

SUMMARY/SANTRAUKA

LANDSCAPE IN LITHUANIAN AUTEUR DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING: STRUCTURING, MEANING AND DEVELOPMENT

Audrius Stonys

INTRODUCTION

After reviewing the past thirty years of my creative work, I can claim that, while from the global historical perspective it is only a short length of time, the intensity of the past three decades experienced by my generation could easily be equated to a few centuries. A succession of political, moral, ethical and aesthetic breakthroughs rapidly followed one another, and like a ship in stormy seas, Lithuanian auteur documentary filmmaking had to survive, stay faithful to the truth and maintain its identity.

A historical analysis of Lithuanian auteur documentary demonstrates that the landscape was guarded, documented and used as a space of expression by the filmmakers of the Soviet period of Lithuanian documentary, who were not able to address their viewer in a straightforward and truthful way. Meanwhile, the contemporary globalised world brought new challenges with it; the tendencies of cultural and national unification compel us to yet again look at the landscape as a cinematographic space that carries a unique historical and national memory within.

The relevance and originality of the research. In an attempt to define the characteristics of Lithuanian cinema, both the academic film scholarship as well as the ironic social media posts often invoke the image of a lonely oak tree standing in a misty landscape. The cinematic landscape shot is undoubtedly the mark of Lithuanian film tradition, however, there is a lack of research that attempts to deconstruct this image, understanding its genealogy and thus revealing the characteristics of Lithuanian auteur documentary.

A recurring view expressed by documentary practitioners, that the landscape in the documentary film is secondary and only serves as a background to the story, shows a need to rethink the role of landscape in the creative documentary. Many film directors continue to believe that the landscape is created by the character and any creative intervention that focuses on constructing the landscape or linking it to the dramaturgy of the film somehow contradicts the nature of documentary film.

Film historians and scholars often view the documentary film from the perspective of cultural history or aesthetic theory, avoiding the less familiar, practical territory of cinematic framing and filming itself. It is regretful that a “golden” generation of Baltic documentary artists

(Henrikas Šablevičius, Robertas Verba, Rimtautas Šilinis, Viktoras Starošas, Andres Sööt, Mark Soosaar, Uldis Braunas, Aivaras Freimanis and Ivars Seleckis) did not leave a written record, enabling us to understand their classic films, their development, aesthetics and philosophy, as seen from the filmmaker's perspective.

Research object. The landscape in Lithuanian auteur documentary filmmaking.

Research question. The Lithuanian documentary filmmakers and scholars have an insufficient understanding of the landscape and its significance when creating the film's dramaturgical structure and meaning. This research paper argues that the landscape, as it appears in Lithuanian poetic documentary film, acquired a wider function: it moved away from its traditional understanding as the action's background and became an important and meaningful element of cinematic dramaturgy.

The films analysed in the research paper. The notion of poetic documentary, as defined and introduced by my pedagogue Henrikas Šablevičius, determined the selection of films analysed in this research project. The choice of films is subjective and does not aim to encompass the entire variety of the Lithuanian documentary film in the sixties and the seventies. Instead, it includes the films that influenced the development of my own cinematic language, namely the most significant works by Henrikas Šablevičius, Robertas Verba, Almantas Grikevičius and Edmundas Zubavičius. It also includes the masterpiece of *The Song of Songs* (1989) by the Latvian film director Herz Frank, which provides a conceptual framework for poetic auteur documentary film. Frank's films had, and continue to have, a significant impact on the creative work of Baltic documentary filmmakers.

The discussion on the continuity and new tendencies of poetic auteur documentary is based on the films by Lithuanian directors of the Independence Generation: Valdas Navasaitis, Arūnas Matelis and my own work. This historical period of fundamental political change compelled and encouraged us to rethink our ethical and aesthetic traditions and to place the new documentary film in the historical and cultural context. When examining intersections, similarities and differences between the documentary and art film, the research looks at the film *Three Days* (1992) by the director Šarūnas Bartas.

Research aim. To examine the function of landscape in contemporary Lithuanian documentary by creating a documentary film *Bridges of Time* (2018), reviewing my professional creative experience of filmmaking and defining the Lithuanian school of poetic documentary and its characteristics.

Research tasks:

1. To introduce and define the notions of auteur film, documentary and landscape used in this

thesis.

2. To highlight the dynamics of landscape in documentary film by using the practice of creating *Bridges of Time* and analysing the visual language of a selection of documentary films.
3. Whilst treating the landscape as an important dramaturgical element, to discover and define its function of meaning-making, using the practice of creating *Bridges of Time*, the analysis of my previous films and the selected films by Lithuanian filmmakers.
4. To investigate the mythological features in Lithuanian poetic documentary.
5. To analyse the working principles of the author's subjective reality in the films by Lithuanian authors.
6. To highlight the influence of Lithuanian school of poetic documentary to the work of contemporary Lithuanian film directors.

Research methods: 1. the theoretical analysis of documentary film. 2. the historical review of Baltic poetic cinema; 3. the formal analysis of a selection of creative works (compositional interpretation); 4. the comparative analysis of a selection of films.

Literature review

In order to define the main terminology, this artistic research paper refers to Bill Nichols' *Introduction to Documentary* (2010). His ideas on the characteristics of documentary film and its place in the global context of cinematography are used to delineate the unique qualities of Lithuanian auteur documentary film.

The Latvian film director Herz Frank published two books: *Ptolemy's Map* (2008) and *Turn Back at the Threshold* (2009), where he systematically analyses his own films, the philosophy and origin of documentary film as well as the nature, ethics and aesthetics of the documentary film as an art field. He does not provide an extensive analysis of the landscape in film; however, he touches on this question when discussing the documentary image. Frank also often references the Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein, who, on the contrary, was highly concerned with the use of landscape in the art film. Eisenstein's book *Non-Indifferent Nature: Film and the Structure of Things* (especially the volumes *The Feeling of Film* (2004) and *On the Structure of Things* (2006)) allowed to better grasp the importance of interconnections between the film elements, when structuring a multifaceted image of the world.

This research also uses the Hungarian film theorist Béla Balázs' book *Visible Man and The*

Spirit of Film (2013), the Chilean film director and theorist Raul Ruiz's *Poetics of Cinema I* (1995) and *Poetics of Cinema II* (2007) as well as other works by contemporary authors, such as Jeremy Hicks' *Defining Documentary Film* (2007), David Bordwell's *Poetics of Cinema* (2008) and Hermann Kappelhoff's *The Politics and Poetics of Cinematic Realism* (2015).

The question of landscape in film is extensively investigated by Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner in their *Cinema and Landscape* (2010), Gaston Bachelard in his *The Poetics of Space* (1994) as well as Martin Lefebvre in his edited volume *Landscape and Film* (2006).

The discussion on the mythological landscapes in Lithuanian cinema uses the ideas of Mircea Eliades in his *The Sacred and the Profane* (1990), Gintaras Beresnevičius' *Lithuanian Religion and Mythology* (2008) as well as the work by Norbertas Vėlius and Kęstutis Nastopka.

The structure of the thesis. This artistic research paper consists of three chapters. The first chapter (1.1., 1.2., 1.3) defines the main notions used in this thesis: auteur film, documentary and landscape. It also highlights different types of documentary film, looks for intersections between documentary and art film, and discusses the dynamics of landscape in the documentary film frame. The 1.4. section looks at different types of landscape found in the auteur documentary film and their role in the formation of the film's meaning and dramaturgy.

The second chapter reviews the work of Lithuanian auteur documentary filmmakers Verba, Šablevičius and Matelis, and reveals the main characteristics of the cinematic language in Lithuanian poetic documentary.

The third chapter analyses the practical experience of making my films *Bridges of Time* (2018) and *Woman and the Glacier* (2016), and highlights the role and meaning of landscape in the narrative structure of documentary film.

1. THE DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LANDSCAPE IN THE AUTEUR DOCUMENTARY FILM

The discussion of landscape in the auteur documentary film stumbles at the very first sentence, because it is difficult to accurately describe the documentary film, as the term "documentary" has not been strictly delineated or given a unilaterally accepted definition. Jonathan Kahana, in the introduction to *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ironically observes that "[...] documentary is a notoriously slippery eel, perhaps the oldest and slipperiest concept in the history of cinema's public and commercial modes and genres. From time to time and from place to place, the term 'documentary' has refused to mean something consistent, but it has been in continuous use for a hundred years. And we are

pretty sure that we know one when we see (and hear) one” (Kahana 2016: 1).

From the outset of its development, the film underwent fusion-like processes, with different types of film borrowing, adopting and adapting each other’s creative and technical means of expression. The boundaries between “documentary” and “art film” rubbed against one another and began to disappear, and the new generation of filmmakers, as well as some individual film artists, compelled us to rethink and reword the established definitions that contrasted these two types of cinema.

The word *peizažas* (landscape) in Lithuanian language originates from the French *paysage*, which means “landscape” or “countryside”. In Ancient China, at around 400 AD, the natural landscape was described by a hieroglyph meaning a “place of action”. Meanwhile, in its contemporary usage, the word “landscape” has acquired multiple meanings and can refer to the manifestations of public life, culture and politics, exemplified by such expressions as “political landscape” or “cultural landscape”. In their study dedicated to the analysis of landscape, *Ways of Knowing and Being with Landscapes: A Beginning*, Mick Atha, Peter Howard, Ian Thompson and Emma Waterton observe that “[l]andscape not only refers to a complex phenomenon that can be described and analysed using objective scientific methods, it also refers to subjective observation and experience and thus has a perceptive, aesthetic, artistic and existential meaning. The term ‘landscape’ became also a metaphor, as in media landscape or political landscape” (Atha et al. 2019: 2).

1.1. Defining the Auteur Film

The American film critic Andrew Sarris is the first to use the notion of auteur in his article “Notes on the Auteur Theory” (1962), published in *Film Culture*, edited by Jonas and Adolfas Mekas. Sarris’ auteur theory suggests that the director’s individual vision forms the final result of the film. According to him, “[t]he three premises of the auteur theory may be visualized as three concentric circles: the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning. The corresponding roles of the director may be designated as those of a technician, a stylist and an auteur” (Sarris 1962: 11).

Similarly, the French film director François Truffaut, in his article of “Une Certaine Tendance du Cinéma Français” (Certain Tendencies in French Cinema, 1954) published in one of the most influential film journals *Cahiers du Cinéma*, clearly distinguishes between auteurs and craftsmen, with the latter, according to him, simply making films from the script written by other authors. Truffaut claims that the best films are made by directors who have a clear author’s vision and direct the work based on their own script (Truffaut 1954: 8).

1.2. Defining the Documentary Film

John Grierson's definition of documentary film as a "creative treatment of actuality" (Grierson 2004: 151), first suggested in the 1926, is commonly used in the contemporary scholarship. This definition acknowledges the creative endeavour of documentary film; however, it does not solve the obvious tension between the "creative interpretation" and "actuality": while the former suggests the use of fiction, the latter calls for the responsibility of the journalist or historian. As neither of these notions fully demonstrate how the documentary combines the creative vision with the respect for historical reality, we are left with a one-sided view of documentary film. Due to being presented from a single and clearly defined perspective, neither the creative approach nor the factual reproduction reflect the actual historical reality.

The recent developments have brought a new and very liberal view towards the distinction between different types of cinema, making it necessary to broaden and revisit Grierson's definition. A closer look at the context of contemporary documentary and art film suggests that, despite their creative fusion, there remains a persistent distinction between these two types of film, which can be addressed by clarifying and widening Grierson's definition, as follows: documentary film is a subjective cinematographic interpretation of authentic actuality which, instead of being created by the author's imagination, actually existed prior to its capture by the film camera and continues to exist afterwards, when the camera is no longer capturing it.

1.2.1. The Types of Documentary Film

1. *Expository* (speaks directly to the viewer, using voiceover and argumentative logic).

"I am telling you about them" – the filmmaker addresses the person either directly or through a surrogate. A typical surrogate is the "Voice of God", a commentator who is heard, but not seen. The method of using an anonymous voice emerged in the 1930's, as the most acceptable way to shed light on a situation or problem, provide argumentation, offer a solution and, at times, create a poetic tone and mood (Nichols 2010: 59). The documentary of this type is deeply rooted in the British television channels of BBC and Channel 4.

2. *Observational* (observes the film characters going about their lives as if the camera is not there).

The use of the third person – "they" – implies a separation between the speaker and the subject. "I", who speaks, is not identical to "them", who I am speaking to. "We", the audience, feel as if the film subjects are presented for our examination and education.

3. *Participatory* (the filmmaker interacts with the film characters and participates in the structuring of the frame).

This type of documentary film uses the interview and other forms of author-character communication: from a conversation to a provocation. It also often employs the archival material to expose historical issues.

4. *Reflexive* (pays attention to the conventions of documentary film, at times, using the interview methodology).

Here, the filming process itself becomes the object of documentary film. The filmmakers involve the viewer by making them an active participant, almost part of the film crew. This is done by revealing the filming process, including what happens behind the scenes – exposing how the film was made.

5. *Performative* (emphasises the active participation of the filmmaker in the creative process; an extensive use of communication with the viewer).

6. *Poetic* (highlights the visual and acoustic rhythms, visual motifs and the overall form of the film).

Instead of focusing on a social problem or historical perspective, the poetic documentary film accentuates the narrative created using the poetic and cinematographic imagery, associative editing and rhythm. While the social environment or the historical period imagery can be part of the documentary of this type, they are mainly used as signs unlocking the metaphysics of that particular time. The makers of poetic documentary draw the viewer into an engendered system of visual signs, where the rules dictated by poetic storytelling substitute the film's narrative logic.

1.2.2. In Search of Documentarity

In order to explore the definition of documentary cinema, this section looks at the limits, similarities, differences and intersections of documentary and art film. This is done with the help of Bartas' first art film, *Three Days* (1992), my first documentary film *Earth of the Blind* (1992) (I was involved in the creative and editing process of both of these films) as well as the creative processes of Šablevičius' film *A Sage* (1975) and Verbas' *The Old Man and the Land* (1965).

Bartas purposefully immerses the action of *Three Days* into the documentary space of the post-Soviet reality. He refuses to use the pavilions; instead, the focus is on the documentarity of an abandoned city in ruins which is multi-layered and difficult to recreate. There are a few reasons for choosing this documentary landscape, one of which is the scenery, chiselled by time and history, that is unimaginably complex, gruesomely beautiful and radiating the aesthetics of death. Such scenery could not be purposefully designed by an artist, because,

rather than emphasising a multi-layered image (often sought after by the film designers), we see an infinite consonance of colour, landscapes and objects varnished by time, evoking a sequence of historical, moral and aesthetic associations.

Bartas' *Three days* maintains its status as an art film; however, the creative elements mentioned above – the landscape and real interiors – together with the non-actor performances as well as the use of provocation and documentary method of filming, bring his film very close to the boundary separating the works of documentary and art film. I attempt to answer the question of how, despite using many methods of documentary cinema, the film can remain an art film, when discussing my own documentary *Earth of the Blind* (1992), which actively applied many creative methods of art film, while, I believe, continuing to be a documentary.

The discussion of similarities and intersections of documentary and art film should focus not only on the technical devices used by both of these film types, but also on their relationship to reality. The author's subjective and passionate view of reality inherent to the art film, if applied to the documentary cinema, can hinder the documentarity of the film's reality. A documentary filmmaker with a convention-defying style might evoke controversies and provoke a question: even if the author claims the film to be a documentary, should it always be treated as such?

It is impossible to fully comprehend and grasp all the hidden meanings of landscape in the documentary film. Just like in Zeno's paradox of Achilles and turtle, when taking a closer look at the landscape in film, we face an infinite possibility of increasingly small details, all potentially hiding a codified meaning, with each, spontaneously occurring, object captured by the camera carrying a historical context and opening up boundless possibilities of subjective interpretations.

1.3. The Dynamics of Landscape in the Frame of Documentary Film

1.3.1. The Cinematic Landscape as A Framed Shift

Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the British journalist, philosopher, theologian and thinker, in his discussion on painting, provides an accurate definition of the main characteristic distinguishing the landscape viewed by the naked eye from a piece of art. He states that “[a]rt is limitation; the essence of every picture is the frame” (Chesterton 2008: 52). The dramaturgy of the image in documentary film consists not only of what is shown by the director, but also what is consciously, due to aesthetic or ethical reasons, hidden from the frame. As an example, we can take the Lithuanian masters of poetic documentary working during the Soviet occupation, who managed to exclude the period-signifying images of grossly disfigured

Lithuanian landscape, such as collective farms, silicate brick buildings, monstrous factories and power lines, by instead capturing the preserved, archaic parts of the landscape.

The movement of camera is part of the overall dramaturgy of the film. During the process of capturing a panoramic view, the changing speed, pausing and slowing down helps to emphasise specific elements of the landscape, focus the gaze of the viewer and meaningfully punctuate the narrative. It can also reflect the author's ethical position towards the subject of the film. The movement of camera is part of the film's overall language, deciphered by a specialist eye. Once the director or cameraman get a deeper grasp of the landscape, they consciously ignore the insignificant details, instead giving all the time and creative effort to that one, landscape-establishing, camera angle.

1.3.2. The Landscape's Movement in the Frame: From Background to Foreground

Traditionally in film, similarly to the proscenium in theatre, the foreground is used as a space for active narration inhabited by the speaking and acting film character. Meanwhile, the function of landscape in the background is largely atmospheric, created through the light/darkness, light/shadows and light angles. The background might resonate and compliment the action in the foreground or contrast it, thus introducing a dissonance. In both cases, the function of landscape remains secondary, auxiliary, highlighting or accentuating the foreground.

In the documentary film, the director might even dramaturgically ignore the background which then becomes an "anaemic" spatial wallpaper behind the main character, devoid of any meaning, atmosphere or emotion, while the film narration continues. This creative choice is often justified as a desire to focus the viewer's attention on the action happening in the foreground, without distracting them with the action in the background and beyond. During the period of Soviet censorship, such secondary function of the background protected this frame layer from the keen eye of the censors, thus becoming a space for a largely uncensored expression, where the artist could not only "breathe easier" creatively, but also speak about things that do not go against their political conscience.

A belief that things in the frame can occur accidentally or involuntarily is deeply flawed. Each frame should be viewed as an act of will of the director or cameraman; even the aforementioned dramaturgical ignoring of the background, the refusal of its meaning-making function, is a specific creative strategy.

In the documentary film, the landscape's movement from the background to the forefront is part of a complex, ethical and aesthetic process, influenced by the historical period and context, the political and aesthetic developments, the tradition and attempts to question it, the

search for truth and beauty, and, finally, the artistic decisions that can be conscious, sub-conscious, intuitive or irrational.

1.4. The Characteristics of Landscape in the Documentary Film

1.4.1. The Landscape and Time

Contrary to photography, film works with the dimension of passing time. The frame captured by a static film camera is fundamentally different from the same frame caught in a photograph, because even the most static cinematic landscape is in a constant state of flux. The smallest, barely perceptible, changes in light have an impact on the emotional feel of the frame. The same can be said about any micro movements that happen due to the wind, air and ground vibration, or the touch of the camera and its manoeuvring by the cameraman, all of which make capturing a completely static landscape impossible. The absolute stillness does not exist in either, nature or its cinematographic reflection.

Raul Ruiz, the Chilean film director and theoretic, in his book *Poetics of Cinema* (1995), references a Chinese painter Shih-Tao and his text “Opinions on Painting by the Monk of the Green Pumpkin”, where Shih-Tao describes six ways of approaching the visible world:

1. “The First Process: draw the attention to a scene emerging from a static background” (Ruiz 1995: 86). The juxtaposition of landscapes existing at different times discerns two parallel temporalities – the space time and character time – endowing them with very different meaning. The space time, which is changing and unconstrained, emphasises a component of eternity, while the consistent flow of the character time highlights the inevitable human finality and mortality.
2. “The Second Process is less easy to understand. Make the background dynamic and draw the attention towards it, by making the foreground static – even though, in principle, it ought to be dynamic too” (Ibid.: 87). The appearance of two very different landscape dynamics in a single film frame creates a strong sense of tension. Their co-existence contradicts, yet also simultaneously strengthens, one another.
3. “The Third Process entails adding scattered dynamism to immobility. Shih-Tao calls this ‘elements full of life where death reigns’” (Ibid.). The process Shih-Tao presents from the aesthetic, an image or a landscape forming, perspective, can be applied to the ethical sphere of documentary film. Such questions as “why do we make films?”, “what is the meaning behind it?”, “what are we trying to achieve?” were often asked by the Lithuanian directors of the sixties. Shih-Tao’s Third Process of how to approach the visible world suggests a very clear answer – to look for “elements full of life where death reigns”.

4. “The Fourth Process consists in introducing incomplete or interrupted figures: a pagoda emerges through the clouds, a tree stands out in the fog” (Ibid.). The principle of incompleteness can be applied not only to the creation of film images, but also to portray a character. For example, in my film *Woman and the Glacier* (2016), Aušra Revutaitė utters only one sentence which is not even related to the main story of the film, thus rendering a sense of mystery and inquiry. The director keeps the details of her biography, her motives (why is this woman living in the mountains; how did she happen to be here; how does she survive) hidden from the viewer and, as a result, they can use the imagination to fill in the gaps with their own versions and interpretations. The more information about the character is revealed, the smaller, shallower the space of mystery, the unknown and interpretation becomes.

5. “The Fifth Process: reversal of function. What ought to be dynamic becomes static and vice-versa” (Ibid.). The nature of film time reflects the inner human time. In film, when transforming the real time, the director synchronises not with the objective reality, but with the viewer’s subjective, inner time. When captured by the film, the deformations of time transform the real landscape into an emotional space reflecting the inner human state.

6. “The Sixth Process is known as vertigo” (Ibid.: 88). This is the most complex process which uses all the elements of film: frame composition, light, colours, frame movement, music, sound track, synchronised sound track as well as time. In this case, time should not even be viewed as one of the film elements and instead functions as a space that bridges as well as widens, transforms and gives meaning to the rest of the elements.

Andrei Tarkovsky claims that he wants “[...] for the frame time to pass in a dignified and independent way, so that the viewer would not feel forced to experience, but instead voluntarily surrender their freedom to the artist, experiencing the cinematic matter as their own, understanding and accepting it as their new experience. However, there is a contradiction in this argument, because the cinematic time, as experienced by the director, always carries an element of forcing the viewer into an experience, similarly to imposing your inner world. The viewer either ‘gets caught’ by your rhythm (and the world you create), thus becoming your ally, or does not and then the contact is lost” (Tarkovsky 2002: 322). Tarkovsky thus accentuates time as a fundamental tool that allows the viewer, through the act of looking, to accept the creative vision of the artist like their own individual experience, which happens due to the flow of time dictated by the filmmaker.

1.4.2. The Undirected Landscape

The discussion of documentary film must acknowledge that the film frame holds many independently existing elements, not directly placed there by the director or cameraman. The

total control of the frame would kill the documentary. Instead, it must capture a life that is spontaneous, undirected and unfeigned.

As stated in the definition of documentary film suggested by this thesis, the documentary reality existed prior to its capturing by the film camera and will continue to exist after the camera is gone. The interplay between all the elements in the frame makes us believe in its overall authenticity. Moreover, every element has its own history, moving trajectory and authentic life. For example, behind the character speaking in the film, there is a tree growing in the background which has its own life and history; the same goes for the house we also see in the background which belongs to a certain historical period, somebody lived or continues to live there. The house's exterior not only suggests certain building techniques and architectural decisions, but also a specific cultural and political context. The film director, with the help of framing, focusing and editing, can emphasise some elements, while making others almost imperceptible. In any case, the latter continue to exist in the frame. Furthermore, the passing of time leads to contextual changes. The previously urgent matters might lose their importance, while the things that used to be insignificant are brought to the forefront. The smallest detail in the landscape might acquire a crucial and dominant meaning in the film frame. According to André Bazin, “[c]inema emerges in front of us like a photographic finality of objectivity in the dimension of time. Film is not limited to preserving the object by immersing it into the frozen time, like insects in a frozen drop of amber; instead, it frees this Baroque art from stagnation. For the first time, the impressions of objects also become the images of their existence in time” (Bazin 1972: 45).

1.4.3. The Landscapes of the Human Body

In the documentary film, a person can participate as a subject or become an object observed by the camera. When constructing documentary narration, the devices of recognition or identification become very important. The images of the forest, desert or meadow have an impact only when they evoke an emotional and associative thought in the viewer, *e.g.* the forest in the film resembles the one from our childhood, the desert looks like the one we saw in a film or read about in a book, or they are the landscapes from our dreams which we then recognise in the film frame.

However, probably one of the most recognisable landscape is the human body. We know how to “read” bodies. We see the wrinkles of our parents and grandparents in the wrinkled faces of strangers. We associate the images of children's hands with those of our own children. When looking at a landscape, we are able to see a lot more than just the terrain. Similarly, without ever uttering a word, the human body tells stories.

1.4.4. The Associative Landscape

In the documentary film, and in cinema in general, the process of comprehension occurs through the self-identification. It is of little importance who is the main character of the story or the film – it can be a person, animal, plant or even an inanimate object – the viewer wants to see themselves in all of them. Therefore, the director's task is to connect the two, to draw strings between the film's character and the viewer. The film only achieves its goal when the viewer notices their own story in a story created by a stranger. As a result, the director's goal is to evoke associations that transport the viewer to the space of their personal memory, emotions and experience. The archetypal images borrowed from mythologies, tales and songs, often used in the contemporary literature, can also play a role in the documentary film. A sequence of associations can be evoked by both a small detail in the image and the overall imagery created in the film frame.

1.4.5. The Personification of Landscape

The auteur documentary film always speaks about a person; even if the story surrounds a bird, tree, mountain or a box of matches, there always exists that inner connection to the human aspect. The nature portrayed in the film is personified: rain, storm or wind work as reflections of human emotions, of the feelings experienced by the film character. Here, the nature becomes an intermediary between the person and God, between the person, history and their memory.

2. THE VARIETY OF LANDSCAPE IN LITHUANIAN DOCUMENTARY FILM

We cannot discuss the Lithuanian documentary film without mentioning the creative work of Robertas Verba (1932–1994) and Henrikas Šablevičius (1930–2004). While the first few films by Verba gained wide recognition, later we come across his name less frequently. It took a few decades to fully appreciate the scale of Verba's work and his influence on the overall context of Lithuanian cinema. Meanwhile, Šablevičius, due to his global openness and active pedagogical work, was widely noticed in Lithuania and elsewhere: his films were very well received at the international Baltic film festival "Balticum" in Denmark, and the students praised Šablevičius for his teaching.

It is also important to mention the Latvian and Estonian cinema, both of which influenced the development of the Lithuanian school of film and its cinematic language, including the masters of Latvian cinema, such as Herz Frank (1926–2013), Uldis Braunas (1932–2017), Ivars Seleckis (b. 1934), and Estonians Markas Soosaar (b. 1946) and Andres Sööt (b. 1934). While there are clear thematic and stylistic differences between the traditions of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian documentary film, we can also observe a shared cinematic language, dictated by the common cultural and historical experience. The aspects of ironic, at times even sarcastic, narration of Estonian documentary filmmakers can be found in the work of

Šablevičius as well as Gediminas Skvarnavičius; and Latvian film artists' use of their contemporaries as the heroes of their films incited the Lithuanian masters of poetic film to more actively engage with the reality surrounding them, while maintaining a distinctive poetics of their cinematic language.

The interconnections between the representatives of Baltic documentary film were further strengthened by the annual film symposia, which included viewing the newest films, professional discussions as well as exchanging the latest discoveries and experience. The free and uninhibited creative atmosphere allowed the Baltic filmmakers to broaden the limits of their respective national cinematographies and explore new stylistic and thematic territories.

2.1. The Mythological Landscapes in the Films of Robertas Verba

In this section, the critical theory of the myth suggested by Mircea Eliade is applied to analyse Verba's film *The Old Man and the Land* (1965). Due to the myth being a primary source of archetypes, the archetypal critical theory is closely related to the examination of old mythologies, often referred to as the myth criticism or mythopoetic thought. Herman Northrop Frye, a famous proponent of mythopoetic thought, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) argues that the principle of myth which governs the literary form also applies to other types of imagination and, as a result, literary mythological insights can be applied to the use of myth in cinema.

In *The Old Man and the Land*, we see an elderly couple leaving an old cottage and entering a grey, autumnal landscape. They step over the threshold and walk across an empty, leafless garden. The director did not add any specific, time period-identifying details, thus guiding the viewer towards a timeless spatial metaphor.

According to Eliade, "from the philosophical perspective, every 'permanent abode' we settle in is equal to the existential situation we take upon ourselves" (Eliade 1997: 125). The everyday action of the couple crossing their threshold and leaving home becomes an expression of forthcoming death and separation. In front of them there are two, old, large and bare trees. Eliade observes that "nature always signifies something that surpasses it" (Ibid.: 82). The tree in Lithuanian folklore and mythology signifies life, renewal and rebirth. The narrative of Verba's film lacks consistency and, after the funeral scene, we see an episode of a boy with the globe. The globe slips out of boy's hands and rolls away, making the boy cry. This can be read as a Christian image of a small boy – Christ – holding the earth in his hands, while the motif of the globe slipping away signifies a misfortune as well as unsustainability, the finality of the world, similarly to how our world collapses after the death of a person close to us.

2.2. The Landscapes of Memory in the Films of Henrikas Šablevičius

The landscape plays an important role in the creative work of Šablevičius. The poetics of his films greatly influenced the subsequent few generations of Lithuanian documentary filmmakers. Šablevičius' films combine the elements of nostalgia with bright humour, thus paradoxically deepening the inner tragedy of the narrative. The landscape becomes the main character speaking about the vitality of the human and the nation, about the relationship between the past and the present, and how a small person with their small history can still be important in the face of the global world history. By using the landscape, Šablevičius creates sequences of associations that question the human fate, historical truthfulness and memory. As Béla Balázs observes in his *Visible Man, or the Culture of Film*, “[t]here are films that expose the face of the earth. Not the idyllic landscapes or panoramas seen by mountaineers, but the globe, its physiognomy, that celestial body which, while swaying in the infinite starlit space, carries a small creature – the human – on its back” (Balázs 2013: 49).

2.3. The Changing Reflections of Time in the Film Landscapes of Arūnas Matelis

In his film *Ten Minutes Before the Flight of Icarus* (1991), Arūnas Matelis did something not yet attempted by the Lithuanian documentary film: he rejected the classical method of documentary narration and instead employed a poetic cinematic language, in order to, with barely a few words, tell a story of the forgotten, derelict district of Užupis – the home and refuge of the poor and the outcasts of Vilnius city.

In his film, Matelis simply observes the silent inhabitants of this strange world, allowing the buildings, time-coloured walls, crooked windows, awry balconies, a lost stray dog and contrasts of sunlight to speak for themselves. Here, the landscape becomes the main narrator, weaving together the meaning-making fabric of the film. The dialogue between the houses, light and shadows help us grasp the inner tensions of time and the person within it. There is a foreboding feeling, a waiting for something to happen. The poetics of this film reveals itself through the imagery of buildings: the entirety of Užupis district is reduced to one big house, full of rooms and corridors, accommodating the microcosm of this small world.

Overall, we could claim that the reflections of time and how they reveal themselves in the landscape is the most important motif in the work of Lithuanian documentary filmmakers. All three directors discussed above – Šablevičius, Verba and Matelis – use the landscape to speak about the historical and mythological roots of our culture, the interplay between memory and present reality and the premonitions of future developments.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF LANDSCAPE TO THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF LITHUANIAN DOCUMENTARY FILM

3.1. A Short Historical Overview

My generation lived through a few major historical, political and aesthetic break-throughs: the national independence, disappearance of censorship, establishment of new political structures and economic relations. All of them crossed the boundaries of politics and directly influenced not only the creative methods of film, but also the overall cinematic language.

During these major historical changes, the documentary film, which previously received its inner strength from the indirect and concealed polemics with the official narrative, paradoxically, lost its “creative source”. Now, we could say anything, speak about everything and in any way we wanted. The oppressive “spring”, which equipped the artists with an inner kinetic force, was released, leaving in its wake a certain creative emptiness. A look back at the poetics of documentary film of the 1960’s could be seen as a search for the inner energy of Lithuanian cinema. In the sixties, a refusal to submit to the dictatorship of Soviet optimism, instead choosing the path of silent cinematic poetics, was in itself a provocation. Similarly, the documentary film of the eighties turned its back on the politicised dynamics of mass enthusiasm, suspended the time with its long, contemplative film frames and thus escaped the rhythm, tone and themes dictated by the historical change of that time, instead creating its own cinematic language.

3.2. The Landscape Transforming the Time and Space

The film frame has two parameters: the time, which measures the length of the frame, and the space, which is documented by the frame. The time and space calculated mathematically can radically differ from our sensory, temporal and spatial, perception. The film directing is, first and foremost, the art of controlling the screen time and the screen space: transforming the screen space into a personal space of the viewer; and allowing the screen time to overshadow and take over the viewer’s perception of the real passage of time.

The nature of film allows, even forces us, to manipulate its time and space. The viewer makes up their own images to recreate and fill in the time segments deleted during the editing process. The auteur documentary film, with the help of time and space transformations, frees itself from the often-imposed ideas of mirroring reality or being an objective document, and instead transports the viewer into a metaphysical space of one’s inner reality.

3.3. The Landscape as A Key to Deeper Meaning

It is difficult to strictly define the function of landscape in the dramaturgy of film, because it can have multiple functions simultaneously, working as a creator of our emotional memory, a means to evoke associative thinking, a tool for dramatic tension and a generator of visual rhythm. The full scope of landscape’s meaning reveals itself only through the contact with

the viewer. While capturing the landscape in the film frame is a conscious creative act of the director, in order to achieve the aforementioned creative aims, the evocation of emotional memory or associations is dependent solely on the viewer. At times, the viewer might not resonate with the originally intended ideas of the director, yet the carefully selected and filmed landscape still evokes other, even deeper, layers of emotion and association, completely unexpected by the director. However, we prefer to aim for synchronicity – for the director’s intentions to synchronise with the inner experience of the viewer.

3.4. The Landscape that forms the Film’s Semantic Vertical

Three different approaches towards the meaning-making were selected when creating my film *Bridges of Time* (2018):

1. The cinematographic journey in time, transporting the viewer to the landscapes of Baltic poetic documentary filmmakers, in order to see and understand how time alters the landscape, often by simply destroying the entire semantic systems of history and unrecognisably transforming the previously existent world. The code name of this approach was “TIME”.
2. The process of searching for and documenting the surviving elements of landscape captured by the films of poetic documentary directors, many of whom are no longer with us. This asynchronicity of human-landscape became important when considering the question of human finality in film, dramaturgically leading towards the second, very important, meaning-making approach. The code name of this approach was “HUMAN”.
3. The characteristic of documentary film that enables the preservation of landscape and human images. The antinomy of landscape-human finality and landscape-human eternity became fundamental to the third meaning-making approach. Its code name was “CINEMA”.

The film’s semantic vertical was structured by reflecting on the temporal relationship between the landscape and the human. The landscape was understood not as the background for the action, but as the main active element that links the meaning-making approaches outlined above and forms the dramaturgy of the film.

The use of landscape in the film frame is never accidental. Even when the director or cameraman uses the landscape only as a background for the action, the choice is influenced by the aesthetic and ethical ideas of the artist: from a simple “it’s beautiful”, to a complex capturing of associative signs of reality, with each choice informing the meaning of the frame. The landscape documents the reality in its complete temporal existence: the landscape, as captured in the film frame, did not exist yesterday or one hundred years ago; this landscape will no longer exist tomorrow or in a hundred years. For the Lithuanian auteur documentary filmmaking, which continues to search for its focal points, the landscape became a powerful

expressive tool; it is a cinematographic manifestation allowing the documentary filmmakers to speak the truth about their time, their relationship to the world and the infinite, and to expose the multifaceted, dramatic inner reality of the contemporary human being.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the many changes underwent by the documentary cinema since the work of Lumière brothers – the widening of aesthetic boundaries, search for identity and development of filming technologies – all of which made a huge impact on the documentary film making process and ideology, Grierson's definition of documentary film as a "creative treatment of actuality", provided in the beginning of this summary, continues to be relevant. However, over time, our understanding of documentary film has developed and we now require a wider definition of this notion, as follows:

Documentary film is a subjective cinematographic interpretation of authentic actuality which, instead of being created by the author's imagination, actually existed prior to its capture by the film camera and continues to exist afterwards, when the camera is no longer capturing it.

The passage of time alters the film characters and the film authors themselves; they change, get older and die. However, the landscape can remain virtually unscathed, bringing signs of the past world to the future. We can observe the film's landscape shifting from the background to the forefront, and it is here that the landscape begins to reveal the meaning-making picture of the film: the space lingering behind the character becomes rich with the signs of culture, mythology and history, evoking the viewer's intellectual, emotional and associative memories. The visual elements of landscape become metaphors, transporting the viewer to a philosophical and timeless space, unsubordinated to any power structures. The cinematographic meditation on the passage of time becomes the meaning-making principle of the film, allowing the landscape, the silent portraits of people and the cycles of nature to speak for themselves. The action of documentary film is transferred to an undefined, metaphysical time and space, to a primordial, archaic world of everyday rituals that retained their sacral nature.

The landscape's transformation from the background space into the space of creating meaning highlights its function as a dramaturgical element. It becomes an equally important character telling a story and transforming the time and space. The inner world of the foreground character is reflected in and given meaning by the landscape space, which carries the signs evoking the viewer's associative, emotional and historical memory. This leads to a personification of the landscape and nature. In the Lithuanian auteur documentary film, the play between dark and light goes beyond just being an element of visual language – it is a dramaturgical construction of history, created through the transformations of landscape.

The Lithuanian landscape is at the heart of the visual narrative of the film: a hill, an oak tree, a horse, a garden in full bloom or stripped bare in the autumn are not treated as elements of realistic landscape, but as the mythological imagery that opens the door to the spiritual heritage and historical memory of Lithuanian nation.

The poetics of Lithuanian auteur documentary film reveals itself through the reflections of person's inner world in the film's landscape. These documentary films were dominated by the triumvirate of person, time and landscape, giving rise to specific cinematic language, rhythm and visuality – the Lithuanian school of poetic documentary film.

As the contemporary Lithuanian cinema increasingly becomes part of the global documentary filmmaking, adopting the latest trends and tendencies, we continue to maintain the Lithuanian poetic film tradition formed by Šablevičius, Verba and other masters, where the landscape is viewed as a metaphysical space and where we can search for the reflections of our inner world.