptual subjectivity. Moreover, it can express a character's mental thoughts, dreams, or memories and thus plunges deeply into its psychological states giving the audience what can be called mental subjectivity. Subjectivity leads the audience to have sympathy for a character, while access to inner thoughts helps accounting for later behavior or creating expectations.

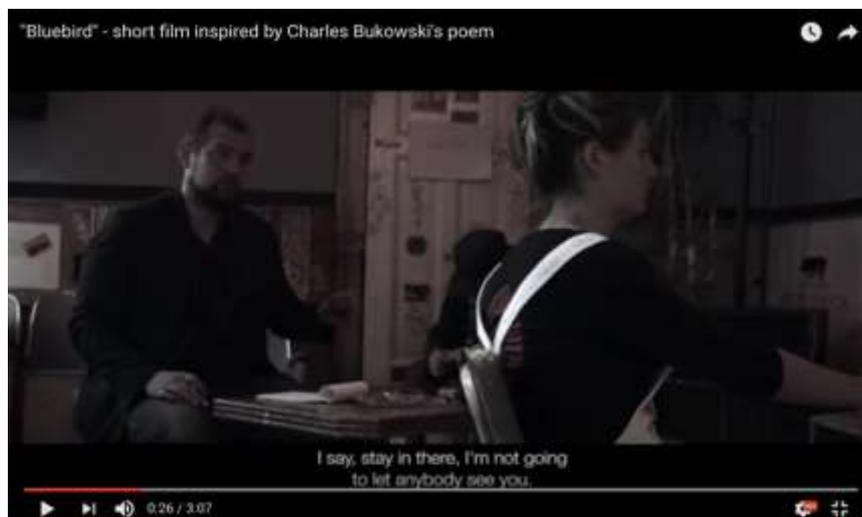
If the story is told as one character's story or "subjectively," so the camera plays the role of the first person observer, showing only scenes in which the main character participates. This is exactly what Stenzel does in his film. He uses Bukowski's voice in narrating the poetic words as if the female abductor was saying exactly what he suffers from and how he treats his bluebird. He uses the camera as a first person observer. The first person here is the female abductor which is following the girl with his eyes indicated by the camera movement until he

appears again in the resolution part when he is abducting the girl to release his bluebird at the end.

Camera language

Stenzel uses one long take and 360s camera movement to reflect the real time and actual duration of the film. When asked why he used one camera take, he replies that this helped him introduce his vision in a more aesthetic way. He claims that making it one shot “is like choreography on the set - everything has to be made fluently and without mistakes.” He adds that all the actors in the same time, “have to do their part in a correct time” and the crew behind the camera “have to do their work without mistakes” (“Interview”). If they make mistakes, they have to start from the beginning. The effect of the one shot films is to indicate that there is a smooth flow of incidents and this is witnessed while viewing the film.

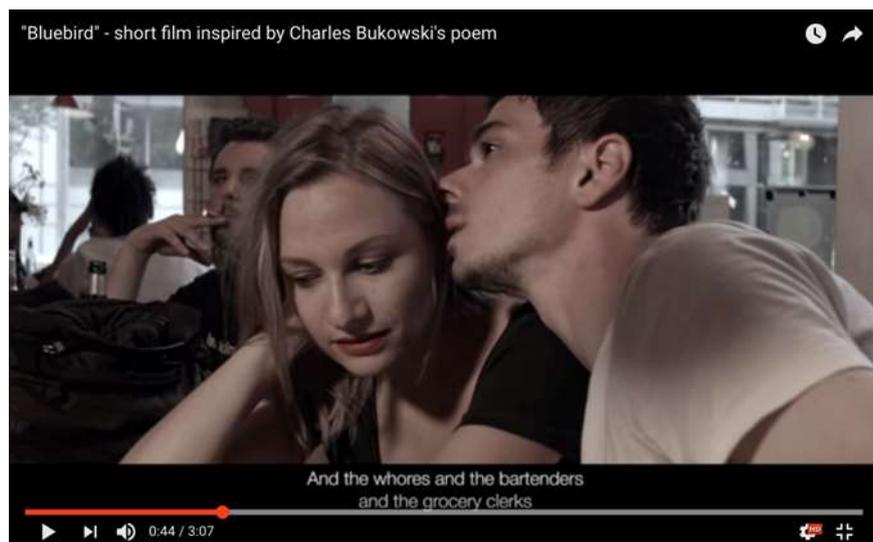
Stenzel introduces his idea that he is talking about a female abductor who hides his victims in a basement in his establishing shot when the camera focuses on this man. However, at the same time, due to the quick camera movement to another character which is the girl sitting beside her friend, it becomes difficult to realize at the beginning of the movie that this man is the female abductor about whom the story revolves. It would have been better if Stenzel gives duration while introducing his main character before moving the camera. This would have given the audience a better chance to understand the characteristic features of this female abductor. Later on, this female abductor appears again to abduct the girl he was following with his eyes at the establishing shot of the short film. It can also be argued that Stenzel depends on the idea of using the narration of the “Bluebird” poem to get the implicit meanings inside his short film and to give the effect of the flowing action through the camera movement in a very short duration.

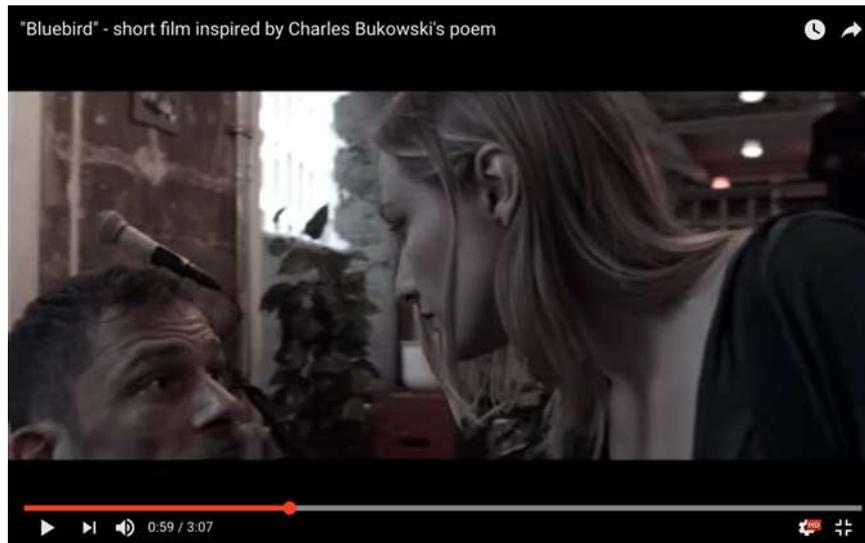




Through the camera movement Stenzel tries to focus on some other men that are trying to lure girls to establish a relationship with them. Here he wants to compare between the female abductor and the others through the poetic words since the poem is focusing on the idea of hiding the bluebird and not letting him out “there’s a bluebird in my heart that / wants to get out / but I’m too tough for him / I say, stay in there, I’m not going / to let anybody see / you” (1-6).

The other four other men who appear through the short film behave differently. They let their bluebird out through temptations. Here the camera movement, while flowing through the action, takes little duration focusing on the other four men with their different reactions. Stenzel uses the girl, who is the main goal of the female abductor to let his bluebird out, to be the main character and to look for the other men using the camera as a point of view to get her reaction as the main feeling the audience recognize.





Stenzel shows the four men's reactions at the same time while the female abductor hides his feelings. So, Stenzel uses the narration of the poetic words to stress the idea of hiding the bluebird "but I am too clever, I only let him out / at night sometimes" (28-29).

At the end of the short film, which is the resolution of the narrative story, the poem says, “with our / secret pact / and it’s nice enough to / make a man / weep, but I don’t / weep, do / you?” (40-46). Stenzel uses a different camera language in which he makes the female abductor react with the camera as if he is asking a question to reveal his deep feelings and to communicate with the audience for the first time since the beginning of the film. Here he makes the audience become more engaged and relates the poem to the implicit meanings through the camera language.

Montage/Editing language

When the resolution part of the film starts Stenzel uses for the first time the language of editing/montage. When the viewers watch a movie, they see the *mise-en-scène*, design, and acting; they hear the dialogue, music, and sound effects; but they feel the editing, which has the power to affect them either directly or indirectly. Good editing, or the editing that produces the filmmaker’s desired effects, results from the editor’s intuition in choosing the right length of each shot, the right rhythm of each scene, and the right moment of cutting to create the right spatial, temporal, visual, and rhythmic relationships between shots. In answer to the question: “What is a good cut?” Walter Murch posits,

At the top of the list is Emotion ... the hardest thing to define and deal with. How do you want the audience to feel? If they are feeling what you want them to feel all the way through the film, you’ve done about as much as you can ever do. What they finally remember is not the editing, not the camerawork, not the performances, not even the story—it’s how they felt. (18)

Stenzel uses transition fading from the exposition and the climax to the resolution. Early filmmaking pioneers created a film grammar, or cinematic language, that draws upon the way viewers automatically interpret visual information in their real lives, thus allowing them to absorb the short film meaning intuitively and instantly. The fade-out/fade-in is one of the most straightforward examples of this phenomenon.

When such a transition is meant to convey the passage of time between scenes, the last shot of a scene grows gradually darker (“fades out”) until the screen is rendered black for a moment. The first shot of the subsequent scene then “fades in” out of the darkness. The viewer does not have to think about what this means. The daily experience of time’s passage marked by the setting and rising of the sun lets viewers understand intuitively that significant story time has elapsed over that very brief moment of screen darkness (Barsam & Monahan 6).

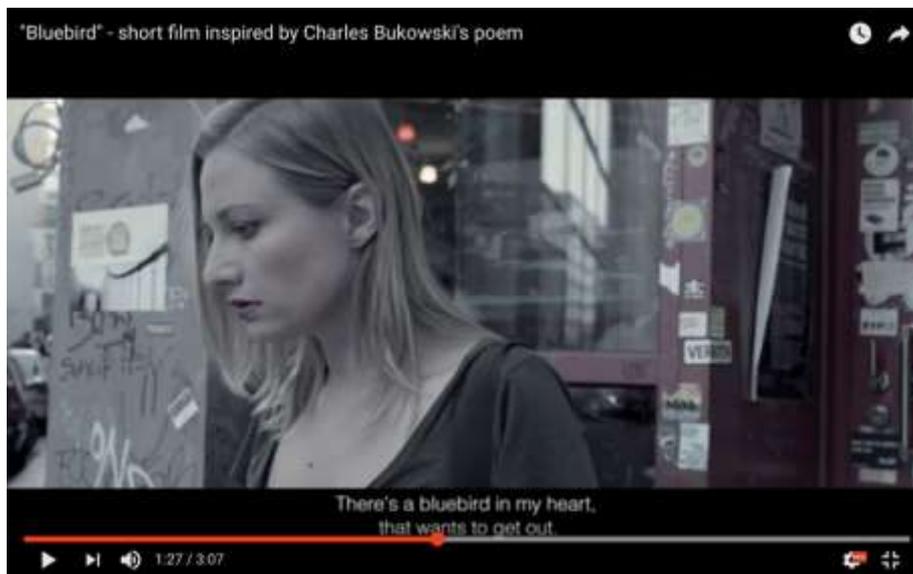
That is why the transition of fading used at the end of the film gives viewers the feeling of the passage of time as well as the change of place and action. As for the exposition and the climax parts, as mentioned before, Stenzel uses one take camera technique to make the viewers feel the actual duration for the real story. However, when the time and place change, he uses the transition fading technique.



Color mode

Color can be controlled by the time of the day and the color of the location or environment of the scene. The color of light can change depending on the surrounding environment colored objects that become reflectors in any location and it may also change depending on their size.

There are many ways to produce contrast or affinity of color. Contrast and affinity can occur within the shot, from shot to shot, and from sequence to sequence. Stenzel uses affinity of color and contrast of light to maintain emotions of sadness and depression to match the poetic words and the deep message of the poem.



The resolution scene got a monochromatic color as the girl wears a blue dress which describes exactly the feeling of the female abductor and matches with the poem when it says, “I only let him out / at night sometimes / when everybody’s asleep” (28-30). While visualizing this part of the poem, Stenzel uses monochromatic colors with only the girl dressed in the blue color to reflect the effect of darkness and secrets at night. Additionally, he dresses the girl in blue to

emphasize the relationship between the girl and the bluebird which gets out sometimes at night in secret.



CONCLUSION

It has thus become obvious that poetry films fuse spoken word poetry and visual images to create meanings and connotations stronger than those suggested by each genre alone. Poetry-films expand the possibilities of visual/conceptual connections while at the same time they use audio-visual temporal specificity that makes possible more direct metaphorical connections.

Bukowski's "Bluebird" is a wonderfully created piece of art that describes the suppressed human emotions. Bukowski's flow of images following the stream of consciousness technique and his nonlinear narrative style enhanced the poetic aesthetics of the poem. The poem is also open-ended to incite various interpretations by the reader. In Stenzel's "Bluebird" short film, the visual form leads to different concepts through using the same symbolism and metaphors employed in the poem to give implicit meanings. Stenzel's "Bluebird" depends on the narrative structure to build up a visual form. Using the poem as words that appear on the screen along with the images also enhanced the poetic qualities of the film.

Moreover, all the visual rules defined in the exposition scenes set up the visual structure for all the basic visual components used in the successive film scenes. Actual screen duration, like the plot duration, made the audience more engaged with the film and the one take camera shot is a better way to transfer the real and actual duration of any incident, while cuts and transitions used in film editing create the feeling of the passage of time. Stenzel was successful in using the color psychology to portray the desired emotions in certain scenes.

Finally, it can be argued that it is important for the filmmaker to use the establishing shot, which helps set the scene and provides important clues to the context of following scenes. That is what the bluebird filmmaker did not achieve. Accordingly, some of the film viewers did not realize that the story was about the female abductor but rather about a girl having an inner conflict.

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