

The chromatic hybridism in cinema: the conjugation of color and black and white to delimitate spaces and idealize new worlds

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Abstract: -Starting from an analysis of the symbolism attributed to black and white in symbiosis with color, we seek in this task to reflect on the way in which cinema seeks to obtain aesthetic, conceptual and even narrative dividends by combining in the same cinematographic piece the use color and black and white. Chromatic hybridism in cinema, let's call it that, definitively presents itself as an important film resource that enhances signifiers and, in the same way, creates or differentiates environments, time spaces and narratives.

Key – Words: Black and White – Color – Cinema – Chromatic Hybridism – New Worlds

1 Introduction

After several years of experience, the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière presented the cinematograph in 1895 and marked the beginning of a new era in the field of art. Cinema was born. In black and white, the still static images would now gain a new life with the illusion of movement and would exert an attractive force on the spectators watching them.

The early years of cinema were years of strong technical limitations despite the creative efforts of many pioneers who aspired a cinema with sound and color.

In 1928, Warner Brothers, after the successful sound experience a year earlier with Alan Crosland's *Jazz Singer*, concluded the sound revolution with the film *The Lights of New York* - the first film with fully synchronized sound. In 1935, the long-awaited *Becky Sharp*, directed by the American Rouben Mamoulian - the first color film - appeared. The monopolizing monochrome that until then had prevailed and constituted the great frustration of the pioneers of cinema ended. With the introduction of the Technicolor System 4 process in the shooting of the *Becky Sharp* film, the cinema reaches a new level, or if we wish, it is freed from the technical imposition (black and white) and can now count on the contribution of colour in the act of making cinema.

The film industry predicted that colour cinema would annihilate black and white cinema just as sound practically annihilated silent cinema. In spite of an evident generalization of the use of colour, especially from the 50's onwards, the truth is that cinema would continue until the present, to exist in black and white and/or in colour, although always (naturally excluding very rare and residual exceptions) with sound. The chromatic possibility that had arrived at the cinema allowed to reach new aesthetic levels that could still be enhanced, when conjugated with a rigorously and carefully considered simultaneous use of black and white. The films could be in colour, black and white and also, simultaneously, in colour and black and white.

2 Problem Formulation

As a form of expression, cinema manifests itself as an aesthetic language. The choice of light, rhythm, scenography, camera movements, plans and frameworks, the decision to opt for sound or silence, color or black and white are aspects of the cinematographic language decided by the director, in full act of creation, and which are then elements influencing the perception of the viewer who, later on, will or will not nourish an affective feeling for the work.

In the last decades, the production of black and white cinema, even if it is a minority when compared to the production in color, has not ceased to exist. Black-and-white in cinema seems to have started to assume contours considered more artistic. Collectively, it is agreed that it is less directed to the general public, however, the aesthetic potential and the symbolic load it brings with it does not fail to present itself as a remarkable tool that, skillfully used, can provoke impactful sensations in the public.

In turn, the simultaneous use of black and white and colour in the same cinematographic work is a relatively frequent film resource throughout the history of cinema. In this study, through the analysis of different filmographies of different directors, it will be of interest to try to identify and systematize the factors that, through chromatic hybridity, show themselves to be potentiators in obtaining new signifiers of a filmic nature and creators or differentiators of narrative and temporal environments and spaces.

3 Problem Solution

The aesthetic analysis of several films that simultaneously combine colour with black and white, from different eras, different latitudes and different genres will make it possible to enumerate the symbolic values that black and white in conjunction with colour bring and that are appealing and relevant in a cinematographic language.

The chromatic hybridism that differentiates worlds, environments and disparate narrative consciousnesses has been extensively tested in filmographies of countless filmmakers throughout the history of cinema. It is very present, for example, in the work of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, who sought, countless times, to neutralize the spectator's familiarity with color, softening it in such a way that it ended up being almost reduced to a range of grays closer to a black and white aesthetic than to a color aesthetic. He also tried to limit its effect by emphasizing that "Perhaps the way to neutralize the effect produced by colors is to alternate colored and monochromatic sequences, in such a way that the impression created by the complete spectrum is spaced, diminished (...) it is necessary to try to neutralize the color, modify the impact it exerts on the public (...) the color in conflict with the expressiveness of the image." [1].

Naturally, this search for new aesthetic and narrative dividends, as well as for new filmic signifiers through the simultaneous use of colour and black and white, is not limited to the cinematographic work of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky. Many are the directors who, in their cinematographic pieces, seek to enhance new ways of approaching the viewer by means of chromatic hybridism. In this study, pieces by directors as distinct as Lars Von Trier, Win Wenders, Tony Kaye, Francis Ford Coppola, Christopher Nolan, Steven Spielberg, Gary Ross or Victor Fleming will be addressed.

4 Conclusion

Through the analysis of several works by different filmmakers, it is concluded in this study that the simultaneous use of black and white and color in the same cinematographic work has various functions that, except if they are limited to mere scores of creative style, pass through the demarcation of various oppositions, whether past and present, reality and fantasy or factuality and dream. This simultaneous coexistence of color with black and white is something vulgarly observable when one intends to reach certain objectives, especially of a narrative nature. As a manipulated narrative resource built in the post-production process, the flashback alters the temporal linearity of the narrative and sends the viewer to an association of images with memories of a certain character. Past / Present temporal differentiation is often achieved or reinforced through the simultaneous use of color with black and white, where much more commonly, but not exclusively, black and white is associated with a past time and color with a present time. The past, present and future, through flashback, are no longer chronologically juxtaposed. "We are aware of a *sui generis* act by which we leave the present to place ourselves first in the past in general, and then in a certain region of the past: work of attempt, similar to the search for the focus of a photographic camera." [2]. These are the remembrance images, so called by Bergson, in temporal opposition to the images of the present time. "They are bifurcations of time that give the flashback a necessity, and the images an authenticity, a weight of the past without which they would remain conventional." [3].

Likewise, the differentiating delineation of different narrative, factual or narrative environments or universes is concretized by the simultaneous use of color with black and white. Chromatic hybridism, let us call it, provides a differentiating cataloging of disparate states where black and white or color can distinguishably refer the viewer to environments of latent tension, utopian or fanciful universes, and distinct experiences. By simultaneously using color and black and white in the same sequence of frames it is also sought to distinguish certain elements from the set by assigning them a differentiating character, showing their performance or characteristics and sometimes punctuating a creative style.

References:

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