

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci
Filozofická fakulta

Palacký University in Olomouc
Faculty of Arts

Diplomová práce
Master's thesis

**DOKUMENTARISTICKÉ ZTVÁRNĚNÍ LENI
RIEFENSTAHLOVÉ
DOCUMENTARY FILM PORTRAYAL OF
LENI RIEFENSTAHL**

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Studijní program/study programme: Film Studies-Media Studies

Olomouc 2016

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma *Dokumentaristické ztvárnění Leni Riefenstahlové* vypracovala samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato diplomová práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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Ráda bych touto cestou vyjádřila poděkování Jakubu Kordovi za jeho vstřícnost a trpělivost při vedení mé diplomové práce. Rovněž bych chtěla poděkovat mé matce Olesii a manželovi Arťomovi, bez jejichž podpory by tato práce nevznikla.

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TITLE:

Documentary film portrayal of Leni Riefenstahl

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ABSTRACT:

This research aims to analyse the documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993) from the perspective of the portrait genre. For this purpose, the definition and distinctive conventions of this particular genre are methodologically outlined on the basis of the thematic titles dealing with documentary theory and genre theory. Afterwards, the outlined conventions are traced on the example of the film. The research is relevant due to the recent increasing production of portrait genre documentaries in the film industry. Besides, the personality of Leni Riefenstahl has rarely been a subject of studies with regard to documentary film portrayal. The generic analysis of such type is innovative by exploring the concept of portraiture applied to the documentary field of motion arts.

KEYWORDS:

genre, documentary, portrait, Riefenstahl

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ABSTRAKT:

Tato diplomová práce si klade za cíl analyzovat dokument Síla Obrazu-Leni Riefenstahlová (1993) z hlediska portrétního žánru. V první části jsou na základě tématických titulů zabývajících se dokumentární a žánrovou teorií metodicky nastíněny definice a charakteristické konvence daného žánru. V následující části jsou nastíněné konvence sledovány na příkladu filmu. Tento výzkum je relevantní vzhledem k rostoucí tendenci počtu produkce dokumentů portrétního žánru v současném filmovém průmyslu. Kromě toho, osobnost Leni Riefenstahl byla málokdy předmětem studií ve vztahu k dokumentárnímu filmu. Žánrová analýza tohoto typu je inovativním zkoumáním pojetí portrétování a aplikací tohoto konceptu v dokumentární oblasti pohybových umění.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

žánr, dokumentární film, portrét, Riefenstahlová

INTRODUCTION

The subject of the diploma research is the documentary portrayal of Leni Riefenstahl's personality in the documentary film *The Wonderful, Horrible life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993) from the perspective of genre theory. The main purpose of my research lies in a generic analysis of the film, the potential definition of a genre within the analyzed documentary and the definition of the genre category to which the film may belong. Analyzing the particular qualities, portrayal techniques, plot patterns of narrative structure, I am making an attempt to outline the conventions which are typically incorporated in the portrait genre with regard to the documentary. The concept of portrait exists in various fields of socio-cultural space; we may call it interdisciplinary. The portrait genre starts its historical origin from ancient cave drawings. It is derived from the different fields of art, mainly from visual arts: from paintings, mosaics, sculptures and theatre to fictional motion-picture art. Based on this, in my research I insist on the existence of the portrait genre in a generic taxonomy of documentary films. Examining the nature of the portrait genre within the documentary, I am making an attempt to prove the hypothesis that the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* carries the features and conventions of the portrait documentary genre. In other words, analyzing this mentioned film, I am focusing on its outstanding characteristics as of the portrait genre. In order to define them, I have worked out a methodology for the research, which is based on the theoretical sources by genre studies scholar Daniel Chandler¹ and the particular statements of a widely-known authority, the documentary expert Bill Nichols. To help myself with the identification of the genre conventions, I am also analyzing the predominant modes and elements of my documentary using the theoretical classifications developed by Bill Nichols² and John Corner³.

The main questions of the research, which I aim to answer, are:

¹ CHANDLER, Daniel. *An Introduction to Genre Theory* [online]. 1997, 15 [cit. 2016-04-14]. Dostupné z: http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf

² NICHOLS, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Second edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, s. 250-251, 142-172ss.

³ CORNER, John, *Civic Visions: Forms of Documentary. Television Form and Public Address*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995, s. 77-104.

1. What is the specifics of the portrait concept in the documentary field? How is it reflected in the documentary I am analyzing?

2. How is the portrayal of the personality provided within this documentary genre? Is that a constructed descriptive process, or a mere exploration of the personality as the main subject?

3. What are the conventions of the portrait genre and how are they incorporated in this particular documentary?

4. What is the specifics of the narrative (or storytelling) in a portrait documentary? What role does the personal narration of the subject play in the narrative structure? Who is the storyteller and the main guide of narrative? The director (main author of the film) or the self-presentation of a central personality? What is the role of biographical and autobiographical components in the narrative construction of a portrait documentary?

The theoretical part of the thesis consists of the background for the generic analysis of the documentary. Firstly, it is necessary to mention the general explanation of the genre definitions in film studies and their interpretations with regard to the documentary. Then, I will briefly summarize the possible genre classifications and explain the specifics of the narrative in a portrait documentary. The second section of the theoretical part starts with the description of the personality of Riefenstahl herself and maps the social context due to which she had become the subject of interest for many authors. Afterwards, I will move to the explanation of the portrait concept, briefly outlining the genesis of the portrait genre and listing the means and techniques of portraying in a documentary. With a purpose of defining the common conventions of the portrait genre in documentary, I will examine the other examples of documentaries in the same genre. As a result of this, I am isolating the main conventions of the portrait documentary genre.

In the analytical part of the thesis I will initially analyze the chosen documentary according to the suggested conventions of the portrait genre, which I have concluded grounding on a) the model of generic film analysis developed by Daniel Chandler; b) the properties of the personal portrait documentary described by Bill Nichols; c) the other remarkable documentaries, which had appeared starting

from the early 60s till nowadays and were assigned to the similar genre type by their authors, or critically evaluated as portrait documentaries by film critics. Eventually, the novelty of the research lies in the discovery of the repeating motifs⁴ within the portrait genre allowing the ideal viewer to identify and refer a documentary to it. Furthermore, such motifs and conventions of this genre were unexpectedly rarely summarized in the field of documentary studies compared to the the field of fiction. My documentary analysis offers the conventions of the portrait genre, traced in the documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*. The approach, explained in the methodology and the auxiliary analysis of the predominant modes according to Nichols, will help me examine the chosen documentary from the perspective of the portrait genre.

Literature and sources

The primary source of my analysis is a German three-hour documentary film about the life of German film director Leni Riefenstahl, directed by Ray Müller. *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*⁵ (1993) consists mostly of interviews with Riefenstahl, voice-over, exclusive archival shots and sequences, which all together tell the story of Riefenstahl's extraordinary life and her relationship to National Socialism. Starkman writes that the documentary presents a subject who fascinates because, morbid as it may sound, she was still alive and remained the last great surviving image-maker of the Nazis.⁶ The film includes many dialogical interviews, arguments of Müller and Riefenstahl just in front of the camera and archival footage from the personal fond of Riefenstahl. On the one hand, this documentary fascinates the viewer with the numerous intentional provocations of a main heroine by a director, but on the other one, Leni is represented as a highly qualified expert, a talented professional devoted to her work. With a sparkle in her

⁴ The term “motifs” is explained by David Bordwell as a significant repeated elements in a film; Such similar elements could be represented either by person and its character traits, lines of dialogue, music or by technical patterns such as lighting, or camera position. Vis. BORDWELL, David, THOMPSON, Kristin, *Film Art: an introduction*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008, p.66

⁵ Original title in german Die Macht der Bilder: Leni Riefenstahl

⁶ STARKMAN, Ruth, Mother of All Spectacles, In *Film Quarterly*, Vol.51, No.2 (Winter 1997-1998), University of California Press, p.21, Available from: [online]
<http://sennhs.org/ourpages/auto/2014/5/27/39313126/3697138.pdf>

eyes she guides the viewer through the history of making her film masterpieces, explains the specifics of the filming techniques and describes her way to success. Riefenstahl engages in onscreen debates with Müller, and then is seen visiting the site of the 1938 Olympics with the surviving members of her film crew. Riefenstahl and her colleagues discuss some of their famous shots and their common inventive solutions of filming – “...from aerial techniques to the idea of digging a hole for the camera, so that athletes could loom over the audience. Shots from the film are a reminder of how beautiful and effective it was.”⁷

By changing the directions of the dialogic interviewing, Müller gradually raises the problem of Riefenstahl’s controversial social reputation of a propagandist film-maker. For some, her works present the clearest example of aesthetics glorified by the Nazis. For others, “*she has unfairly shouldered the blame for the real culprits of the regime, most of whom, as far as film making goes, were quite happily reintegrated into the industry.*”⁸ There is also a suggestion that she remains an artist who has suffered enough from her past association with National Socialism and deserves social amnesty.

The wide spectrum of literature and articles serves as a theoretical foundation of my research. Here I would like to recapitulate the most remarkable of them, which were informative and helpful for the analysis. Some of them are dedicated to the topic of her controversial personality, while others discuss both the film itself and the director’s approach and film-making strategy.

Steven Bach is a former head of production at United Artists. He is considered the most famous biographer and expert on Riefenstahl’s life. In his first-rated biography *The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl* (2007) Bach composes her literary portrait, describing each stage of her life carefully, leaving a space for the reader’s rethinking. Without any touch of blame or justification, he explains that the participation in the establishment of Nazi propaganda shouldn’t affect the reception of the artistic product. In the nineteenth chapter of Bach’s book, which is called *The Final Film Performance*, Bach speaks about Müller’s documentary and the

⁷ EBERT, Roger. The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl. In: *Rogerebert.com* [online]. 1994 [cit. 2016-04-14]. Dostupné z: <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-wonderful-horrible-life-of-leni-riefenstahl-1994>

⁸ Ibid.

complicated circumstances of its making. He writes that Leni was looking for a director capable of creating her last documentary image for a long time and it was rather problematic, because many directors, among whom were Marcel Ophüls or Wim Wenders denied being even mentioned in context with her name. Some of the directors were not talented enough in Leni's opinion and she refused to work with such adepts immediately. The other directors were afraid of spoiling their reputation by making a film about a Nazi director. Finally, she has chosen to work with Ray Müller, the experienced, but yet relatively unknown documentarian.⁹ The following passages of this chapter describe all the complications of co-working, which Müller and Riefenstahl have lived through on the set. Bach provides a brief analysis of the film, quoting the words of Müller collected from different interviews and finally, he sums up what vision of her personality Müller reached, what portrait he represented. Bach writes that the film was conceived mainly as a chronicle of her life. With the purpose to reflect the most spontaneous reactions and to learn more about his subject matter, Müller convinces Leni to shoot a „diary” of the filming process.¹⁰ The elimination of the political naivety and ideological innocence was necessary, because the documentary did not have the intention to glorify her personality, but rather to show her natural behavior answering unexpected questions. This filming move allows him to achieve a series of different sequences, which show the viewer different faces of her: from kind, nostalgic workaholic, to aggressive, irritated and cranky old lady. Müller pays a lot of attention to Leni's physiognomy and her manipulations with gestures within the camera frame.

In the recorded discussion of his book with Gabriele Sanders in New York, Bach mentions that unlike Dietrich, she clearly did not reject the Third Reich, but embraced the Third Reich.¹¹ Bach notices, that after the war and until the end of her life she maintained apolitical, and denied the crimes attached to her work. He even connects her denials to the psychological complexity and the absence of ability to

⁹ Müller, Ray, In BACH, Steven, *Leni Riefenstahlová: Život a dílo „Hitlerovy filmačky“*, Praha: Ikar, 2009, pp.333-345.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ BACH, Steven, [Recorded video interview]. Book Discussion on Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl, In: *C-SPAN* [online] Available from: <http://www.c-span.org/video/?198534-1/book-discussion-leni-life-work-leni-riefenstahl>, 01:08 min.

admit and regret her probable mistakes. For example, in an interview in 1964, reprinted in *The New Biographical Dictionary Of Film*¹² by David Thompson, Riefenstahl makes clear that she felt *Triumph of the Will* was a recording of an event, not a propaganda film. *"If you see this film again today you ascertain that it doesn't contain a single reconstructed scene. Everything in it is true. And it contains no tendentious commentary at all. It is history. A pure historical film... it is film-vérité. It reflects the truth that was then in 1934, history. It is therefore a documentary. Not a propaganda film. Oh! I know very well what propaganda is. That consists of recreating events in order to illustrate a thesis, or, in the face of certain events, to let one thing go in order to accentuate another. I found myself, me, at the heart of an event which was the reality of a certain time and a certain place. My film is composed of what stemmed from that."*¹³ This important quotation represents not only the things on which Bach has commented, but also Riefenstahl's attitude to this problematic as a whole. Year by year, in all the further interviews as well as in Ray Müller's film, her position would remain approximately the same as we may perceive from these words of her.

Her complicated attitude to the stigma associated with her art is evident from her own publication *Memoiren* (1987)¹⁴, where Leni recapitulates her own life in detail in order to convince the reader that she never had an intention to create her films in the service of propaganda. This autobiographical book covers many facts, mentioned in the documentary I analyze. Moreover, her on-screen narration or self-presentation sometimes sounds even too rehearsed. Her narration gives a feeling that her lines are almost learned by heart by her and there is an explanation to that. Looking through her book, I have figured out that in most interviews with Müller, she repeats or paraphrases the passages from her autobiography. This fact also tells a lot about her personality and questions the extent of the realism and trustworthiness of the main speaker in the documentary.

¹² THOMPSON, David, *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film*, London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2010

¹³ CHESHIRE, Ellen. *Leni Riefenstahl: Documentary film-maker or Propagandist?*, [online]. [cit. 2016-04-14]. Dostupné z: <http://eh.mkc.nsw.edu.au/WORD%20FILES/TRIUMPH%20OF%20THE%20WILL/DocumentaryOrPropaganda.doc>.

¹⁴ In Czech translation vis. RIEFENSTAHL, Leni, Blanka KŘIKLÁNOVÁ a Milan NAVRÁTIL. *V mé paměti: memoáry fotografky a filmové režisérky, která pracovala pro Hitlera*. Praha: Prostor, 2002.

The producer and director of portrait documentary films Jill Godmilow has shared her interesting critical verdict on the film of Ray Müller in her conversation with the historian Ann-Louise Shapiro.¹⁵ As a moderator of the interview, Shapiro leads a discussion raising the topics of genre, meaning, and the relationship of form to content. Godmilow also claims an interesting point about the decontextualization of the objects in Riefenstahl's films. As I have said before, Leni is sometimes blamed by critics for supporting the cult of body perfection in her film *Olympia*, which was then harshly imposed by Nazis. Godmilow argues with that and remembers the example of the film sequence from Müller's film, where a viewer has the possibility to observe an interesting visual comparison, during which we can figure out that, the way Riefenstahl has organized the close-ups of different fish for her footage is practically the same as she had organized the shots of sportsmen in *Olympia*. She claims that Riefenstahl's "*images are drained of the time and space in which they were shot; they are just shots*".¹⁶ Godmilow is also intensely critical about Müller's documentary and she even calls it a corrupt one, because there was doubtfully no deal between Riefenstahl and Müller about the final cut version of the material. She states that this documentary serves as a confirmation to the suggestion that oral history not always necessarily creates a truthful historical documentary.¹⁷ In this way, she impugns the sincerity and truthful representation of reality in this documentary, but nevertheless, it raises many debatable topics.

The German documentary scholar Ruth Starkman wrote that the director Ray Müller has applied the extraordinary technique of representing Riefenstahl by leading the dialog in a specific manner and by calling out the reactions, which he needed for the reflection of her natural reactions in a documentary.¹⁸ Starkman has even called Müller's technique of the representation as an "unartistic spectacle"¹⁹ played in front of the camera. Nevertheless, Starkman also raises the topic of

¹⁵ GODMILOW, Jill. *HOW REAL IS THE REALITY IN DOCUMENTARY FILM?: IN CONVERSATION WITH ANN-LOUISE SHAPIRO* [online]. [cit. 2016-04-14]. Dostupné z:

<http://www3.nd.edu/~jgodmilo/reality.html>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ STARKMAN, cit. 6, Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

auterism and commemorates her cultural contribution to the world's cinema heritage: “*Riefenstahl is an auteur, unlike many of the Nazi directors, and it is her unique film talents which com-promise rather than, as she would hope, absolve her. The brand of image-making which once served the centralized cultural politics of the Third Reich now persists in other more diffused media spectacles that aim to excite the emotions and elide the material circumstances of their given context*”.²⁰

All these brief annotations of sources help to delineate my primary critical evaluation of both the documentary and the central personality of it. These sources also create a base for the expectations from the genre to which a documentary may belong.

Methodology

This chapter aims to outline the theoretical background which presents the basis of my methodological approach to the documentary analysis. In the analytical part of the research I use multiple theoretical sources, mainly by Bill Nichols²¹ and Daniel Chandler²². As far as the main purpose of my research lies in the exploration of the documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* from the perspective of the genre, the research should be built on the following stages: Firstly, it is necessary to start from the general examining of the documentary genre characteristics in my film at a “macro level”. For this intention, I am focusing on Nichols’ (2010) most influential modes of analytical taxonomy, namely his classification of documentaries according to expository, observational, poetic, participatory, reflexive, and performative modes.²³

Genre studies deal with the features that characterize groups and categories of different films and somehow unify the similarities between them. In documentary film these six modes of representation function something like sub-genres of the documentary genre itself. “*Modes establish a loose framework of affiliation within*

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ NICHOLS, cit.2, ibid.

²² CHANDLER, cit.1, ibid.

²³ NICHOLS, cit.2, pp.142-172

which individuals may work; they set up conventions that a given film may adopt; and they provide specific expectations viewers anticipate having fulfilled.”²⁴

The following summarizes features for each of Nichols’ six modes of documentary film:

1. *“The poetic mode exhibits Modernist characteristics typified by the qualities of fragmentation, emotionalism, expressiveness and ambiguity;*

2. *The expository mode’s purpose is to disseminate information or to persuade. Images and footage are used to strengthen spoken narrative. A common feature is an authoritative voice-over as used in news and TV programs;*

3. *The observational mode uses film footage to chronicle a scene as it occurs. Seeking to be objective, the unobtrusive camera takes on the role of the audience, watching and observing the action;*

4. *The participatory mode relies on interviews, considering them to be a credible source of knowledge about the subject;*

5. *The reflexive mode focuses on the act of filming to apprise the viewer of the film-making process. An example is when one camera films a recording session taken by another camera;*

6. *The performative mode is identified as being subjective. Performed acts with an emotional intensity or uniqueness of vision are recorded to express the director’s personal vision or enhance the narrative.*”²⁵

In my point of view these modes are connected with the structure of the narrative and they are integral for the formation of the viewer’s expectation from a documentary, which means, that modes could be considered the means of the film’s further genre establishment. In order to have a holistic view of my analyzed documentary it would be useful to briefly examine the predominant mode or

²⁴ ANDERSON-MOORE, Oakley. Nichols’ 6 Modes of Documentary Might Expand Your Storytelling Strategies In *No Film School* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2016-03-26]. Dostupné z:

<http://nofilmschool.com/2015/09/nichols-6-modes-documentary-can-help-expand-your-storytelling>

²⁵ NATUSCH, Barry, HAWKINS, Beryl, Mapping Nichols’ Modes in Documentary Film: Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry and Helvetica, In *The IAFOR Journal of Media, Communication and Film*, Volume I - Issue II - Summer 2014, Available from [online]:< <http://iafor.org/archives/journals/media/media-journal-vol1-issue2-contents/Nichols-theory.pdf>>.

probable combination of the modes within the documentary. Another important statement of Nichols claims that the spectrum of possibilities presented by the emphasis on personal portraiture can be found at work in all six modes of documentary representation.²⁶ This is also one of the reasons why I am applying Nichols' taxonomy of modes in order to define the hybrid characteristics of the portrait genre. My task is to help myself with the interpretation of the portrait genre specifics by looking for the predominant modes in my documentary and then, by analyzing how the predominant modes contribute to the portrait genre.

There is a chapter in the same book *Introduction to Documentary* (2010), which is named *Social Issues and Personal Portraiture*²⁷. In this chapter Nichols compares the documentaries which put emphasis on the personal portrait with those which put emphasis rather on social issues. In contrast to the social issue documentaries, he suggests that a documentary film portrait is one of emphasis, which offers a viewer the perspective of the individual. He claims that the broader social issues remain in the background of the portrait genre.

Distinguishing personal portrait from social issue, Nichols highlights the specific properties of the portrait documentary, which I use in my analysis to outline the conventions. If a social issue documentary is focused mainly on finding a viable solution to a common problem, the personal portrait on the contrary focuses on experiencing the world from an individual's distinct perspective. If in a social issue documentary the style or form of the documentary is secondary to content (Nichols calls it the discourse of sobriety), in the personal one the form is what matters the most and the form allows us to see the world with someone else's eyes (Nichols calls it a poetic or subjective discourse). In a social issue documentary a film-maker's personal style is suppressed by the importance of the social message that should be provided. On the other hand, the personal documentary film puts accent on a film-maker's artistic expressiveness.²⁸ Here I am recounting only some of them, because the full list of the properties by Nichols is represented in the table below.

²⁶ NICHOLS, cit.2, p.242

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid,p.250

In the next stage I will move forward to the explanation of the hypothesis, which I have mentioned in the introduction of the research. For the formulation of my hypothesis that my analyzed film contains the *portrait documentary genre* features, it was required to work with the next source of my research, represented by the work of Daniel Chandler. Chandler (born 1952) is a British visual semiotician based (since 2001) at the department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at Aberystwyth University (where he has taught since 1989).²⁹ In his publication *An Introduction to Genre Theory* (1997) he polemicalizes on the problematic of genre definition, mentioning the approaches of David Bordwell, Robert Stam, Andrew Tudor, Gunther Kress, Steve Neale and Roland Barthes. On this theoretical basis he has developed the basic guideline for his own students for analyzing an individual visual text in relation to genre. Chandler has worked on the following criteria set for defining a genre:

- *“narrative - similar (sometimes formulaic) plots and structures, predictable situations, sequences, episodes, obstacles, conflicts and resolutions;*
- *characterization - similar types of characters (sometimes stereotypes), roles, personal qualities, motivations, goals, behavior; basic themes, topics, subject matter (social, cultural, psychological, professional, political, sexual, moral), values and what Stanley Solomon refers to as recurrent 'patterns of meaning' (Solomon 1995: 456);*
- *setting - geographical and historical;*
- *iconography (echoing the narrative, characterization, themes and setting) - a familiar stock of images or motifs, the connotations of which have become fixed; primarily but not necessarily visual, including décor, costume and objects, certain 'typecast' performers (some of whom may have become 'icons'), familiar patterns of dialogue, characteristic music and sounds, and appropriate physical topography;*

²⁹ Daniel Chandler. In: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [cit. 2016-04-14]. Dostupné z: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Chandler

- *filmic techniques - stylistic or formal conventions of camerawork, lighting, sound-recording, use of color, editing etc. (viewers are often less conscious of such conventions than of those relating to content).*³⁰

This criteria set is multipurpose; it notes the textual features of any genre no matter whether the film we analyze is fictional or non-fictional. With the help of this set I am further marking the genre of my analyzed documentary as a portrait one and continue to reveal the convention of this particular portrait genre.

The last stage of the analysis lies in combining the theoretical sources for my methodological apparatus; I have discovered a certain connection or parallel between the statements of Daniel Chandler and Bill Nichols, which I am expounding below. In my research I will consider these statements the key instruments for defining specific conventions of the documentary film genre, namely the docu-portrait within my chosen film:

<p>Daniel Chandler (An introduction to Genre Theory, p.13) has summarized the common criteria, which allow a researcher to identify one genre (or respectively the mixture of genres) within a film, listed by film and television theorists</p>	<p>Bill Nichols (An Introduction to Documentary) p.250.) has identified the properties, which initially distinguish a genre of personal portrait documentary from other documentary genres.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrative - similar (sometimes formulaic) plots and structures, predictable situations, sequences, episodes, obstacles, conflicts and resolutions; • characterization - similar types of characters (sometimes stereotypes), roles, personal qualities, motivations, goals, behavior; basic themes, topics, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social actors speak for themselves by their own voices. film-maker interacts with subjects more personally, which may include discussion of the interaction itself; - Poetic or subjective discourse; - Stresses embodied, situated knowledge derived from individual experiences; - Private moments;

³⁰ CHANDLER,cit.1,p.13

<p>subject matter (social, cultural, psychological, professional, political, sexual, moral), values and what Stanley Solomon refers to as recurrent 'patterns of meaning' (Solomon 1995: 456);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting - geographical and historical; • iconography (echoing the narrative, characterization, themes and setting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a familiar stock of images or motifs, the connotations of which have become fixed; primarily but not necessarily visual, including décor, costume and objects, certain 'typecast' performers (some of whom may have become 'icons'), familiar patterns of dialogue, characteristic music and sounds, and appropriate physical topography; • filmic techniques - stylistic or formal conventions of camerawork, lighting, sound-recording, use of color, editing etc. (viewers are often less conscious of such conventions than of those relating to content)³¹. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Characters convey considerable psychological complexity; - Individuals are often presented as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique or distinctive (idiosyncratic) Mythic Charismatic; - Direct maximum attention to the qualities and challenges of the individual, usually with indirect or implicate reference to larger issues; - Stresses film-maker's style or personal expressiveness over his or her focus on a social issue; - The interactions (especially interviews) may be a key element of the film; - Commonly presents a problem, situation or individual without providing a solution or strong sense of closure; often invites understanding and empathy (of crises, intense experiences, maturation, personal growth or change, effect of experiences.); - Stresses drama of experiencing the world from an individual's distinct perspective;³²
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Table 1 Sources for conventions outlining

³¹ Ibid

³² NICHOLS,cit.2, p.250-251

In Table 1 I have combined the two sources by Nichols and Chandler, which will serve as guidelines for analyzing my film in relation to genre. Due to the criterion points summarized by Chandler, I will be able to look for the properties which Nichols refers exclusively to the personal portrait documentary specifically in the film I have chosen. For instance, I will describe how Chandler's criterion of *cinematic techniques* helps to stress a film-maker's style and I will try to describe what particular traits of portraying were reached by using specific lighting, editing or, for example, the angle of the camera position. It is also not excluded that the process of analysis could be done vice versa. In such case I will look for particular properties, listed by Nichols and will find by which of Chandler's criteria the specific property is provided. For example, the *poetic and subjective discourse* (one of the Nichols' features of portrait documentary) could be reflected in the stock of images and motifs, which Chandler relates to the criterion *iconography*. In order to search for generic labels of portrait I will try to define what can be considered a *subject matter* of my documentary and to estimate what basic themes and topics are raised during the film with a purpose of portraying the subject matter. I will also pay special attention to all the interactions within the camera shot, especially to interviews, because as Nichols points out – they might play a key role in the portrait documentary genre. The analysis of the structure and familiar patterns of dialogue within the interview will be done to understand whether the interview helps to demonstrate the individuality of the main social actress, or not.

As I explain later in my work, the concept of *narrative* in documentary differs not only from the fictional discourse. I have found out, that the narrative in a documentary of the portrait genre is a special one in general, because it is led by both the maker and the subject of the portrait. That is why one of the first points from Chandler, namely narrative will be applied in the analysis in the following way: Firstly, I will reveal what situations and sequences in my documentary construct the narrative of the main subject of documentary (Riefenstahl). Secondly, I take a look on a narrative function of the film-maker (Ray Müller) or respectively I note what techniques or means he uses for the construction of the plot. All these things should be done to answer the question of who participates in creating a portrait and what conventions the portrait documentary should carry. All the points from the table will

serve to me as means for searching for portrait genre labels and conventions. These means represent an optimal model of the documentary film analysis from both sides: as a sample of the portrait genre and a creative product of its film-maker and protagonist.

Key terms of research

In the following part of this chapter I would like to collect brief information about the key terms and concepts I am operating with in the analytical part.

The key concept of my research is a *portrait* is a work of art which presents an image of a person, especially it focuses on the face of a central hero; it is not purely biographical and “*instead of dynamic, processual identity, it presents a static collection of attributes*”.³³ A portrait puts emphasis on the individualism and spirituality of humanistic values. The individual approach to a main social actor frequently grows from the wider social context. A portrait is dialogical by its nature; every small detail within the camera frame could play a significant role in the structure of the portrait as a whole: clothing, appearance, gesture, the interior of the location where the presentation takes place. Moreover, there is a suggestion that a portrait always concerns both the person being portrayed and the artist, emphasizing that the audiovisual portrait is the image of a person which has been filtered through the artist's sensitivity.³⁴ In other words, a film about a personality could not become a portrait without the artist's intention to portray.

Analyzing film and video portraits, Lellis refers the portrait concept primarily to the documentary genre field due to its lack of narration. Insisting on this, he mentions the spiritual implications, brought by the placement of the camera and the composition of the image, reflect the mediations of the portrayed person, which frame and present the subject matter.³⁵ The interview in documentary film portraits is used in addition with a purpose to expand the limits of the visual images.

³³ LELLIS, George P, [Portraiture in Film, Video and Internet], In KELOMEES, Raivo, HAILES, Chris, *Expanding Practices in Audiovisual Narrative*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p.135

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ LELLIS, cit.33. *ibid.*

Considering the statements and axioms of Lellis very thorough and accurate, the only point on which I argue is a lack of narration, or the anti-narrativity of the portrait regarding non-fictional film. It may seem anti-narrative in opposite to fiction film, because of its more conservative static behavior, but I suggest that even the static images apply narrative.

The *social actor/actress* – is a term used with regard to non-actors, who do not perform as some other fictional character, but respectively share their vision or optics. Sharing is possible either through the form of a guided discussion or through the retelling of their own life stories, situation, or point of view. Social actors are merely playing themselves during the shooting process and their natural, non-fabricated actions do not have to match the expectations and artistic intentions of the director. This term was explored and originally used by Bill Nichols³⁶, but the interpretations of this term have appeared in the works of Julianne Burton, Jason Middleton and John Corner.

Mode of address – this term implies the examination of the way or manner in which the audiovisual text “speaks” to the audience. Mode of address manifests the construction of the connection between the addresser and addressee. It has a strong relation to the genre of the audiovisual text, because similarly to genre, mode of address includes such factors as type of narration (first person, third person), tone of address (direct, indirect), formal or informal character.³⁷ This term was a point of discussion in Christian Metz's *Imaginary Signifier* (1982).

The terms *narrative* and *storytelling* cannot be considered synonyms, but they are rather interrelated words of approximately same meaning, especially in English film studies literature. Unlike in fictional film, in documentaries the narrative presents the “voice” of cinematic representation, using both components, namely images and comments of a series of events, which make up the life-story of a biographical subject.³⁸

³⁶ Nichols uses this term for “individuals” or “people”, who retain the capacity to act within their historical arena, Vis. NICHOLS, Bill, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991, p.42

³⁷ PEARSON, Roberta, SIMPSON, Philip, *Critical Dictionary of Film and Television Theory*, London: Routledge, 2001, p.283

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.300

In my research I consider *personal narrative* a distinctive feature of the portrait documentary genre. A documentary practitioner Matthew Williams even isolated personal narrative as a distinct type of documentary, naming the interview of the person who the documentary is about the main component of it. He also does not exclude the possibility of expanding the personal narrative frames for making a documentary more engaging to the audience; such elements (visual tools) as archival footage, photographs or music could accompany the key interview of the central person.³⁹

One of the important terms, which questions the topic of documentary realism is *reflexivity*. Jay Ruby points out that the reflexivity of the documentary film lies in structuring a product in such a way that the audience assumes that the producer, the process of making, and the product are a coherent whole. I have mentioned the term reflexivity, because according to Ruby it is closely connected or sometimes even confused with an autobiography: “*There may be some confusion between reflexivity and terms which are sometimes used as synonyms: autobiography, self-reference and self-consciousness.*”⁴⁰ Nevertheless, reflexivity is also considered a first sign of authorship. It reminds us, that a documentary optic is also the product of the author's interpretation. To be reflexive means to reveal that films – all films, whether they are labeled fiction, documentary, or art – are created, structured articulations of the filmmaker and not authentic, truthful, objective records. Sooner or later the documentarian is going to have to face the possibility of assuming the socially diminished role of interpreter of the world, of no longer being regarded as an objective recorder of reality. Reflexivity offers us a means whereby we can instruct our audiences to understand the process of producing statements about the world. This term is useful for the analysis, because the narrative structure of the portrait documentary is complicated and the audience should remember that even the personal narrative in a form of monologue-interview could somehow be changed by a director during the final cut. That is why reflexivity always takes place in the

³⁹ WILLIAMS, Matthew, In chapter 19, *Making Real-life Videos*, Skyhorse Publishing, 2013

⁴⁰ RUBY, Jay, *The Image Mirrored: Reflexivity and the Documentary film*, In ROSENTHAL, Alan, CORNER, John, *New Challenges for Documentary: Second Edition*, Manchester University Press, 2005, p.35

documentary and it does not matter if the intrusion of the film-maker is evident, or neutral.

1. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR THE GENERIC ANALYSIS OF THE DOCUMENTARY

This chapter summarizes the necessary basic information from the field of genre theory and genre studies including the paragraphs about the concept of genre, its definitions, possible genre taxonomies and the specifics of the term “narrative” within the documentary film and in its portrait genre. Further information is integral for analyzing visual text in relation to genre.

1.1. The concept of genre in film studies

Initially, scholars, theoreticians and historians of the genre concept in film studies are mentioned according to their general specializations: fictional or non-fictional field of research interest. Generally, the topic of genres in fiction film was widely explored by such respectable authors as Robert Stam, Steve Neale, Jane Stadler, David Bordwell, Rick Altman etc. On the opposite, in the documentary film studies the concept and questions of genre taxonomies were raised more seldom. Bill Nichols, Erik Barnouw and John Corner are those of not many theoreticians who were partly dealing with the genre concept and its practical identification in the non-fictional field of studies. From the general perspective of the documentary film as a medium providing a message, genre may be considered as a practical device for helping any mass medium to produce consistently and efficiently and to relate its production to the expectations of its customers. Since it is also a practical device for enabling individual media users to plan their choices, it can be considered as a mechanism for ordering the relations between the two main parties to mass communication.⁴¹

When we speak about film genres, we indicate certain types of films. “*Genres are the convenient terms that develop informally.*”⁴² In regards to film, genre refers to the way of the categorization of the film. The major role in this categorization is

⁴¹ MCQUAIL, Denis. *Mass communication theory: an introduction*. 2nd edition. Sage Publications, 1987, p.200

⁴² BORDWELL, David a Kristin THOMPSON. *Film Art: An introduction*. 8th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008, p.318

played also by a set of expectations of the viewer. Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress define genres as “*typical forms of texts which link kinds of producer, consumer, topic, medium, manner and occasion*”, adding that they “*control the behavior of producers of such texts, and the expectations of potential consumers*”.⁴³

As with any other art form, film has been subjected to many classifications based on different criteria and points of view over the years. Rick Altman, in his book *Film/Genre* (2000) says that the film genre can be understood based on various perspectives and meanings. The list he suggests is as follows:

-The genre as a blueprint, as a formula that precedes, programs and patterns industry production

-The genre as structure, as the formal framework on which individual films are founded

- The genre as label, as the name of a category central to the decisions and communications of distributors and exhibitors

-The genre as contract, as the viewing position required by each genre film of its audience.⁴⁴

John Corner defines genre as a principal factor in the directing of audience choice and audience expectations; continuing his definition, he explains the nature of genre by organizing the subsets of cultural competences and dispositions appropriate for watching, listening to and reading different kinds of media.⁴⁵ It is true that the viewers may have certain expectations of those works, which are promoted as documentaries, but uncertainty still remains concerning the criteria that should be applied in determining which works to include or to exclude from the genre. For breaking this uncertainty critics have limited the wide range of documentaries into more convenient subgenres. More particularized structure of the genre established as subgenres contributes to the easier defining of the categorical nature of every film.

The term genre is usable for any group of motion pictures, which express similar stylistic, thematic or structural interests, but at the same time it is used for

⁴³ KRESS, Gunther. *Social Semiotics*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1988,p.7

⁴⁴ ALTMAN, Rick. *Film/Genre*. 2nd edition. London:BFI Publishing, 1999, p.17

⁴⁵ CORNER, John. *Popular television in Britain: studies in cultural history*. London: BFI Publishing, 1991,p.34

distinguishing such classes of films as documentary, the experimental and animated films from fictional class. The study of various film genres gave birth to genre criticism and genre analysis, which I have stated to be one of the means for reaching the purpose of my research. By genre criticism in my research I consider the isolation of various cinematic conventions which characterize a particular motion-picture genre and the employment of those elements in evaluating a film that falls within the genre. The examination of the way in which the recognizable generic conventions have appeared in my analyzed documentary will help me to determine how the cinematic thematic line was achieved.⁴⁶

As far as in my research I work with the term genre, this paragraph highlights the outstanding definitions and interpretations of the genre concept, its analysis and criticism. Moving to the next paragraph, it is necessary to explain, that some of the genre taxonomies isolate the documentary genre itself as a separate element among the groups of genres. Documentary as a basic type of film along with fiction is a genre category taken for granted, but just like genres, this basic type also shapes the viewer's expectations and guides their reactions. The genre of a documentary exists independently, because it originally distinguishes itself by the way it is made and the intentions of the film-maker.⁴⁷

1.2. The variations of documentary genre definitions. Genres of documentary

The label of documentary film is now applied to a much wider range of audio-visual culture comparing to the pioneering definition of documentary in the 1930s by John Grierson. There is no doubt that a film which uses any record of reality could potentially belong to the genre of documentary. Nowadays, the documentary could still be described as “*the creative treatment of actuality*”⁴⁸, but only partially. There is a plenty of definitions and visions of this mode or genre of film making. “*Documentary has in short become a portmanteau word with multiple*

⁴⁶ BEAVER, Frank, *Dictionary of film terms*, New York:McGraw-Hill book company, 1983

⁴⁷ BORDWELL,THOMPSON,cit.44, p.335-336

⁴⁸ GRIERSON,John, *Grierson od Documentary*, Oakland:University of California Press, 1966,p.13

points of reference.”⁴⁹ It is generally expected from this genre to unify the evidential, educational and historiographical characteristics within the non-fiction. The documentary film genre derives from real life as from the most trustworthy raw material, which is constructed by the narrator, non-actor and audiovisual supporting material. This genre provides an important reality-shaping communication due to its claims to factual information grounded, or at least referred, to the real events.

Each definition of the documentary film genre has a tendency to contribute something characteristic and helps to identify different sets of approaches. For instance, the documentary genre could be defined from the point of view of the film-maker, the text and the viewer. In his book *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (1991)⁵⁰ the British documentarian Bill Nichols offers an extraordinary definition of documentary as a combined institution, consisting of a corpus of texts, a set of viewers and a community of practitioners and conventional practices that are subject to historical changes. Nichols also insists that neither the form and the rhetoric strategy nor the process of realization of a documentary should not be underestimated and be appreciated less than the main subject of a documentary film. Nichols does not agree with the fact that many film-makers are guided by the motto that a good documentary stimulates discussion about its subject, not itself. Primarily, Nichols pays attention to the realization of a documentary as a strategic form, but not to the content itself. Besides the subject itself, a documentary film can raise rich variations of historical, philosophical, aesthetical or socio-political topics, which are a part of the documentary discourse.⁵¹

Paul Rotha, a British documentary film-maker, historian, critic and the collaborator of John Grierson, is convinced that the documentary film core lies in its interest about scientific, cultural and sociological subjects⁵², but furthermore, Rotha lays emphasis on the documentary method rather than on the documentary as a

⁴⁹ KILBORN, Richard, IZOD, John, *An Introduction to Television Documentary*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, p.13

⁵⁰ NICHOLS, Bill, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.42

⁵² ROTH, Paul, *Documentary Film. The use of the medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of people as it exists in reality*, 1935, London: Faber and Faber LTD, p.115

particular kind of film.⁵³ By this statement he underlines that the most important distinguishing point about documentary is a method of practical treatment within the film-making process. The content and the subject of film may play an essential role in forming a genre of documentary, but the method of their representation still remains dominant. The explanation of the documentary film as a methodological concept, which is focused on the particularities of structuring the very process of film-making, which differs from the fictional discourse by its strategy and purpose and that is the reason to call the documentary a specific method. The method is implemented by film techniques and presents an admirable instrument for clarifying and coordinating all aspects of the film subject. All in all, the fundamental distinctions between the fictional and documentary methods lie in using the apparatus and materials of cinema and that leads to totally different approaches of creating fiction and documentary.

In his book *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (1974) Erik Barnouw has mentioned that a documentary genre cannot be perceived as the subjective truth, but rather the testimony or the well-proven argument of a fact or situation, within the complex development of history. Moreover, this genre intends to fulfill two main functions, namely the recording and the interpretation of a documentarian.⁵⁴ It is also necessary to remember that sometimes in English and American film studies documentary film is marked as non-fictional film. The term non-fiction is based as the opposite concept to fiction, carrying the meaning that something non-fictional is definitely understood as truthful.

Although the common conventions or qualities for defining a film as a documentary may often vary between each other depending on the different sources, there are still the same commonsense assumptions, which were historically establishing as the exceptional marks of documentary.

1. Documentaries are about reality; they're about something that actually happened;

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ BARNOUW, Erick, *Documentary: A History of Non-fiction Film*, New York: Oxford University Press, p.287

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2. Documentaries are about real people;
 3. Documentaries tell stories about what happens in the real world;⁵⁵

Modifying the three commonsense points, Nichols comes to the important more complete definition of documentary as a “...*film, which speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the film-maker shapes this story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than into a fictional allegory.*”⁵⁶

In other words, these mentioned commonsense assumptions about the essence of documentary refer to the realism, verity and objective truthfulness of the events, the confirmed existence of people, if they are central in the particular documentary and to the storytelling, which reflects truthful events. I am mentioning the modified definition of Nichols, because my research is focused mainly on the presentation of a real personality/social actress – Leni Riefenstahl, who expresses herself and her life story from the individual perspective. Nevertheless, a director of the film is the one who shapes the visual representation of her individual perspective on screen. This thought will be further developed and remains one of the keys for the formulation of portrait genre conventions.

Bill Nichols is one of the theoreticians who defines documentary as a separate genre based on realism as the special core, which characterizes the nature of documentary more than any other feature. On the general level of differentiation of a documentary discourse from a fictional one, fictional realism serves to make a plausible world seem real while the documentary realism renders persuasive arguments about the historical world. Documentary realism is one of the main characteristics of the documentary as a separate genre itself, because it always has a historical dimension concerning something that people inhabit.⁵⁷

The problematic of distinguishing the genres of documentary film is generally less discussed by academics and theoreticians compared to the fiction film. I suggest

⁵⁵ NICHOLS, cit.2, p.13

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ NICHOLS, cit.50, p.165

that the lack of information, the blurred classifications, categorization and definition of the genres in a documentary film could be probably explained by the following reasons:

1) The documentary film itself could be characterized as a separate genre of film in general.

The documentary film as a genre should be definitely grounded in some aspects of true and real life. Documentaries vary between each other: from the list of pure informational facts to an extremely interpretative explanation of a subject, advocating a particular point of view on some social, political or historical aspect. In a documentary, actual information should still be dominant over the creative ideas of the documentarian to avoid the effect of intentional propaganda or historical fiction. The creativity of the documentarian should not be exaggerated within the film frame in order to save the documentary's realism. The genre of documentary film affords some reconstruction of the historical events supported by talking-head scenes of individuals for reaching the effect of realism. Nevertheless, the documentary genre cannot use pseudo-realistic and staged scenes for telling a fictional story.

Discussing a nature of documentary film in his blog *Observations on film Art*, David Bordwell mentions few interesting opinions on definitions of documentary as genre itself. He insists that the label of documentary means that the documentary has its ambitions to substantiate the claims and conclusions of the film as truthful. In this same blog he highlights two more interesting attempts to describe the documentary genre. Film theorist Noël Carroll defines documentary as the film of “*purported fact*”. Carl Plantinga makes a similar point in saying that documentaries take “*an assertive stance*”.⁵⁸ Both these writers argue that we take it for granted that a documentary claims something to be true about the world. Bordwell explains assertiveness of documentary as a truthfulness supported with commented arguments and audiovisual devices. Based on this, it is obvious that truthfulness and intentionality also reflect the documentary as a genre.

⁵⁸ BORDWELL, David, In *Observations on Film Art* [online]. [cit. 2016-04-15]. Dostupné z: <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2009/03/04/showing-what-cant-be-filmed/>

The specifics of the documentary genre are also characterized by the combination of three preexisting elements - photographic realism, narrative structure, and modernist fragmentation - along with a new emphasis on the rhetoric of social persuasion.⁵⁹

The next reason, which could be suggested as an explanation of the blurred genre classifications can be phrased in the following way:

2) Perhaps there is no accurate information about the well-shaped criteria or conventions for documentary genres (respectively for each genre of documentary film).

It is true that theoreticians operate with the following terms, which are sometimes identified as genre, sub-genre, style, subdivision, type or mode of documentary film, but very often the rigorous attempts to produce a genre classification or categorization seem to be rather artificial. Analyzing different sources, I have found out that there is no one approved and unified list or categorization of documentary films, because many documentaries exist in multiple categories. For example Zuzana Michalská distinguishes four branches of documentary film: reportage, journalistic, educational and science-oriented. Milan Kuna has defined the journalistic, promotional, popular science, science, and reportage types of documentaries.⁶⁰ Miroslav Hladký differentiates documentary genres according to the prevailing content of the film. He mentions socially-political, contemporary, historical, portrait, nature and geographical genres.⁶¹ I suggest that generally, “pure” documentary genres can be rarely found in scientific literature, because more frequently we can observe the characteristics of several kind in one particular film. Despite this, the documentary film genres are mostly separated into:

- Nature and scientific documentaries
- Biographical
- Autobiographical

⁵⁹ NICHOLS, Bill. Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde. *Critical Inquiry* [online]. 2001, , 580-610 [cit. 2016-04-15]. Dostupné z: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/film/gaines/documentary_tradition/Nichols_Documentary%20and%20Avant-Garde.pdf, p.582

⁶⁰ KUNA, Michal, *Zvuk a hudba ve filmu*, Praha: Panton, p.31

⁶¹ HLADKÝ, Miroslav, *Žurnalistika v televizi*, Praha: Novinář, 1986, p. 267

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- Portrait documentary⁶²
 - Historical documentary
 - Advocacy documentary
 - Propaganda documentary
 - Mockumentary
 - Ethnographic documentary
 - Animated documentary
 - Educational documentary
 - Docusoaps
 - Docudrama -
 - Observational
 - Fly on the wall
 - Self-reflective
 - Talking heads

As I have already mentioned, Bill Nichols also assumes that genres and modes are terms of close meaning. From that reason, the list of genres could be also expanded by six modes developed by Nichols.

As you can see from this list, most of the basic documentary genres cover not only social issues, science or history, but also single-subject orientation. By single-subject I mean focused on the individual, or the prevailing attention is given to mono narration.

In the moving image genre form guide database of the Library of Congress, Linda Tadic works with so-called genre subdivisions of audiovisual material as the autobiographical one and the portrait one. Portrait genre subdivision is explained to

⁶² The common device for the portrait, autobiographical and biographical sub-genres is the on-camera interview in which witnesses of the epoch or participants of the historical events directly share their life-experience. The direct biographical evidences have a strong effect of documentary realism for the viewer.

be a work that can be evocative of an individual, rather than strictly biographical while the autobiographical one uses the life of film-maker as the subject of a film.⁶³

In his article *The Voice of Documentary* Bill Nichols identifies four major styles throughout the history of documentary. I am explaining them in my work because I consider styles/modes and genre as notions of approximately the same meaning. Nichols himself also uses the terms style and mode practically as synonyms. For instance, mentioning the first of four historically-shaped styles of documentary, namely the direct-address style of Griersonian tradition (or, in its most excessive form “voice of God”), Nichols calls this style the first thoroughly worked out mode of documentary.⁶⁴ Nichols admits that this style has been characterized by the dominating off-screen narration, which is not so popular and even unfavorable nowadays. The second style of documentary – cinéma vérité, produces a greater effect of reality compared to the previous one and records the actual events in the everyday lives of particular people.⁶⁵ The pure cinéma vérité style used to capture individuals in action, and letting the audience come to conclusions about them without the support of any implicit or explicit commentary. A third style is interview-oriented and it indicates a form of interview to be the specific form of direct address.⁶⁶ The storyteller is represented as a main witness-participant expressing their own experience speaking directly to the viewer. Such style has prevailed on the field of documentary during the past decade and it is mainly understood as the elemental (basic) model of a documentary film since the last decade until nowadays. The last fourth self-reflexive style of documentary tends to be the most complex one: it mixes observational elements with interviews, voice-over of the film-maker and other evidential footage in order not only to represent, but also to reveal and explain the implicit, unclear facts.⁶⁷ This style often refers to the interpretative power of documentary influence. It reminds that despite everything, the documentary is primarily a tool of representation of a film-maker or partly a participant, non-actor.

⁶³ TADIC, Linda. The Moving Image Genre-Form Guide. In: *Motion Picture and Television Reading Room* [online]. [cit. 2016-04-15]. Dostupné z: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/migsub.html#Portrait>

⁶⁴ NICHOLS, Bill, *The Voice of Documentary* In ROSENTHAL, Alan, CORNER, John, *New Challenges for Documentary*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005, p.15

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

The self-reflexive style assumes a meaning-making process and the active role of a director, producer or other dominating individual on the set.

The “voice” of a documentary is generally a narrower concept for Nichols than style, because voice is more individualized and has a distinct purpose to represent something by organizing all the documentary film elements into a whole. Voice is not a feature, but a common framework, which informs us about the social message.⁶⁸ As far as Nichols derives these four styles chronologically from history, he also notices, that each of these styles has their disadvantages and limits and each style is somehow related to the context of the decade or to the tendencies within a particular time interval. Consequently, the first style is the oldest and the fourth one is more relevant nowadays.

In this paragraph I have summarized the different critical points of view on the distinguished notion of the documentary genre. Then, I have foreshadowed the most remarkable divisions of the documentary genre into the existing subgenres/styles/branches and their distinctive qualities with a purpose to explain the possible recasts inside one genre and mixing into the hybrid forms.

1.3. The specifics of the documentary narrative and narration within the portrait genre. Personal narrative, self-presentation, biographical and autobiographical components of portrait documentaries

There is no doubt that the meaning and definition of the narrative concept is different in fiction and non-fiction film branches. I would say it is different mainly due to the different nature of the conditions which the term “narrative” implies in these two fields. In both cases the narrative presumes the process of narrating a story. The set or the sum of all the events in a narrative is what creates the story and this story makes sense of a narrative as a whole. Consequently, those events which create a story are depicted on the screen – they construct a plot of the fiction film. In fiction, a narrative typically begins with one situation; a series of changes occurs according

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.17

to a pattern of cause and effect; finally, a new situation arises that brings about the end of the narrative. The balance between causality, time and space are central to the narration of the story in fiction film.⁶⁹

In their turn, documentaries embody the story and plot through sounds and images in a different manner. Bill Nichols states that documentaries „speak“to the viewer with their „voice“. There is an assumption that what he names with the term voice is very close to the term narrative, because the voice represents a documentary's „*composition of shots, its editing together of images, its use of music...everything we see and hear. Voice, then, is a question of how the logic, and perspective, of a documentary gets conveyed to us.*“⁷⁰ It probably means that same as narrative, the voice represents the organization of the whole structure and knowledge, which is received from a film. Nichols doesn't exclude that the voice is based on the idea of an informing logic overseeing the organization of a documentary, and this idea can be compared to the idea of a compelling story organizing a fiction.⁷¹ I have mentioned this important comparison of narrative term understanding within the basic division of film into fiction and documentary (non-fiction) to confirm that the narrative may not be called by this word “narrative” when we speak about the documentary form, but it is still present there. I am taking it into consideration and continue to use term “narrative” here in after.

Carl Plantinga also distinguishes a narrative among the existing structures of non-fiction film, he thinks that the narrative itself is neither inherently fictional or non-fictional. Plantinga considers narrative a fundamental mode of explanation, which represents historical events or personalities to others.⁷² All in all, non-fiction films also have narrative form, but unlike in fictional film, it has a different narrative comprehension – a different coherent flow of produced meaning.⁷³

Narration within the portrait genre could be explained analyzing the relationship between verbal expression and images we see on the screen. In

⁶⁹ BORDWELL, THOMPSON, cit.42, p.75-76

⁷⁰ NICHOLS, Bill, *What Gives Documentary Films A Voice of Their Own*, In cit.2,p.69

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² PLANTINGA, Carl. R. *Rhetoric and Representation in Non-Fiction Film*, Cambridge University Press, 1997,p.104

⁷³ The central theoreticians, who explored the concept of meaning are C.Metz and D.Bordwell

documentaries of the portrait genre, narration is often provided not only by voice-over, commenting on the possible meanings of images, but also by the self-representation of the main social actor. The dominant voices in documentaries of the portrait genre are supposed to narrate their kinds of “truth”. The trustworthiness and authority of the voice-over is assumed to be weaker compared to the documentaries potentially belonging to the expository mode, for instance. The reason for that lies in the significance of the first person narration (the testimony) of the central protagonist in portrait documentaries to the same extent as voice-over narration implies in other genres, as far as portrait documentaries are based on the informative power of the interview. The benefit deriving from the interview also influences the narration. Such benefit comprises not only in what is said, but from the visual and aural information available in how it is said – from facial expressions to gestures to inflections of the voice.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, if the interviewer of the portrait documentary is simultaneously the director of the same film, the director's narration becomes investigative. Ken Dancyger speaks about the specific function of a narrator as an investigator in a documentary film. The investigation implies a goal: to come to the understanding of an issue or a person by means of investigation.⁷⁵ In other words, by making a try to understand some consequences, the narrator becomes a part of the investigative process. Ray Müller also strives for understanding in his film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993). The German language voice-over is provided by Müller himself and moreover, during interviews the audience is always able to hear the questions he states. The goal of Müller's investigation goes beyond a portrait of Riefenstahl as a film-maker. By means of interviewing, Müller makes attempts to get to the essence of deeper issues, mainly how involved she was in the Nazi party, or whether she admired Hitler and his goals.

⁷⁴ PLANTINGA, cit.72,p.162

⁷⁵ DANCYGER, Ken, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing: History, Theory, and Practice*, London: Taylor & Francis, 2007, p.337

The specifics of the portrait documentary narrative (voice).

The interrelation of the biographical and autobiographical

Analyzing the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*, I have noticed that this film represents a combination of features which are appropriate for both biography and autobiography. Due to the fundamental role of personal narrative and interview in the discussed documentary it is necessary to sum up how the biographical and autobiographical genre developed in the documentary film.

Defining the portrait genre of the film I analyze, it is necessary to mention the possible specifics of the narrative within the portrait genre. It is important to realize to whom the narrative can potentially belong, or in other words, to understand who is the chief of the narrative. Is the narrative fully biographical or are there still some distinguishing features of autobiography? In other words, primarily, for analyzing a portrait it is necessary to explore who can be perceived as the subject and the object of portraying.

Alisa Lebow, a scholar of screen media at Brunel University of London, points out that when a film-maker makes a film with themselves as a subject, they are already divided as both the subject matter of the film and the subject making the film. "*The two senses of the word are immediately in play- the matter and the maker- thus the two ways of being subjectified as both subject and object.*"⁷⁶

The main remaining question is: to which extent does the autobiographical narrative change the primary strategy and the idea of the film-maker? Could the film-maker allow the integrity of someone else's biographical narration? This question was deeply explored by Audrey Levasseur.⁷⁷

She considers biography a multimedia genre; which exists in oral, written, and audiovisual forms. In her article *Film and Video Self-Biographies* she develops the genre theory in the direction of the specification of the cinematic biography and self-biography sub-genres. Levasseur also pays attention to the subject of the documentary narration. She claims that the new push for the large corpus of

⁷⁶ LEBOW, Alisa, *The Cinema of Me: Self and Subjectivity in First-Person Documentary Film*, Columbia University Press, 2012, p.4

⁷⁷ LEVASSEUR, Audrey, *Film and Video Self-Biographies*, 2000, pp. 176-192, Dostupné z: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/5028>

biographical films and videos was conditioned by an increasing interest of the audience in celebrities. Levasseur uses the term “traditional” for the type of cinematic biography which typically involves the subject in a chronological order by using photographic images, the juxtaposition of shots, records of expert knowledge and evidential arguments accompanied by commentaries. Levasseur enriches the spectrum of the cinematic biography with such subgenres as “*biographical sketch, a brief account of a subject's life, focusing on factors that contributed to the subject's present state; self-biographies, hybrid forms combining traits of biography and autobiography; investigative biographies, works that examine the guilt or innocence of the subject, or attempt to get at the truth of some inquiry; biographical concert performances, a specialized form that captures a star's experiences during a concert tour; ethnographic films and videos, works that seek to document the culture of a specific geographic or cultural region; mixed or hybrid forms, newly evolving formats that combine the characteristics of two or more genres or subgenres, such as autobiography, investigative biography, and self-biography; biographical docudrama, biopics that use performers and recreations to simulate actual people and events; and moc docs, representing fake documentaries*”.⁷⁸

Levasseur focuses on the representation of the subject's performance and performance identity of a celebrity and insists, that the aim of the biographical subgenre is expressed through the life-storytelling. She also distinguishes the roles of the film-maker and the celebrity as a performing identity in the cinematic self-biography: 1) the film-maker has to control the final product of the cinematic self-biography paying attention to the control of the biographical complexity. 2) the celebrity's role is to reveal their public identity through their self-representation.⁷⁹ Mentioning of these roles leads to the statements, that cinematic biographies are collaborative works, in which it is hard to define the authorship of the narration.

The interrelation between the directors of cinematic biographies and the subjects of their interest can be hardly balanced. The biographical self-representation of the subject could often be misrepresented or interpreted by the directors in a false

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

manner, breaking the ethical parameters of the documentary genre. Such misrepresentation is offered to grab a viewer's attention by some controversial information to be more competitive on the market. Based on Levasseur, I have made a suggestion that the cinematic biography is a matter of two-way performance. On the one hand, the presence of a director on the set may somehow affect the performance of the non-actor, but on the other hand, the director can contextualize the narration of the non-actor with the help of montage. The contextualization in the cinematic biography is also provided by the documentarian either through the interviews with close relatives, friends, colleagues, or through some controversial facts, which may often distort the self-representation of the subject. For example we see the sequence of Riefenstahl, which says, that she stopped meeting Goebbels since 1937. But afterwards, Müller reads a passage from Goebbels's diary, which proves the opposite. Such contextualization became a part of the director's performance, which has intervened into the main biographical self-representation of the social actress.

Cinematic self-biographies are often characterized by the presence of first-person storytelling. The attempts of defining a function of first-person storytelling in documentary have been made by Patricia Aufderheide⁸⁰. In her point of view, first-person storytelling manifests itself within the frame of documentary through so-called forms, namely personal essay, personal saga and self-investigative story. She calls the personal essay documentary a specific minigenre, which has become the dominant style of documentary, which includes self-investigative passages. What she calls personal saga seems to be a wider form of personal essay, which differs from it within a larger context. First-person storytelling is expressed by the combination of the first-person testimonial and bringing of the viewer into the world of its life experience⁸¹, which brings us back to the question of the interrelation between biographical and autobiographical qualities of documentary genre. The point of first-person storytelling does not lie in the direct argumentation of some fact or life event, but in the implicit possibility for the viewer to discover the reality of a person who speaks, and to filter that reality through their personal perception. In such way, a

⁸⁰ AUFDERHEIDE, Patricia. *Public Intimacy: The Development of First-Person Documentary* [online]. 13 p. [cit. 2016-04-15]. Dostupné z: <http://bono.planet.ee/variaator/gj/dok/publicintimacy.pdf>

⁸¹ Ibid.

speaker, who embodies a dramatic storyteller, gets the main privilege part concerning the narrative of the film. Moreover, such narration crosses the thin borderline between the journalistic social aspects and the artistic qualities of a documentary. In fact, a first-person narrative could be called an integral component of the portrait genre narrative, because of its enormous power of holding a viewer's attention exactly on the aspects which a main speaker intends to emphasize.

The conclusion which I would like to draw from mentioning the autobiographical and biographical explanations is that the coexistence of both types of narrative – auto and bio. There is nothing doubtful about the statement about the presence of the autobiographical component in the film I analyze. I insist on understanding the main personality/subject of the film (Riefenstahl) and the filmmaker/ director (Ray Müller) as the co-authors of the narrative in the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*. Riefenstahl becomes the creator of the narrative through the self-presentation and first-person storytelling within the film frame, while Müller remains the creator of the whole documentary structure and he is the one who has the power of explanation of her story, on the angle of the interpretation point of view. In other words, the director still remains in charge of everything. With the help of creative interpretation, his own filming method, he chooses the final configuration of the narrative. The personality, who responds to the stated questions and constructs the monological storytelling about herself and the events she has lived through, is naturally becoming the creator of her auto portrait.

2. PORTRAIT IN DOCUMENTARY GENRE STUDIES

Firstly, in this chapter I am going to introduce the personality of Leni Riefenstahl more closely, and therefore explain why her personality could be an interesting subject of portrayal. The significant parts of her life biography which I will mention should make my choice of the analyzed documentary clear. Then, I am going to reveal the meaning of the original concept of portrait and the process of portraying, describing its essence, the evolution of the portrait concept in cinematography. Finally, I will speak about the portrait documentary genre and the uniting conventions within it. The demarcation of the conventions is necessary for the following analysis of my chosen documentary.

2.1. Leni Riefenstahl as a subject of portrayal in the documentary film

The personality of Helene Amalie Riefenstahl has always aroused interest due to her association with the Nazi party and her international recognition as a propaganda director. The reputation of Hitler's favorite was poisoning her social life for a long period of time. In the following chapter of my work I am going to mention not only some of the facts from her biography, but also her personality as the central point of interest for historians, documentarians and journalists.

Many publications were dedicated to her life and explore of her film work. Among them the most remarkable are Salkeld, Audrey (2011), *A Portrait Of Leni Riefenstahl*; Rother, Rainer (2003), *Leni Riefenstahl: The Seduction of Genius*; Hinton, David (2000), *The Films of Leni Riefenstahl*; Trimborn, Jürgen (2008), *Leni Riefenstahl: A Life*; Bach, Steven (2007) *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*; Rich, Ruby, *Leni Riefenstahl: the Deceptive Myth, Sexual Stratagems: The World of Women in Film*, ed. Patricia Ehrens (New York: Horizon, 1979), *Leni Riefenstahl, Fives Lives*, ed. Angelika Taschen (New York, London: Taschen, 2000). Same as in the analyzed documentary, these biographical publications usually separate Riefenstahl's life into different chapters: dancer, actress, director, photographer and diver. All of these authors make their contributions to the complexity of her literary portrait of personality.

The personality of Riefenstahl has already become the subject of a few documentaries. In this following passage I have collected the brief information about the most remarkable existing films and TV documentaries focused on Riefenstahl's biography and chronologically composed them. It is necessary to recapitulate them in order to explain my choice of film for analysis. A TV documentary *Leni Riefenstahl* (1975) by John Musilli is the only more or less complete documentary, which resembles a portrait style and it have existed before the work of Ray Müller. Actually, the idea of this short TV documentary (55 min.) is close to the brainchild of Müller's film, but it is obvious that Müller's one had a more fundamental preparatory phase: its structure is more full and elaborated. As well as Müller will do later, Musilli located his documentary in Riefenstahl's studio in Munich and in the nearby Alps. A documentary is also based on the key role of interview about her career and her life path, her professional growth from a dancer and actress to the director of *The Blue Light*. The main differences between this TV documentary and the one I have chosen is the timing, actuality of presented facts and more consistent structure. Although Musilli was a pioneer in documenting her personality, Müller succeeds in making a more contemporary and complex product.

In 1992-1993, two BBC production documentaries about professional propagandists manipulating with the facts about reality were filmed. *We Have Ways of Making You Think: Goebbels - Master of Propaganda* (BBC TV, 1992) written and produced by Laurence Rees and *Out Of The Shadows*, (BBC TV, 1993), presented by Ian Christie, produced by Simon Elmes. The plots of both contained a brief story about Riefenstahl.

Ray Müller has directed two documentaries about Riefenstahl: the one I am analysing from the year 1993, and afterwards, in the year 2000 Müller creates one more documentary called *Leni Riefenstahl: Her Dream of Africa*. This was his second collaboration with Leni. He documents 97-years old Riefenstahl returning to Sudan visiting the Nuba tribe, which she once photographed and issued a photographic book about in the 1970s.



Image 1. Muller and Riefenstahl while shooting *Her Dream of Africa*

There also exists one more short German TV documentaries created in 2002. One of them was directed by Olaf Jacobs, named *Ich wollte nie so alt werden - Eine persönliche Begegnung mit Leni Riefenstahl* and the other one *The Immoderation in Me* - the recorded interview of Riefenstahl with Sandra Maichsberger. As far as these documentaries were shot primarily for TV purposes, they both represent a pure reportage style: recorded interviews involving the TV host's questions. Comparing to these two TV documentaries, Müller's one attracts with the bigger amount of archival materials and his film does not aim to expose, or unmask her deeds. Müller's film represents a multifaceted portrait of her with several intrusions to Leni's personal narrative, but he primarily fulfills the function of the observer, not a host, or moderator.

After studying the fund of existing documentary material about my subject of research, I have chosen the documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993), because in my point of view it marks an exhaustive portrait of her. Compared to other TV format films, this one covers all sides of her personality more precisely. Müller explores her early career as a dancer and actress, then he highlights the totally different aspects of her film-making for Nazis. Müller shows a many-sided portrait of her as a woman, as a colleague, as a talented professional, photographer, underwater film-maker. This film is the most complete collection of

material about her life, including her own self-presentation and Müller's directorial touch. Besides that, the film is highly-evaluated by film critics all over the world.

It is interesting to notice that Riefenstahl has often claimed her art to be apolitical.⁸² For example, there is an interesting scene in the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*, where Riefenstahl watches a scene from her film *Triumph of the Will*, discussing the technical difficulties of filming a particular shot. When she sees her own footage, she begins to act confused and to defend herself by the phrase "*in art one can't afford to be political*"(1:27:53 min.). By these words she convinces the viewer that the chronicle has nothing to do with politics. It is a pure register, the record of a happening. Not surprisingly, her point of view has become the bone of contention for debates. Is it not abnormal to take art out of a holistic context?

In her defense, she argues that her films were never meant to support the political dogmas of National Socialism.⁸³ Riefenstahl highly evaluated her own films primarily as an artistic contribution to cinematography and she refused all the provocative discussions about the content of her films, or about the subliminal message they may provide. This thought has become central not only to the biographies about her, but also to our analyzed documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*. "Female docugenius", "nazi pin-up girl", "accursed witch", "Hitler's and Goebbels's mistress", "auteur and victim"... All of these epithets powerfully describe a portrait of Riefenstahl in the language of critics. What emerges from Steven Bach's biography is that Riefenstahl was always almost obsessed about the achieving of her creative goal in her cinematic projects. This was one of the reasons why she did not even notice herself glorifying the Nazi political chief by her art.⁸⁴ This point has also become the subject of many disagreements and arguments between the authors. Scholars and historians debate on the doubtful subject argue whether Riefenstahl was a propagandist, Nazi film-maker, or nothing but a pure artist. The program director for cinema at the German Historical Museum in Berlin - Rainer Rother writes: "*Riefenstahl presents herself as a mere medium,*

⁸² ROTHER, Rainer, *Leni Riefenstahl: The Seduction of Genius*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003, p.32

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.33

⁸⁴ BACH, Steven, *cit.9*, p. 49

within which something beyond her own control took place. She defines herself rather passive than active.”⁸⁵ Her self-representation as the mere medium assumes the neutral role of the narrative constructionist, and cared only about the noble task of giving the bare cinematic facts in the form of the chronicle of the contemporary happening.

In his work *Ethics of an auteur* Thomas Doherty discusses the notion of auterism and the unlucky circumstantial context of the era, which has been attached to the career of Riefenstahl. Doherty ironically states: “*Riefenstahl, the artist whose career pre-eminently confirms the commingling of art and life, has been auteur non grata precisely because her work has lived beyond its historical moment and ideological context.*”⁸⁶

It is no doubt that she was truly talented and her extraordinary approach of using film techniques has made her an unforgettable documentarian icon. One of the most famous American critics of the 80s Pauline Kael has once called Leni Riefenstahl “*one of the dozen or so creative geniuses who have ever worked in the film medium*”.⁸⁷ The two masterpieces which she has directed are now perceived critically due to the circumstances of their making, but despite the historical tragedy, indeed for that particular era the films *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Olympia* (1938) were innovative and extraordinary. We cannot help mentioning that these films are the breakthrough of the observational type of filming.

Although when the film starts, a voice-over comments that the film is going to portray Riefenstahl's life and career without any prejudice, later it becomes obvious that it would not be possible to avoid the questions about her socially-formed reputation. Ray Müller has chosen the interviewing technique of interrogation in order to record the most sincere and non-histrionic reactions of the social actress. The various interpretations about her work have made a mark on her life. It is totally understandable, because it is hard to believe that a talented director

⁸⁵ ROTHER, Rainer, cit.85,p.34

⁸⁶ DOHERTY, Thomas. *Ethics of an auteur*. In: *Jonathon Delacour the heart of things* [online]. 2002 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Dostupné z: http://weblog.delacour.net/archives/2002/08/ethics_of_an_auteur.php

⁸⁷ DIAZ, Ramona. Ray Müller's 'The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl'. In: *International Documentary Association* [online]. [cit. 2016-04-16]. Dostupné z: <http://www.documentary.org/magazine/playback-ray-mullers-wonderful-horrible-life-leni-riefenstahl>

with her claimed higher aesthetic ideals did not realized the manifestation of the racist mood and the obtrusion of anti-Semitism provided by Hitler. All in all, the society could not justify her artistic priorities and the obsession with the realization of her projects, because it has turned into the ignorance of breaking the global priorities of tolerance. She has somehow isolated herself and her art from the function of art on the global level. The paradox lies in the fact that she blindly claims the aesthetics and beauty of the artistic ideals, while on the global political level the elementary tolerance ideals were broken. The very aesthetic of her work and the filming of the chronicle about a political chief are political itself.

Although for the biggest part of the society she remained a taboo person, until the end of her life she tried to fight several accusations. She refers to her own naivety and insists on the sanctity of the creator's vision, for which she has never spared.

As every documentarist-practitioner knows, even if you are the greatest and most talented film-maker in the world, it can be absolutely useless if your film is not properly funded. The prosperity of any film needs an investor or a sponsor and Riefenstahl has also faced this problem at the start of her career. Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, which records the 1934 Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg, was sponsored by Hitler himself; *Olympia* (1938), a two-part documentary about the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, was officially commissioned by the International Olympic Committee but was mostly richly financed by the Third Reich's reserve fund.⁸⁸ We can suggest that considering Hitler her financial investor she had to be flexible enough to take a position of the artist, who was influenced by propaganda in the same way as the majority of the German population was. Based on the same reasons, she may have remained ignorant knowing the fact of invasions to former Czechoslovakia and partly Poland, or by the Reich's provocation, for purely imperial purposes, of a war that was gradually destroying Europe, or the persecution and mass murder of the Jews by the Germans.

⁸⁸ DIXON, Wheeler, FOSTER, Gwendolyn, *A Short History of Film* [online]. New Jersey: Rutgers university press, 2008 [cit. 2016-03-23]. Dostupné z: <https://annkwannie.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/short-history-of-film.pdf>

Such controversial facts from her biography have turned her personality into an interesting and mysterious object of exploration, of research, of portraying. By the way, the portraying of Riefenstahl was provided also in the spheres of literary publicism, painting, photography and media. For example, a medial portrait was released by Hans Michael Koetzle and Horst Moser; Audrey Salkeld and Steven Bach have dedicated a greater part of their life exploring the life of Riefenstahl and releasing literary publications about her. Even Helmut Newton was not indifferent to her facial features, captured in his extraordinary photographical portrait of Leni in her late years.



Image 2. Leni by Helmut Newton

2.2. Genesis of the portrait genre

The concept of portrait has always been a category, derived from the different spheres of socio-cultural space. Especially, the portrait has become remarkable in visual arts, which gave impulses to the motion-picture ramification. *“Portrait – is a painting, which has fulfilled the function of the photography before the photography was invented.”*⁸⁹ Analysing this statement by Lotman, I have noticed that the main trait, which is so common between photography, painting portraits and the

⁸⁹ [LOTMAN, Jurij], Портрет, In Статьи по семиотике культуры и искусства, Санкт-Петербург: Академический проект, 2002, pp.349-375, Available from: [online]http://philologos.narod.ru/lotman/portrait.htm#_p1

documentary film portrait is characterized by focusing the camera mostly on the face, gesture and other particularities of physical appearance of the portrayed personality (or perhaps a person appears in the middle of attention more than, for example, an event). This concentration on the human as on the central subject is historically closer to the portrait in painting, or photography, rather than to a literature portrait, or a fiction film portrait (biopic).

Film and television are obviously related to the means of expression in painting and photography. Same as in painting, after passing through the naive reflection of everyday life through paintings, centuries later, the possibility to reflect or describe a human has appeared. The gaze of artists was centered on the spiritual and moral essence of a human and their psychology. In the same manner, the visual screen arts are developing in their own specific way and to explore the life through the detailed and unfamiliar demonstration of man. This fact has become the main reason for the evolution of the portrait sketch in film and media. Andronikova M. (1936-1975) - a soviet art historian, author and host of the cycle of telecasts named *Portraits of portraits* and VGIK pedagogue made a serious attempt to systematize the development of the portrait genre, transmitted by audiovisual media. She explored mainly the spheres of painting, photography and film. The publication edited after her death *Portrait, from cave paintings to the sound movie* unites three works published and printed *How old are movies?*, *From the prototype to the image*, *On the art of portraiture*.⁹⁰ These books include the discussion of the human portraiture problematic in the complex evolution of artistic means, beginning from primitive cave paintings and ending up in contemporary visual images within fiction and non-fiction film.

The evolution of the portrait genre in film and television starts with the fact that a person is shown more multifaceted.

Portrait as an audiovisual work is traditionally divided into fictional film portrait and television documentary portrait.⁹¹ Studying literature, however, no

⁹⁰ [ANDRONIKOVA, Manana], *Портрет: От наскальных рисунков до звукового фильма*, Москва: Искусство, 1980

⁹¹ Ibid

significant differences have arisen between these categories in terms of form and content of the film. The main distinguishing criterion in this case is the fact that the fictional film portrait is primarily called a biopic and it is mostly intended for commercial distribution, while the television one is primarily designed for television broadcasting. In particular, an integral part of the portrait genre in documentary is revealing and reflecting of the inner psychological world of the social actor. Discovering the inner side of a human through the particular documentary segments, it becomes possible for the viewer to understand the wider context of a main hero's life. Such approach also allows a viewer to understand the logic of a hero's actions better, in case they are central to the plot of the portrait documentary same as in the documentary I am analyzing. For these reasons, the documentary film portrait has acquired its own specifics, which has led to the fact that it became a distinguishable genre with a stable set of conventions. Portrait documentaries bring the possibility to portray a person through a whole complex set of their spiritual mind and physical appearance, their personal uniqueness and at the same time - typicality. The portrait in a documentary film can be called the essential image of a real person captured by another human. The image, which complexly transmits the character and individual, personal traits of the social actor bearing the stamp of the creator's identity.

The early references of the documentarians to the portrait genre gave birth to *Nanook of the North* by Robert Flaherty (1922). This film can be considered as not only the first documentary ever along with movies of Dziga Vertov, but also as a portrait documentary. That is not literally a portrait of a single person, but a portrayal of the family life of the community. In this genre of film people had become the “actors” of their own life stories.⁹²

Remarkable discoveries, which are associated with such names as Dziga Vertov or Esfir Shub have proved that documentary film has a cinematic power for the creation of realistic art, for the exploration of the phenomena of nature and for the comprehension of the individual human features within the documentary. In their early documentaries *A Man With A Movie Camera* and *The Fall of the Romanov*

⁹²LOVELL, Alan,HILLIER,Jim. *Studies in Documentary*. 1.ed. London: Secker & Warburg Limited, 1974

Dynasty these pioneer directors wanted to create a gallery of portraits of real people and laid the foundation for the development of this docu-film direction.⁹³

The beginning of a new independent stage in the development of the documentary film portrait (compared to other branches of the arts) has begun approximately in the late 1950s - early 1960s. As the result of this stage, many movies that were based on the laws of journalism and publicism have appeared on the screen.

The 1960s has brought the common interest in the film work of the 20s and 30s, specifically in the films by Dziga Vertov and Esfir Shub. A rethinking of their creativity was reflected in the practice and theory of cinematic publicism, cinematic chronicle and in other forms of film journalism. One of the most successful portrait documentaries examples, inspired by kino-oko, cinéma vérité and avant-garde is the film *Portrait of Jason* (1967)⁹⁴ about the life of the homosexual African-American cabaret performer Jason Holliday, directed by experimental documentarist Shirley Clarke. Mentioning this film, I would like to put an accent on the fact that this documentary works with a narration of one and only person, telling his life story to the viewer with a minimalistic inclusion of off-screen voices. When Jason tells us about his life in *Portrait of Jason*, a key avenue to understanding his words involves what we see of his infections, gestures, and behavior, including his interaction with Shirley Clarke, the film-maker, as she orchestrates their dialogue.⁹⁵ Later, in my work I am suggesting that the presence of such dominant self-narration can be considered as one of the most important conventions of documentary portrait.

I have also noticed, that in the early 60s another interesting contribution was generally added into the process of documentary filming all over the world: mainly, the circle of the documentary screen heroes was expanded. The circle was much wider, because there were films not only about celebrities, or noble people. Portraying of the rich social class was still popular, but it was no longer so trendy

⁹³ GAUTHIER, Guy. *Dokumentární film, jiná kinematografie*. 1 ed. Praha: Akademie muzických umění, 2004

⁹⁴ *Portrait of Jason*. In: *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia* [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [cit. 2016-04-16]. Dostupné z: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Jason

⁹⁵ Vis. chapter *Qualities of the Voice* In NICHOLS, cit.2, Ibid.

and that is why many directors moved to the other aspect: to film the portraits of ordinary people, proletarians, laborers, representatives of the working class, or handcraft professions. For example, such portraits as the day from a life of a café waitress, or about the hard working life of miners, immigrants escaping from poverty, plant workers, shepherds, farmers, etc. For example, the short documentary *Song of the Valley* (1957) by John Schlesinger portrays a working-class Yorkshire community.⁹⁶ The TV documentary *The Colony* (1964) by the Birmingham-based film-maker Philipp Donnellan portrays the lives of working class immigrants. The film marks the significant social changes in Britain. Its participants and main social actors belong to the first-generation of Afro-Caribbean immigrants.⁹⁷ They directly address the camera and share their own life experience with the viewer, the economic circumstances, which have led to their immigration.

Another new feature of documentary filming has to be mentioned. Films about famous, well-known personalities began to be built in a new way: the authors began to make attempts to show the life of outstanding personalities in all its complexity. It means to film not only the successful side of their life and all the applause, flowers, and glorifying of the achievements, but to follow the path to glory from the very beginning, to show the origins of the feats, to reveal the inner side of the every-day steps to the success of famous people. And that is where the biographical and autobiographical features of portrait documentary start to develop. For instance, the documentary *Antonia: A Portrait of a Woman* (1974) by Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow portrays the most fascinating biographical story of the first female symphony conductor Antonia Brico. This documentary is concentrated mainly on the problems of gender stereotypes in America of 60s, but here I would like to underline that it shows the viewer the whole life-story of Brico with all the achievements and struggles from the start until the end. It represents the uninterrupted biographical flow of the portrait documentary.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ KERRIGAN, Lisa. 10 great but forgotten TV documentaries of the 1950s and 60s. In: *BFI Film Forever* [online]. 2015 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Dostupné z: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-forgotten-tv-documentaries-1950s-60s>

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ *Antonia: A Portrait of a Woman* [film]. Director Jill Godmillow. USA, 1974

The documentary *The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner* (1974) by Werner Herzog focuses on the portrait of the famous sportsman Walter Steiner, the champion in ski-jumping and the woodcarver. This portrait carries the features of a docu-reportage, in which Herzog unexpectedly participates himself as an interviewer and commentator of the main hero. Herzog works with slow-motion, recording the most disturbing shots of injuries caused by ski-jumping with a purpose to reflect the bravery of Steiner. This documentary also emphasizes the biographical narrative component and it is also an example of the correlation of the portrayer and the portrayed. The documentary narrative of this film is surprisingly based on both Steiner's responses and Herzog's intrusions.⁹⁹

Further progress in the documentary film development has put it on a higher level. The author's detachment from the material about the daily life of social actors and neutral image of reality gave the way to the personal documentary vision of the director as an auteur. *All in all, the documentary portrait seeks to create a full-value artistic and journalistic image of a person or community, creating the specific synthesis of pure recorded facts, the autobiographical narration of the hero himself and the vision of an auteur - of the director as the main creating mind.*¹⁰⁰

Exploring the algorithms of creating a portrait documentary film, I have noticed that the directors often use indirect methods of portraying, such as the narration or storytelling of acquaintances, close friends, or other people, who knew the main social actor (or group of s.a.). Among other indirect methods, I can name the record of the hero's homeplace, passing of the atmosphere, where they live, or showing of personal creations of his mind and hands, etc. A screen documentary portrait is always visually concrete: likewise portrait in the visual arts, it "paints" a multifaceted visual image. Besides, like a literary portrait, it can be created with one more indirect method, in particular by means of speech. The optical value of the image itself in every screen art, its realistic nature, on the one hand, and the ability to create the collective, complex image on the other hand, are one of the reasons why the portrait is primarily the prerogative of the documentary film, but not a fiction

⁹⁹ *The Great Extasy of Woodcarver Steiner* [film]. Director Werner Herzog. West Germany, 1974

¹⁰⁰ Personal definition of portrait documentary by author

one. The portrait documentary is generally very close to the sense in which a portrait is sometimes understood in fine arts. The same as for a painter creating a portrait, it is important to a documentarian to bring a specific reflection of the external and the internal shape of a particular person.

In my point of view, the current period is characterized by the new documentary "rearrangement" of genres. The role of some of them has increased, and the value of some other well-known ones is weakening. The careful attention to the man, his inner spiritual and psychological world, human's role in the history and the general experience has led to the expansion of documentary portrait frames. The new forms, such as portrait sketch, portrait essay, portrait-interview, psychological portrait, biographical portrait and other various combined forms, have appeared recently.¹⁰¹

It is necessary to represent the main stages of the portrait genre genesis in documentary cinema, and that is why I should briefly mention some significant events which have served to the evolution of it. These are: an autobiographical documentary avant-garde, documentary biographies of famous people, interview reportage, borrowed from the field of journalism and so on.

The problem of the portrait on the screen was posed by Eisenstein himself. In a broader sense, this great film-maker believed that the artist is always autoportretic.¹⁰² Several authors such as for example Jim Lane¹⁰³ or Michael Renov¹⁰⁴ prefer to use the umbrella term "autobiographical documentary" for the exploration of the filmmakers own biography, which, indeed, may take a form of self-portrait or a portrait of the author's alter-ego, childhood memoirs or some other types of author's personification. The point is that as well as this umbrella term autobiography can reflect the personality of a film-maker fully, it can also cover it only partially. That is one of the reasons why documentary portrait as a genre stays very close to autobiographical and biographical sub-genres mentally and historically.

¹⁰¹ GRANT, Barry Keith, *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*, Wayne State University Press, 2013

¹⁰² ROBERTSON, Robert. *Eisenstein on the Audiovisual*. 1. ed. New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011

¹⁰³ LANE, Jim, *The Autobiographical Documentary in America*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002, 264p., p.12

¹⁰⁴ RENOV, Michael. *The Subject of Documentary*. 1. ed. University of Minnesota Press, 2004

It is also interesting to know that the development of the autobiographical and biographical genre in documentary film has actually been pushed by the emergence of the avant-garde stream in American documentary cinema. In his book *The Autobiographical Documentary in America*, Jim Lane emphasizes the obsession of documentary directors and video makers with the reflection of self and identity in motion arts. Generally, this book is about a new approach to the understanding of a documentary form. If earlier the documentary genre was all about exploring and investigation of a human, starting from 60s it has become popular to record the reality of the film-makers themselves. Discussing the role of autobiographical element in documentaries such as *Roger and Me*, *Sherman's March*, and *Silverlake Life*, Lane pays attention docu-creator's reflection within their documentary art. He considers the autobiographical genre the next phase of the development in documentary after the long-term dominance of the observation mode. Autobiographical types of documentary estimate the significance of the author's personification in nonfiction films. Lane mentions that this stream had appeared in the work of the filmmakers of the northeastern avant-garde movement known as New American Cinema, which was associated with the Journal Film Culture and most significantly discussed by the critic P. Adams Sitney. The directors Bruce Baillie and Kenneth Anger, participating in the West Coast avant-garde film movement also made their contribution onto the promotion of the autobiographical tendencies in documentary films.¹⁰⁵ The impact of these films to the further creative approaches of the personal portrait genre is enormous. The main innovation brought by the autobiographical avant-garde movement is that the presentation of the director is able to express itself through their cultural product, even while they are making a film about some other person. Avant-garde filmmakers developed visual presentational forms and the structuring of the documentary narrative, which was intended to represent states of mind and emotional states.

The majority of autobiographical documentarians emerged from a separate film tradition, namely the American avant-garde documentary and inspired the next generational waves of biographical documentary films, such as for example The

¹⁰⁵ LANE,cit.106,Ibid.

Oscar-winning documentary by Richard Kaplan, *The Eleanor Roosevelt Story* (1965), was a tribute to one of the most influential First Ladies in US history, two rock music documentaries concentrated on folksinger/songwriter *Bob Dylan: D.A. Pennebaker's Don't Look Back* (1967) followed a young Bob Dylan on his 1965 tour of England, *Bruce Weber's Let's Get Lost* (1988)- a biographical account of the life of jazz trumpeter Chet Baker, or Marcel Ophüls' riveting *Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie* (1988), with an extensive examination of the exploits of the infamous Nazi "Butcher of Lyon", which had won the Best Documentary Feature Oscar in its year of competition.¹⁰⁶ The historically-formed avant-garde film movement has made the greatest contribution not only to the documentary in whole. Related to the avant-garde movement, the documentary film took a new role of advocate fulfilling the social and historical functions.

Mentioning of the development of autobiographical avant-garde movement serves as the description of the historical establishment of the portrait genre and maps the sources, from which it was formed.

2.3. Portrait and portraying within the documentary film genre. The essence and basic conventions of documentary film portrait for analysis

The point of focus of the documentary portrait is a human and the image of a human's work, society, space and time of his living. The documentary introduces a human closely to another human. Documentary film thus becomes one of the means of self-knowledge, self-awareness of people.¹⁰⁷ "*A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression are predominant. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even mood of the person.*"¹⁰⁸ A portrait image is created on the basis of individual memories, which took place in the private or career life of the main character (the respondent or a non-actor), and these memories are fundamentally important for

¹⁰⁶ DIRKS, Tim. DOCUMENTARY FILMS Part 2. In: *Amc film site* [online]. [cit. 2016-04-16]. Dostupné z: <http://www.filmsite.org/docfilms2.html>

¹⁰⁷ KRYLOVÁ, Jarmila, *Příspěvky k tvorbě dokumentárního filmu*. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1985, p.85

¹⁰⁸ BACKLUND, Harry. Portrait. In: *The Chicago School of Media Theory* [online]. 2010 [cit. 2016-04-16]. Dostupné z: <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/portrait/>

understanding the personality of the respondent, revealing the background of a society in which the character and passion of the main protagonist was formed.¹⁰⁹ Nichols also presents a personal portrait documentary as one of two basic accents of a documentary film. According to him, the social actor and his speech do not serve for representing the case, event or issue, but perform for himself; that is what he calls dominant to a portrait documentary. In such documentaries Nichols investigates the uniqueness, specifics and charismatics of the main heroes, who are characterized by psychological complexity. Broader topics appear implicitly or indirectly. *“The selection of individuals who display psychological complexity but whose experience also vividly points to larger social issues combines the social issue and personal portrait tendencies into an effective hybrid.”*¹¹⁰ This statement could probably mean that the portrait documentary can be supplemented by the context of the social issue. Consequently, the portrait consists of both psychological complexity mirroring the individuality and the reference to larger important social topics.

I may suggest that at least three of the six Nichols's modes of documentary film-making¹¹¹, which he defines could appear in the portrait, biographical and other related genres of documentary. The essential ones for documentary are mainly the participatory, performative and expository modus.

Participatory mode - emphasizes the interaction between film-maker and subject, especially filmed interviews or for more direct forms of participation, from conversations to various provocations, often accompanied by archival footage to examine historical themes.

Performative - emphasizes the subjective or expressive aspect of the film-maker's own relationship to the subject, trying to make the viewer understand this relationship, focusing on developing associations and impressions.

Expository - emphasizes on verbal comments and argumentative logic. In fact, documentary portraits of a historical person always exhibit the convention of more than one genre, one mode, one type of icons, one way of performance. This

¹⁰⁹ NICHOLS,cit.2,p.256

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp.142-172

convention establishes the connection between the viewers and the narrator to accept objectivity and truth across the “filmic pleasure” of portrayal.

Documentary film portrait could be also characterized as a *medallion* of personality. Mihálik comes with closer specification and definition of the medallion. According to him, the medallion presents only one central figure who mediates reality, visible and audible reality of being a human.¹¹² The medallion is then subjectively tuned and as Osvaldová points out - describes the selected personality and highlights the specific character, as well as artistic features of a person.¹¹³

Realizing the plurality of existing portrait genre definitions I agree with the impossibility of one exhausting portrait genre definition. Nevertheless, based on them all, for my research I offer the following definition of the genre of the documentary portrait: it is a documentary of artistic value, carrying the features of reportage and observation, in which the image of the individual identity obviously prevails over the other general social issues. In my point of view, the portrait genre within the documentary has an intention to discover the fate, psychology, traits of character, deeds or life problems of the personality. The aim of the portrait documentary is either the analysis or pure observation of the fate and nature of human actions in different event or situations in their relationship to the social motives. The author of the portrait documentary has mainly the options: the first is to express his attitude clearly towards the depicted and offer his/her interpretation of the filmed material in order to participate in the construction of the narrative by this. The second option is a mode of pure observation and leaving as much space for the neutral representation as possible. Summing everything up, the portrait documentary depicts and examines the individual, specific nature of the central subject features and the specific connection of the main hero with the social environment, with society and time of his living, and with the social and historical context of his/her life.

¹¹² MIHÁLIK, Peter, *Kapitoly z filmovej teorie*. Bratislava: Tatran, 1985, p.281

¹¹³ OSVALDOVÁ, Barbora, HALADA, Jan, *Praktická encyklopedie žurnalistiky a marketingové komunikace*. Praha: Libri. 2007.,p. 117

2.3.1. Portraying process within a documentary

It is possible to substantiate the development, trends and transformations of the portrait documentary with some of the development phases which film and television documentary as a whole have underwent. Primarily, it is about the transformation of the quality of the relationship between the man facing the camera and the man behind the camera. That is why it is necessary to mention the eligible principles and techniques of shooting, which should be followed during the process of portraying a person for reaching a maximally authentic portrait.

Principles of shooting a portrait documentary film:

- 1) The suppression of the importance of the very fact of filming and the decreasing of the technique's presence;
- 2) Motivation of actor's impulses, which would allow them to act more naturally;
- 3) Knowledge of the individual features of the person, which is portrayed.

Baran¹¹⁴ insists, that a camera could record the intimacy of live speech. He summarizes the rules that contribute to natural responses and credibility of non-actors in front of the camera in four points.

- 1) The isolation from the effects of technology.
- 2) Capturing of only the events, to which a non-actor is accustomed to in everyday life.
- 3) To film, if possible, in an environment that is familiar and comfortable for the non-actor.
- 4) Do not force a filmed person into acting behavior.

Such rules and principles are not obligatory, but they are significant for increasing the possibility to create a more comprehensive portrait of a personality. The knowledge about the practical aspect of portraying is necessary for the credible representation of a person and helps to unify the efforts of both portrayer and portrayed with a purpose to reveal the dominant non-actor as completely as possible.

¹¹⁴ BARAN, Ludvík, *Řeč filmové kamery*, Praha:Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1965

2.3.2. Exploring the conventions of documentary film portrait in contemporary documentaries referred to similar genre

Here I would like to introduce the list of existing portrait documentary films, which have appeared recently and have conquered a high attention of the documentary film audience. It is necessary to mention these documentaries, because firstly, we have to identify some of the common conventions of portrayal, and secondly, they carry the qualities of the biographical sub-genre and caught my attention because of an interesting approach to the depiction of personality.

A Portrait of Pat Carey (2013)– the storyline of this documentary represents a portrait of famous San Francisco artist and activist, Pat Carey and her role on the international art scene. This personal documentary draws a portrait of her life not only through archival footage, but also through the reflection of people from her environment, who were somehow effected by Pat Carey's artistic career.¹¹⁵

A documentary film portrait *Film Adventurer Karel Zeman* by Tomas Hodan (2015) is focused on the famous Czech animation creator Karel Zeman. The features of the portrait genre are mirrored not only in the archival shots of Zeman's working process during his making of commercials for the Baťa factory. This film also includes interviews about his long life journey to his international success with different excerpts, his daughter, foreign film-makers and other colleagues. The director Tomas Hodan concentrates the attention of the viewers on the portrait of Zeman as a film-maker and talented master of animation enjoying the challenging process of film-making and seeking for solutions in life situations where it seemed to be impossible. Hodan uses a mode of memorizing and by putting the relative questions to his respondents, he has marked Zeman as an extremely hardworking and inventive animation artist.¹¹⁶

Even if the portrait documentary has a form of an hour long interview with the main social actor, which is supported by observational shots without any other voice over besides the speech of the social actor – the convention of portrait documentary would be still partly completed. Such form of portrait documentary is recognizable in the case of the documentary *The Betrayal By Technology: A Portrait*

¹¹⁵ *A Portrait of Pat Carey* [film]. Director Anson Musselman. USA, 2013

¹¹⁶ *Film Adventurer Karel Zeman* [film] Director Tomas Hodan. Czech Republic, 2015

of *Jacques Ellul* focused on the worldviews and experience of French sociologist Jacques Ellul. During the interview, Ellul discusses the topic of technological society prosperity. He claims that nowadays society differs from previous generations and stresses the breakdown of ethical values.¹¹⁷

Alice Neel (2007) is another feature-length documentary film portrait by Andrew Neel focused on the American painter Alice Neel. The film depicts her personality through the directing vision of her grandson Andrew Neel. The cinematic portraiture in this case is performed mostly visually. Instead of typical enthusiastic statements or voice-over comments about Neel's artistic talent, the director offers a footage series of photographed examples of her work, which visually indicate a painter's skills. By the way, the technical side of the film is delicately limiting the strictly constructed ordinary and declarative narration. The role of the film-maker remains rather neutral except for using specific archival footage and home movies. The storytelling of this particular portrait documentary consists of Alice's memoirs recorded for voice-over. One of the most important autobiographical traits of Andrew Neel's portraying politics is allowing Alice to narrate her own story by representing her art and explaining the essence of it by means of archival footage.¹¹⁸

In the recent documentary *Amy* (2015), director Asif Kapadia represents the portrait of an extremely talented singer, songwriter, celebrity Amy Winehouse, who is considered to be a controversial, alcohol and drug addicted jazz music icon. Same as Andrew Neel, Asif Kapadia rather watches or observes Amy's life than expresses his opinion. His approach stays neutral. Kapadia creates an unjudgmental portrait of a singer whose life goes up and down and whose talent is buried under the pressure of publicity. In his film he uses off-screen interviews with close friends and relatives for collecting the material, on-screen talking heads interviews and dynamic structure of storytelling as the main means of portraying.¹¹⁹

All these examples make us assured that starting from the 90s the documentary portrait confidently proceeds from the margins of cinematic discourse

¹¹⁷ *The Betrayal By Technology: A Portrait of Jacques Ellul* [film] France, 1992, In TDF [online] 7.2.2016. Dostupné z: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/betrayal-technology-portrait-jacques-ellul/>

¹¹⁸ *Alice Neel* [film] Director Andrew Neel. USA, 2007

¹¹⁹ *Amy* [film] Director Asif Kapadia. USA, 2015

to its central part. A documentary film portrait intensely develops, stopping to be a selective group.

All of these films demonstrate the variety of approaches for understanding the essence of portrayal. Based on this, I have revealed that the contemporary documentary portraits reflect an increasing tendency of mixing different genre features. For instance, the reportage and interview could be mixed with observational shots or biographical archival footage. The genre model of portrait documentary continues to develop, changing the classical ordinary experience of speech and interview. At the same time, this model keeps being enriched with different forms of mutual relationship between portrayers, portrayed, film crew and audience, which have been used in painting portrait, literature portrait and photographic portrait.

Analyzing the portrait documentary, I am trying to discover its characteristics and, at the same time, to reveal its original connection with the portrait in the visual arts and literature. The genre is a developing, dynamic, progressive category, but it still has constant, stable characteristics and conventions. This fact partly explains the difficulties that arise from the study of various genre structures. Genre, as I have already noticed, is a changeable category and that is the reason why features of a particular genre can not stay the same, or in other words, be strictly determined. However, the impossibility of rigid formulation of the genre, not only does not prevent us from identifying its main conventions, but on the contrary - leads to the necessity of such a definition, because the common signs allow us to speak about common features in genre structures of different artwork.

A. After looking through a number of different theoretical sources, I have tried to summarize the different signs, features, codes, which consequently form the conventions of the documentary genre. Normally, such features were precisely distinguished by critics and theoreticians. By listing them, I would be able to form the set of features and qualities, which represent the typical conventions for analysis of the documentary as a genre itself. In my research, by *convention* of the documentary genre I mean the specific set of audience expectations about narrative structure, repeating plot points, social actors/non-actors, and specifics of voice-over, archival footage, events and values that define a specific genre by appearing in it. On the other hand, the list can consist of the following conventions, which can be seen

also as integral elements of documentary film making: montage, exposition, reenactment, archival footage, voice-over. Also, the list of conventions could be represented according to the modes according to Bill Nichols: expository, observational, reflexive, performative, participatory (or interactive), poetic. These modes still unify the same elements mentioned above: voice-over, direct/indirect interview, archive material/footage, narrative structure, etc. For instance, the expository mode includes the notion of voice over/voice of authority, archive footage, interviews and stills supporting the arguments.

B. After a critical evaluation of the mentioned examples of the documentaries similar to the one I am analyzing, I have isolated the main conventions of the portrait genre, which reappear in one documentary after another. The following list of them is not exhaustive, but recognizable in documentaries of this category. In addition, they are partly compatible with the sources I refer to in the theoretical background of the research.

- 1) The presence and dominance of a single social actor/actress (protagonist, main character, central hero); the focus of the documentary film-portrait on central the narrator of their own story.
- 2) Documentary film-portrait genre is based on the simultaneous description and exploration of a personality. Provocation regime provided by a director.
- 3) Reference to a broader socially-historical context. The reflection of the portrayed person's character and their life within the broader socially-historical discourse (issue, historical event, etc).
- 4) Combined narrative construction. The combination of the personal, autobiographical narrative (storytelling) of the social actor provided by their self-presentation with the narrative organized by the film-maker and their vision of the person they portray, provided by different elements, such as voice-over, interview, etc.

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- 5) Stylistics of camerawork and lighting are mostly focused on the physiognomy and follow the gestures of the social actor central to the portraying. The prevalence of medium close-up shots and mid shots.

3. THE ANALYSIS OF THE FILM *THE WONDERFUL, HORRIBLE LIFE OF LENI RIEFENSTAHL*

Generally, in my research I am proving that the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* demonstrates the particularities and embodies the conventions of the portrait documentary genre. In this brief introduction to the analysis itself, I would like to summarize once more the main reasons of outlining these exact conventions I am mentioning above. Further explanation confirms and justifies the rationality of each convention and recapitulates once more the theoretical basis which lead to their formulation. I do not exclude that these conventions could not appear simultaneously in one sequence, because the convention is not a notion which can be strictly isolated one from another.

Convention №1 - Film portraits are almost always associated with the representation of the social status, profession, career or occupation of a personality. For instance, Riefenstahl is represented primarily as a propagandist film-maker, but not as a beloved wife or mother. A characteristic feature of the portrait documentary film is the concentration of maximum attention on the main social actor (protagonist, main hero etc). Not less significant is the feature that the main character is the actor of their own story. As I have mentioned earlier in the methodological chapter of my research, among the properties of the personal portrait Nichols also states the ability of social actors to speak for themselves in their own voices. Moreover, speaking about portrait in documentary, Nichols has also emphasized the more personal interaction of the director and social actor and the importance of the knowledge derived from individual experiences.¹²⁰ These statements strengthen the validity of the first convention. For this reason, the first convention is relevant. Riefenstahl is definitely the central subject of the narrative and director Ray Müller mostly lets Riefenstahl speak and represent herself, with no further reconstruction or comments to her speech. The main heroine recapitulates her individual working experience both on the film set and in her private studio. With the help of personal interaction with Müller and his questions, which are sometimes audible, sometimes cut – Leni

¹²⁰ Vis. Table 1 in chapter Methodology

gradually narrates the story of her life starting from her participation as an amateur actress in Fanck's mountain films, continuing with her famous period as Hitler's film-maker producing *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*, then commenting on her photographing activity and ending with her last hobby – underwater diving shooting.

Convention №2 - The second convention emphasizes the power of the description and exploration of the main hero within the portrait genre. This convention refers mainly to the film director and it is outlined on the basis of the watched documentaries of similar or resembling genre. Film portraits provide a biographical exploration of individuals through the collision between the director and the subject. Film portrait mirrors its subject in a descriptive manner, without unmasking or exposing the main hero.¹²¹ At the same time with a purpose of more detailed portrayal in documentary, it is necessary to achieve a closer interaction with the portrayed person, more intimate atmosphere and spontaneous real responses and reactions. The film-maker simultaneously explores the personality as the subject of his interest and by showing such reactions to the viewers – describes and “paints” the portrait. What I call *provocation regime* is the fundamental contribution of filmmakers to "the acting" of the social actors in front of the camera, impulses and provocations of the situations, which the director intends to shoot. Such impulses concern negotiations, dialogues and their directions. Speaking about the documentary I am analyzing, I am pointing out that by such method of provocation, Müller encourages the viewers to identify themselves with the the social actress and to make them evaluate the frankness of her story. Müller succeeds as a portrait maker exactly because the doubts about her frankness have called out a wave of discussion and critical viewpoints. Müller intentionally shows his audience the complications and confrontations with the person he portrays. In fact, their arguments in front of the camera concern the different approaches of directing, two opposite filming styles of professionals. Their implicit fight for taking over the leadership in film directing and storytelling of this particular film gives the viewer the feeling of their mutual participation in what we see on a screen.

¹²¹ BINDER, Eva, Sokurov's Film Portraits, In BEUMERS, Birgit, CONDEE, Nancy, *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, London:I.B.Tauris,2011,p.28

Furthermore, in some cases the function of the provocation regime can be provided by any interviewer. In this way the flow of the personal narrative is broken by such intervention. The role of the interviewer in our film is sometimes provocative as far as he offers some pieces of information, which changes the focus of view on the facts about her life. In several sequences the questions of the interviewer make Leni nervous, but fortunately it gives the director a chance to express herself in a new way, enriching her image with new strokes.

Convention №3 - The third convention is outlined mainly on the basis of the statements by Bill Nichols and documentary scholar Eva Binder. Nichols differentiates the property of paying maximum attention to the qualities and challenges of the individual, usually with indirect or implicit reference to larger issues.¹²² In her turn, Binder formulates her understanding of documentary film portrait on the example of the documentary films of Russian film-maker Alexander Sokurov. Generally, Binder considers documentary film portrait to be a separate genre. *“Grounded in the here-and-now, film portraits capture a moment in time and often refer to contemporary events and broader social discourses.”*¹²³ In the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* for instance, we can observe such features in the sequences, which refer the viewer to the archival footage from the Nazi party's formation, speeches of the party members and other references to the historical era background. In this way, the portrait seeks both to depict and to mediate on Riefenstahl's life and on the historical context of her life by the exploration of her character, with simultaneously more universal statements. Anyway, the analyzed film invites viewers to explore broader social issues through the experience of Leni Riefenstahl and at the same time, it concentrates the attention of the audience on the fate and suffering, glory and shame of her personality in different moments of history. Documentary portrayal emphasizes the mediations on themes of common and individual memory of World War II. It also focuses on Leni's underlying elegiac mood, when she tells us her own life story and partly mentions the fates of some of her colleagues and other contemporaries. It gives us a unit of

¹²² Vis. Table 1 in chapter Methodology

¹²³ BINDER, cit.121, ibid

internal and external structure of timing in film: remembering the past and living in the present moment. The past and the present in her life collapse during the on-screen interviews and this integration of two disparate time frames contributes to the portrait effect of the alleviated anguish that inflicts an impression about Riefenstahl on the viewer.

Convention №4 - The fourth convention carries a name “combined narrative construction” mainly because of the doubtful questions, which some of the theoreticians and historians confront. The vagueness lies in the uncertainty about the author of a documentary of the portrait genre. Who influences the narrative of the documentary film portrait more? Who is the main storyteller and the main portrayer of such type of documentary? Perhaps it is the central social actress, to whom the most of the self-representing narration belongs? Or maybe the main authorship signature belongs to the director? Or probably they both cooperate on storytelling?

The analysis of documentary films generally shows that the most successful documentaries are the ones in which the emphasis is balanced between the individualities of the author and the main protagonist. The correlation of the social actors, director and film crew as the co-authors of the film reflects perhaps the most important tension during the documentary-making process. To a large extent the final form of a documentary will depend on the quality of their mutual cooperation. Nevertheless, the main remaining questions are 1) where is the boundary between interpretative art and reportage of reality? 2) to which extent does the film-maker take part in the documentary as a narrator? Does the status of the main narrator belong completely to the director or does a director allow the integrity of autobiographical narrative through the speech of a social actor?

Deriving from Levasseur's explanation of the self-presentation concept¹²⁴, I have figured out that Riefenstahl is the main narrative agent due to her prevailing personal narration, which is often left without any intrusions of the director. One of the modifications which I am going to contribute to the already formed concept of documentary film portrait is that the social actor could also be seen as the active producer of their own portrait and its meaning. I suggest that Riefenstahl has

¹²⁴ LEVASSEUR, cit.77, *ibid*

participated on the documentary narrative and on the element of the autobiographical genre, because of the presence of personal narration or self-narrative tendencies in the film.

The convention, namely the combined narrative, generally assumes the combination of the storytelling of the main personality/subject of film (Riefenstahl) and the film-maker/director (Ray Müller) as the co-authors of the narrative in the film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*. Riefenstahl becomes the generator of the narrative through her self-presentation and the embodiment of first-person storytelling, while Müller remains the composer of the final documentary form. While Riefenstahl speaks for herself narrating her life story, Müller gets the benefit of the final cut and a partial interpretation with the help of voice-over. By using the creative power of interpretation and by structuring the film according to his artistic conception, he influences the final configuration of the narrative.

Convention №5 - The fifth convention is based on the statements of George Lellis¹²⁵ and Daniel Chandler¹²⁶ I mentioned earlier in the theoretical part. While Chandler marks the significant role of cinematic techniques and iconography in a formation of genre in general, Lellis points out the importance of the predominating focus of the portrait on the face of the person. Bordwell also agrees that any film as a visual medium defines genre through conventional iconography, which is represented by recurring images.¹²⁷ That is why medium close-ups and mid shots are especially important for the documentaries of this genre. In the documentary I am analyzing, the very significant instrument of portrayal from the perspective of the operator is also zooming in particular details of her hands, physiognomy, and the static shots of Leni sitting in front of the camera. Camera observes her natural motion giving us the impression of her emotions and reactions in a more detailed way. Additionally, this convention deals with the rules of shooting summarized by Baran¹²⁸ to reach the intimacy and credibility of the main actor's responses in front of the camera.

¹²⁵ LELLIS, cit.33, ibid

¹²⁶ CHANDLER, cit.1, ibid

¹²⁷ BORDWELL, THOMPSON, cit.42, p. 320

¹²⁸ Vis. chapter Portraying process

3.1. Tracing of the conventions and other points of methodological sources in a documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*

The documentary lasts three hours and consists of two parts. The analysis is segmented into smaller chapters according to the suggested portrait genre conventions in order to confirm their validity and apply them practically. I will analyze the documentary, trying to identify the key plot patterns, specifics of cinematic techniques, iconography and other points mentioned in the chapter Methodology and key terms with an intention to recognize the most distinguishing conventions linking this particular documentary to the portrait genre. Although I take into consideration that the translation of the original German-language voice-over to English caused an excess of clichés, during the analysis I am working with English film dubbing. By the way, the narration of Riefenstahl herself and her dialogues with Müller are left to sound in original language with adequately translated English subtitles in order to save the authenticity of their narration.

3.1.1. The First Convention

The presence and dominance of a single social actor/actress (protagonist, main character, central hero); the focus of the documentary film-portrait on a central the narrator of their own story.

The portrait type of documentary centers on scenes from the life of a compelling person.¹²⁹ Not every image, or sequence in documentary film can be considered a portrait one, but only those which manifest the inner world of a person. Deriving both from Bordwell's statement mentioned upper and Nichols's property of personal portrait documentary about experiencing the world from an individual's distinct perspective¹³⁰, I suggest that a documentary of a portrait genre must contain the flow of sequences, which reflect the subjective vision of a main protagonist. The leading or headlining role of Leni Riefenstahl's narration in this documentary is significant for her documentary portrait. Analyzing the patterns of her narration and

¹²⁹ BORDWELL, cit.42, p. 340

¹³⁰ Vis. Table 1 in chapter Methodology

the main scenes providing the dominance of her representation is helping us to reveal the inner characteristics of the predominant portrayed person.

The documentary starts with introductory parallel editing sequences (cross cutting). The sequence of Leni taking underwater shots of fish is confronted with black and white sequences of marching Nazi soldiers. The following montage represented by archival footage consisting of film shots from her documentary masterpieces, the young Riefenstahl searching the solution for the right angle of framing switch with the sequences of Leni, capturing the shots underwater and then, the sequence of Leni, dancing with the members of the Nuba tribe. These introductory sequences foreshadow the portrayal of one single person as a main heroine. Moreover, a viewer can notice a filming tool in her hands almost in every shot, giving us an indirect indication of the following focusing primarily on her career life.



Image 3. Leni taking underwater shots of fish at the age of 91

Afterwards, the viewer observes the title of the documentary (Germ. Die Macht der Bilder), which is graphically inscribed on the photograph of young smiling Riefenstahl behind her work tool reminding the viewer of the fact that the personality of Riefenstahl will be presented putting the main emphasis on her job. It is interesting to notice the fundamental difference in the original name of the film and the English translation, which I am using in my research. The German original title could be literally translated as the power of the image and in my personal point

of view, it conveys the holistic content of the film better than the English translation of the film.

Unlike the English voice-over dubbed by a woman, in the version with German dubbing, Müller himself leads the voice-over narration, which starts on the second minute of the film. Here I would like to mark also the main musical motive by composers Ulrich Bassenge and Wolfgang Neumann, which will repeat several times and accompany the narrative along the whole film.

The voice-over introduces us to the main social actress of the film, reminding the viewer that her legendary name still remains a taboo in Germany, because of her ill-fated Third Reich involvement. On the 2:25 min. a viewer can see her for the first time, standing near the window to the terrace of her house. Her face is barely visible due to the dark lights; While she is walking upstairs, the camera slowly follows her shadow.

A voice-over narrator states the main rhetoric question of the film, hinting at the neutral, impartial position of the director. It is not clear whether a film will present a revision of prejudice or a journalistic form of an interrogation.

As far as Müller examines the multi-functionality and different sides of her professional life chronologically, he conditionally divides his film into passages characterizing each phase of her life. I suggest that the film draws a portrait of a personality, gradually presenting her various occupations, artistic ideas, interests and enthusiastic career projects. He mirrors not only her features of character, but also different stages of her life, helping the viewer to take a look at her from different angles of view. Leni as a dancer; Leni as a director, scriptwriter and a devoted professional; Leni as a teacher passing her knowledge, sharing the experience; Leni as a colleague, ready for teamwork for the sake of the film realization; etc. Nevertheless, the director does not avoid the allusions and insertion of the controversial questions about the issue of propaganda attached to her films.

There is something fascinating about the way she narrates a story about filming her first feature film *The Blue Light*. The sequence starting at 30:03 min. focuses on today's Leni, holding a piece of mountain crystal in her hands and explaining the plot and artistic idea of her film with a great delight. It is necessary to

say that she unexpectedly fully holds the attention of the viewer, speaking about the symbolism of the crystal in her film and the reference of the film to the fairy-tale genre. This sequence contributes to an impression that she knows the exact meaning, which she wanted to objectify. The impression that she actually “knows her business” and is able to defend her artistic intentions persuade us of her professional competence.

The same effect of portraying her professional qualification is reached during the scene when she describes her collaboration with Bella Balazs on the script of *The Blue Light* (34:00min.). She explains her own drawings of the scenes and memorizes the preparatory phase of this film. The terms with which she operates and the professional language she uses in describing the film-making process strengthen the credibility of her person and her long-term experience of working in the film industry. Voice-over also emphasizes her endless intransigent character, mentioning that she was ready for new experiments. She has even cooperated with the Agfa Film Corporation on the invention of a new type of film stock called R-Stock for her film in order to embody her idea of filtering.

Afterwards, Müller comments on her self-narration about the failure of her film (38:00 min.) He directs our attention to her ability to overcome the difficulties on her way and her desire to learn new things from other authorities whom she recognized, like Fanck was to her. Returning the sequence back to Leni's self-narration, Müller lets her vividly speak about the way she learned new techniques of plot composing, reflecting her own joy from the fact that she has managed to fix her mistakes.

The scene where Leni is standing in front of a big photograph of herself, describing herself playing the role of Junta, is significant, because it implies her personal narration and dramatizes her storytelling. If we look at this scene from the perspective of the portrait genre, here we are able to notice how a central protagonist of the film stresses the drama of experiencing the world from her own distinct perspective. Referring to Nichols, this scene represents one of the examples of special property of the personal portrait documentary developed by him. Riefenstahl mentions that the role of Junta - a character, who is considered to be a young witch

according to the script of *The Blue Light*, was a premonition of her own life: “Junta was loved and hated. It’s been the same for me-I’ve been loved and hated. (42:43 min.) We may also assume that this part of her narration can also explain the English translation of the film title. Continuing, she dramatizes her narration even more by comparing herself to the fictional character of Junta and drawing an analogy between the plot of the film and her life: “Just as Junta lost her ideal through the shattering of the crystal ... in the same way I lost my ideals at the end of that terrible war. To that extent the film was indeed the premonition of my own destiny” (43:03 min.) With these words she tries to emphasize her disillusionment at the end of the war. Mistrustfully for the viewer, she seems to allude the regret about her past.



Image 4. Riefenstahl describes her role as Junta

At the end of this sequence we again observe Müller's representation in the atypical arrangement of the images. He offers an interesting editing solution, showing us a dissolve transition between two still images. An extreme close-up framing of Riefenstahl's eyes from the same photograph you can see in Image 4 gradually transit to the same type extreme close-up of Hitler's eyes taken from his photograph (43:20 min.). This dissolve, accompanied with disturbing incidental music could be perceived differently: either it indicates the person who affected her destiny most, or it marks the reference of the next scene to the politically-historical issues.

The segment of the film in which Leni starts to discuss her most famous and successful film of all times *Triumph of the Will* (1935), due to which she is considered an auteur of Nazi film-making until nowadays, starts at 1:06:30 min. of

the film. In his book *Leni Riefenstahl: The Seduction of Genius*¹³¹, Rainer Rother provides a detailed description of all the circumstances which preceded the making off of her two propaganda films about Party Rallies, which very often do not converge with her own narration. Especially it concerns the matters of commissioning of the films.¹³²

The next segment of the film is located in Riefenstahl's private editing room. Generally, further sequences are very useful and didactic for the practitioners of documentary, because they contain the shot, where Riefenstahl explains the process of creating *Triumph of the Will* from the perspective of a chronicle genre documentary. She discusses the specifics and the design of separate scenes with Müller, sitting in her editing room. She describes the composition of shots and her own vision of what she considers a quality documentary product.

It is also worthy to notice that she exactly understands the artistic intensity of her film. She emphasizes that it was partly created using the example of feature films and accentuates the main differences between her film and newsreels. Although the newsreels were usually static at that time, her innovative approach of creating more mobile shots is the thing which has made *Triumph of the Will* so special. Leni: "I thought that the shooting has to be mobile, that is why my crew even began trying to shoot on roller skates" (1:09:49 min.). Then, in the next sequence she describes her cinematic solution of laying a circular track around Hitler, to capture his speech in an extraordinary way, not from a fixed point. Afterwards, she also mentions the difficulties she faced during getting the permission for a tiny camera set near the flag poles. The representation of her search for new approaches of camera positioning marks her resourcefulness and the willingness to experiment.

Her narration about *Triumph of the Will* concerns rather the techniques of shooting than the content of the film itself. The narration resembles a series of advice as from a film practitioner, which certainly shows her personal artistic vision, the auteur approach to the filming process: "It's a feeling of links between the images. A connection between one picture and next....It's like a musical composition." (1:10:47

¹³¹ ROTHER, Rainer, *Leni Riefenstahl: The Seduction of the Genius*, London: Continuum, 2002

¹³² *Ibid*, p.48

min.) By the way, her answers in regards to the artistic value of this film carry the tutorial or master-class character: “It is very important to put a climax at the right point of the film, so that there’s a continuous build-up” (1:11:25 min.). Such mini-tutorials are immediately complemented by the exact climax segment from *Triumph of the Will*, supporting her narration.

Riefenstahl clearly avoids the most discussed topic of film critics and historians, namely the presence of fascist aesthetics in this film. She was castigated by society mainly due to glorifying the Führer, although she insists that the film represents pure historical facts and refers to the absence of commentary supporting the images. “I just observed and tried to film it well” she answers, considering Müller's question if she took part in staging and organizing the Congresses spectacle an absurd one (1:20:14 min.). Her insistence on the pure chronicle and documentation of the political event was deeply criticized for instance by famous critic Susan Sontag, who wrote that the film does not need a commentary, because it represents an already achieved and radical transformation of reality.¹³³ Surprisingly, Leni does not make attempts to explain, or defend her intentions while creating the film and chooses to keep silent about it until Müller raises such topics by himself. Riefenstahl chooses a strategy of speaking about this film as the analysis of editing and way of filming, but not as the analysis of the plot and story which it may provide. She focuses on the technical matters from a perspective of a professional, although she sometimes expresses her concern with political topic. Mainly, a viewer can observe her concern when she tries to explain that if the film *Triumph of the Will* was focused on any other person or mass political meeting, she would still film it. In this way she stresses the priority of interesting material, which could make her film product interesting. Furthermore, discussing her film, she compares herself to other directors like Eisenstein and Pudovkin filming during the Stalin period, or directors, who filmed in GDR and makes an attempt to state rhetorical questions about the political responsibility of an artist. She expresses her view on the matter of art and political context: “If an artist dedicates himself totally to his work, he cannot think politically” (1:27:55 min.). For her, the main message of *Triumph of the Will* was not

¹³³ SONTAG, Susan, Fascinated Fascism, In GRANT, B.K., Sloniowski, J,eds. *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*, Detroit:Wayne state university press, 2014,p.84

political. It was about creating jobs through the labor-service scheme and the contemporary idea of work and peace (1:29:38 min.).

When Müller tries to check her reaction to the matter of Hitler's close-ups dominating in the film, which were firstly represented to the Germans, she insists that there is nothing special about the shots of “Just Hitler and people” (1:17:27 min.). Moreover, later in the film, she will also mention that *Triumph of the Will* does not contain Hitler's speeches making references to his racial ideology, although this statement contradicts her position of being a pure chronicler and simply nothing more than a recorder of history. Anyway, even though she seems to build her self-narrative very carefully, sometimes some pieces of it are out of her control. Such uncontrolled passages of her narration may provide a contradictory impression on the spectators.

Concluding the paragraph about *Triumph of the Will* discussion in this documentary, I must say that her self-representation is very persuasive and she is capable to argument her attitude very strictly. No matter how deeply were her views criticized, her portrait, which emerges from this discussion, impresses with self-confidence, logic of explanation and consideration of her own deeds. To some extent, her narration can be perceived as self-justification, but anyway, she seems to be overcoming all the obstacles and she remains the active participant of the narrative creation through the representation of her vision.

Her obsession with the film-making process is notable when she explains the principles of lighting or correct use of filters. The voice-over of the film even directs our attention to the fact that Leni was so enthusiastic about the perfect editing, that she was sometimes ready to spend twenty four hours in studio. The clarity of her memory in regards to the filming process fascinates when she easily remembers the technique of aperture stop she once used almost half a century ago. In general, her persuasive stories about the making of *Triumph of the Will*, the record of 1934 Nazi rally at Nuremburg, and later, the innovative filming approaches during 1936 Olympic Games shooting in Berlin – are the most significant to her portrayal and tell the viewer a lot about her temper and resourcefulness.

3.1.2. The Second Convention

A portrait is simultaneously a description and an exploration of a personality. Provocation regime.

I suggest that the personality of Riefenstahl in the portrait documentary gives the viewer not only the foundation for being interested in her life, but also for critical thinking about the reasons of her acts, manner of speaking with the interviewer, truthfulness and hypocrisy within her personal narration and responses to the questions. That is why a documentary of portrait genre assumes not only the analysis of explicit address of the main social actress, but also the investigation of her personality alongside the film-maker. Outlining this convention, I summarize the main techniques, which are necessary for such kind of investigation. They include the provocation regime; juxtaposition with the archival footage recording the historical events or facts; the unexpected expression of sympathy or admiration in regards to the protagonist by the film-maker with an intention to prepossess or to motivate her for further speech, etc.

When the location is changed to the legendary film-studio Babelsberg - the cradle of such films as Lang's *Metropolis*, von Sternberg's *Blue Angel* and recently Tarantino's *Inglorious Bastards*, the voice-over comments the shots of Leni arriving to the studio with her life partner. One of the most interesting scenes of the film from a portraying point of view starts at 13.30 min. Here we can observe a pure example of the personality's exploration. The *provocation regime* provided by Müller is intended to reveal the natural reactions and to let the viewer learn more about the subject of the portrayal. It is helpful to mention that according to the modes categories developed by Nichols, provocations implied by interviewers and often accompanied by archival footage are the complex feature of *participatory mode*. The participatory type of documentary generally suggests the role of the film-maker as the researcher, who goes into the field, participates on the lives of other social actors, and afterwards, reflects his opinion within a documentary.¹³⁴ For the benefits of the film creation, a director must become a social actor himself for a while and moreover, to be sometimes bodily present in front of the camera. The fact that a

¹³⁴ NICHOLS, Bill, *Introduction to Documentary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, pp.115-116

spectator observes Müller arguing and responding to his main social actress – Riefenstahl from the same location, same historical spots as his subject of portrayal gives us the confirmation of the participatory element in this convention. Not always can the viewers see such reflection immediately after the contact of the film-maker with the subject of filming. The author's feedback may be provided by the auxiliary images, voice-over or footage. Nevertheless, the participatory feature is integral to the portrait genre, because it helps not only to explore the subject of matter better, but also gives a director the possibility to be critical, interrogative, or provocative in order to offer the audience more information. As a result of it, the viewer is expected to be more prepossessed in regards to the author's argumentation. This importance of the director's full engagement with the subjects of the portrayal is perfectly described by this citation of Nichols: *“When we view participatory documentaries we expect to witness the historical world as represented by someone who actively engages with, rather than unobtrusively observes, poetically reconfigures, or argumentatively assembles that world.”*¹³⁵

Very often, the confrontation of two directors on the set leads to the frictions and misunderstandings between Leni and Ray. Although Ray is politely asking for her professional opinion when giving her the instructions about the next shot, the collision of their artistic visions is unavoidable. Leni refuses to follow Müller's instruction to walk and answer the questions at the same time in front of the camera. She arrogantly answers: “I’ve never talked while I’m walking. I’m not a ghost.” (14:20 min); “You can’t walk backwards and I’d have to speak like this?!” (14:53 min.). Her stubbornness and unwillingness to subordinate are brilliantly portrayed with the help of the argument in frame. I would like to pay attention to the brackets within a shot pictured below, which break the illusion of the documentary coherence. These brackets will reappear in several further shots interrupting the chronological order of the biographical facts. Müller intentionally uses them even after editing and does not hide the presence of the camera crew on the set. In such method of sudden intrusions, he keeps a viewer informed that this part of the sequence is unofficial. Finally, she agrees to Müller's advice; slowly walking and looking directly into the

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.115

camera lens she continues her narration about the Holy Mountain shooting, filmed in this studio.



Image 5. The off-record camera mode. Müller and Riefenstahl at Babelsberg film studio

The collision of two director's minds on set continues. Marking the unofficial part of footage with on-screen brackets again (17:46 min.), Müller shows us how the social actress tries to exchange the roles and functions with the director on the set. For instance, on the shots below you can see how Leni explains the film crew how they should set up their camera to achieve the right juxtaposition of her against the mountain background. Roughly speaking, Riefenstahl tries to direct Müller's film by giving him strict advice and even instructions about the way he should shoot her. Müller does not resist that; on the contrary he gathers the recorded material consisting of her spontaneous reactions and then involves them into the film for the composition of the full documentary portrait.

According to John Corner, the interview is one of the most significant elements of the documentary as a whole. He even calls an interview speech openly interventional both verbally and visually.¹³⁶ In case of this documentary, Müller almost constantly works with the *direct interview*¹³⁷ technique, because mostly we see the main social actress and hear the questions of the interviewer; sometimes we

¹³⁶ CORNER, Elements of Documentary, *In Civic visions: Forms of Documentary*, p.89

¹³⁷ YAHNKE, Robert, *A Primer of Documentary Film Techniques*, [online]. 2009 [cit. 2016-04-07].

Dostupné z: <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~ryahnke/filmteach/My-Archive-of-Film-Notes/x-documentary-techniques.htm>

even see him through an over the shoulder shot. I may assume that the interviews are mainly unstructured and not prearranged beforehand although there is no consistent proof of that. I cannot help mentioning the major role of the direct interview in the provocation regime, because due to such form of interview, Müller achieves the recording of natural responses of the heroine.

Mostly, in interviews of Müller's documentary, Riefenstahl addresses the interviewer either in-shot, or talking to him in three-quarter profile. The direct mode of address is absent. Nevertheless, the provocation in this documentary mostly emerges within on-screen interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. For example, such directorial manipulations are noticeable when Müller asks if she had already been in contact with the National Socialists by that time (43:30 min.). Answering to the question, Riefenstahl firstly denies having any information about the existence of the party and Hitler. When Müller understands that his interviewee will not develop the discussion, he starts to ask questions, which show his mistrust to her answer. By means of such questions within an interview, the provocation usually starts. For instance:

Riefenstahl: "I hadn't even heard of Hitler. When I was filming *The Blue Light*, I had no idea who he was"(43:40 min.)

Müller: "Didn't Hans Jaeger say to you about Hitler?"

After that question, Leni starts to recapitulate her talk with Jaeger, retelling how she visited the National Socialist meeting in Berlin's Sports Palace with Hitler in chief. Consequently, her further answer partly contradicts her initial answer about not having known anything about Hitler. On this example you can see that the director's leading question has actually got the social actress talking and pushes her to continue the conversation to that topic.

Ambivalence of portrait creator

The provocation regime within a documentary serves not only as one of the explorative means, but also as a main method of depicting Riefenstahl's portrait ambivalence. This documentary is very interesting also due to the conflicting or simultaneous opposing attitude of a director towards the subject of his portrayal.

Consequently, Müller's representation of her portrait and the emotional landscape which the portrait transfers to the viewers is ambivalent¹³⁸. Müller's artistic vision in regard to the subject he portrays is stuck between two poles. On the one hand, the director obviously praises Riefentahl's talents, but on the other one he does not seem to trust the honesty of her answers.

For instance, when the archival footage visualizes the public book-burning of literature by Jewish authors in January 1933 (50:30 min.), in the further sequence Leni persuasively says that she knew nothing about it, because she was too busy with her film project in Greenland. She also claims that in the early thirties, she had never heard of Hitler and when she finally heard, like everybody else, she considered his anti-Semitic rhetoric a part of some "electioneering", "a temporary thing that would lie down". Here is where the directorial ambivalence of her portraying could be noticeable. He mirrors his disbelief with the help of a voice-over rhetorical question: "How could she have overlooked what was happening?" (52:29 min.) The same mistrust is perceptible in his personal question to her: "Didn't Mein Kampf open your eyes to Hitler's aims?" (52:43 min.). Her narration contains several analogical controversial assertions including the one that she hasn't made a film since the end of the war, or the one about her belief in preventing the spread of anti-semitism by remaining in Nazi Germany (53:20 min.).

The culmination of the *provocation regime* starts with Müller's question about Riefenstahl's relationships with the Propaganda Minister, Goebbels. The collision between the interviewer and interviewee rises up due to the contradictions about the information from Goebbels's private diary. The voice-over commenting on the archival footage of Goebbels introduces the core problematic issue of the next scene. The voice-over mentions that the information from Goebbels's private diary provides the evidence of a good relationships of Riefenstahl both with Hitler and Goebbels. Starting from 54:09 min. she starts to describe their relationships with him. By the way, within her narration about Goebbels, we may notice that for the first time she affects her own femininity, stating that Goebbels wanted her to be his mistress (54:11 min.). This feature of her character is new to her documentary portrait, because

¹³⁸ Recently, the phenomenon of ambivalence in film and media representation was explored by scholars Miranda Green, Lincoln Shlensky and Shani Orgad.

earlier she had only positioned herself in regard to her professional life. It is clear from her speech that she evaluates their relationships as bad ones and explains it with the reason of her denial of him as a woman: “He pursued me and was determined to have me. I felt nothing for him and he never forgave me for rejecting him. I can say he was almost an enemy.” (54:16 min.). The following series of sequences demonstrate us Müller's counter-argument showing the spectators the reason to disagree with her statements. In addition, the voice-over comments against the background of the Goebbels's diary cover claim the opposite information, which does not match Leni's previous words. For instance, Müller offers a few chronologically written diary passages by Goebbels, written on 16.3.1933, 17.5.1933, and 14.7.1933, which confirm that Goebbels regularly saw Riefenstahl. These entries from the diary give an impression that the two of them were on visiting social terms and spent a lot of time together at different private events, although Leni continues to deny that on screen. Leni's reaction to such provocation unexpectedly reveals her strong disturbance, irritation and even arrogance. She even gets up from the couch where she was sitting giving the interview and starts to wave her hands nervously (55:50 min.). Recording her spontaneous reactions, motivated by his provocation matter, Müller reaches the desired effect of revealing the traits of her character which were inconspicuous from the first sight.

It is noteworthy that every time the voice-over cites the words of Goebbels or Hitler, it is supported by supplementary photos of the speakers, which are doubling the influence and effect of the argumentation line. Such argumentative sequences remind the viewer that the main social actress remains the direct participant of the real events which happened to her, but it does not make her narration a completely reliable source of information. This scene is concluded by the voice-over commentary mentioning that nevertheless, Goebbels's diary presents the last surviving evidence of that time, and it continues with Leni's final phrase: “Goebbels was a master of lie.” (56:05 min.). Consequently, on the example of this scene we see the author's desire not to incline the viewer to somebody's side. This scene contains not only the example of the provocation regime, but also the crossing of two narrative constructions by the main social actress and the author of the film.

The change of the location to the Nuremberg stadium signifies the next point in the plot of the film. The next scene (57:30 min.), remarkable for the investigation of the heroine's documentary portrait, concerns her first propaganda film product – *Victory of the Faith* (1933)¹³⁹ – a film about the Fifth Party Rally of the Nazi Party. This scene again fascinates the spectator with another on-screen argument between Müller and Riefenstahl. Implicitly, this time the reason for Riefenstahl's unwillingness to talk about her first propaganda movie concerns her own amateurism and inexperienced camera shooting angles. The voice-over directly comments her insecure attitude to the imperfect result of her work.

The scene in Nuremberg, which starts at 1:00:30 min. of the film marks the tension growing between Müller and Riefenstahl on set. The main source of confrontation is Riefenstahl's disagreement with the way Müller wants to structure the dialogue. Riefenstahl does not hide her nervous behavior, which is apparently caused by her suspicion concerning the possibility of misrepresenting her speech and actions. The reason of her irritation comes out of Müller's directorial decision to mention two of her propaganda films in a row. Disagreeing with that, she insists to structure her narration about each film separately. She allows herself to grab Müller by the hand and starts to shake him. As you can see, the director does not cut out these shots, but intentionally leaves them as valuable informative and depicting material. Müller allows the viewer to explore the personality through the demonstration of their on-screen dispute. The metaphorical analogical parallel could be drawn with the creation of the portrait in painting. If a painter would draw a portrait of a person from nature in a moment of anger, a person on a painting would look absolutely different compared to the calm state. We can see a similar parallel in Müller's approach: he composes the documentary portrait from different psychological states of his main protagonist. That is why the portrait in documentary film holds dynamism compared to the static character of the portrait genre in other spheres.

¹³⁹ Original title *Der Sieg des Glaubens*

3.1.3. The Third Convention

Reference to a broader social context. Respectively - the reflection of the portrayed person's life within the broader social discourse (issue, historical event, etc).

Through the tracing of this convention I suggest that a documentary portrait of a person could be cinematically formed by the address to social, historical and respectively political issues. Firstly, it is impossible to make a documentary portrait of a personality without mentioning the context of the time, or era in which this person lives and creates. Every person is a part of society, formed in a certain time and place. Secondly, such reference could describe a person's character, for example through the exploration of their attitude to some political event, or participation in some social issue. It may be provided mainly by the interview element or by personal narration of the portrayed person. A personality within broader social discourse could be represented either by showing the relation of a social actor to some social, historical, political issue, or by mentioning this person's participation in some social/historical/political event, activity, etc.

Müller starts to implicate the shots mirroring the historical context approximately during the 12th minute of the film. Again, he works with an archival footage of Berlin in the 1920s. While showing us the footage of food distribution on the streets of the city, the voice-over informs the viewer about the historical era context and the period of total poverty for Germany before the rise of Hitler's NSDAP party.

Müller organized the narrative of the film by careful occasional mentioning of political and social issues, which took place alongside the development of the mountain genre trend in the film industry. He slowly leads the story, letting a viewer know that the expected climax of the documentary will be presented later. For instance, Müller mentions that postwar film critics had recognized the ideological preparation of fascism in the propagated heroism of mountain films (23:11min.). With the help of such statements, a director draws closer to the representation of the most controversial topic, namely Nazi propaganda, raised in his documentary.

Another attempt of the director to involve the socially-historical context of that era continues starting at 28:30, when he emphasizes that unlike Dietrich or Sternberg refused to support Hitler's politics, Riefenstahl started to produce films for him. Müller works with shots of swastika flags, commenting on the Führer's rise to power. Afterwards, an interesting method takes place: Müller lets his social actress hear the record of Dietrich's protesting speech against the Führer cut out of the documentary film-interview *Marlene* (1984)¹⁴⁰ by Maximilian Schell. Müller has asked Riefenstahl to listen to Marlene's words referring to the specifics of the German mentality and is waiting for her response to it. Dietrich: "We Germans wanted a Führer, right? We got one, right? We Germans are like that, we want a Führer ... And what happens? Along comes this ghastly Hitler and we say, great, finally someone who will tell us what do." His choice of the record is not random; he intentionally seeks for her reaction to the opposite disapproving thoughts of her colleague about Hitler's rise and the mass support of National Socialism in Germany. Surprisingly, she ignores the historical context of the event, explaining support of Hitler by Germans with their mentality character feature of being disciplined: "For us at school and at home discipline came first. She's right there. Germans would be very enamored of someone they could model themselves on. They are happy to be led, that's for sure."(30:40-30:50 min.). In this same scene we can also notice the manifestation of the third convention, namely the reference to the provocation regime.

Archival footage plays a major role in reflecting the historical events and addressing the past. According to Nichols, mostly, the archival footage had become the recognizable feature of *observational* and *expository* modes. In this particular documentary, archival footage fulfills both the function of the supporting argumentation and the function of illustrative shots with the addition of voice-over commentary. Mostly, Müller uses archival shots to support Leni's self-narration with the visual material referring to her current speech; or to reconstruct the historically-political context of her life and work for the viewer. Nevertheless, when he includes the footage consisting of the posters with anti-Semitic claims (51:03 min.) supporting Leni's narration about the ignorance, or lack of information about these historical

¹⁴⁰ *Marlene* [film] Director Maximilian Schell, West Germany, 1984

events, such footage may be perceived as negative argumentation, or disagreement with her words.

Müller also visually supports Leni's personal narration about her first fatal meeting and her impression of Hitler with archival shots of his speech and photo portraits of young Hitler (44:50 min.). When her narration relates to Hitler, she accentuates her fascination by his ability to affect other people. She mentions an almost hypnotizing aura coming out of him during their communication: “He radiated something very powerful. You immediately forget about everything” (47:12 min.) She remembers her negative reaction to Hitler's suggestion of filming for him in the future, which is important for the further reception of her statements about the propaganda involvement. Müller asks if she felt his demonic power of suggestion and she answers positively, hinting that she had a fear of her will being paralyzed by Hitler's hypnotic affection. Interpreting this dialogue we may assume that like many other people, she could be unstable and not resistant enough in her decisions. The main heroine conveys the possibility of being affected. Through her personal narration and the representation of her relationships with Hitler, Müller complements the complexity of the psychological portrait of the main social actress.

Sometimes, while the voice-over narration reflects the social context of Leni's life and professional activity, the documentary works with the observational mode, dynamically representing the sequences of the location nowadays and combining such sequences with the archival observational footage of the same location. (56:30 min.) These observational shots of the historical building section of Kaiserburg Castle in Nuremberg and shots of city the itself become the bridge to the next important segment of the documentary, which is remarkable in terms of the provocation regime embodiment. By such observational shots, the director diminishes the possibility of calling out an effect of moralizing on his documentary. In order to stay neutral, Müller tries to include depicting shots of locations into the film, not to exaggerate with expository argumentation. The same principle can be noticed at the beginning of the second part of the film, when the camera observes the stadium in Berlin – the location of Riefenstahl's second most remarkable film, recording the 1936 year Olympic Games.

During her self-representation she often tries to restore her reputation by herself. She tries to be self-reflexive and rethinks her actions in front of the camera. “My image of Hitler was shattered much too late. Right at the end of the war.” (2:26:05 min.) Although she claims her unwillingness to refer her film art to political aspects, she sometimes reconsiders her own past.

Closer to the end of the film, we can observe that Riefenstahl herself invokes the context of then contemporary era and she cannot help mentioning her disillusionment and shock at the end of the war. Müller visually supports her speech with the footage of camps and corpse piles signifying the horrible crimes against humanity in order to increase the dramatization (2:28:25 min.). The expression of her face certainly conveys her deep concern, sadness and regret, but in the light of Müller's provocations, it is much harder for a spectator to trust her words. When Müller asks if her perception of her own work changed after she had discovered the crimes of the Third Reich, she answers: “No, I was just appalled and confused to have lived through that period” (2:30:05 min.). By these words Riefenstahl once more convinces the viewer about the consideration of her unchangeable views to her own art. The portrait, which derives from her interpretation remains unswerving even after her on-screen reconsideration of her art against the background of the broader social context.

3.1.4. The Fourth Convention

Combined narrative construction: The combination of the personal, autobiographical narrative (storytelling) of the social actor provided by their self-presentation with the narrative organized by the film-maker and his vision of the person they portray provided by different elements, such as voice-over, interview, etc.

The embodiment of this convention is becoming visible right at the beginning of the film. During the scene we see Leni, sitting behind the table looking through her own black and white photographs captured in her youth. Suddenly, Müller puts the question about her feelings concerning these photos in front of her and she starts to answer him, although he still remains unseen during the whole scene. Despite the fact he navigates the direction of the narrative, he cares about leaving enough space for her own self-presentation. Leni says she doesn't live in her past anymore (4:10 min.).

The following sequence is composed from the archival sepia photos of the posters created for Riefenstahl's dance evening promo. Here we can see her in the guise of a ballet-dancer. Leni comments her unexpected success and the invitation of Max Reinhardt.

Then, the location is changed again and we see the next scene, in which Leni stands in the middle of the Nollendorfplatz metro station, talking about it as about the starting point, from which the changes in her life began to happen. Here I would like to mention her clothing. There is something matronesque and modest in the way she has dressed for the shooting. Chandler considers costume one of the substantial components of iconography.¹⁴¹ That is a reason to see the traits of a portrait genre even in the choice of clothing by the main heroine. A pink raincoat, the white shoes on small heels and a white little purse also reflect the individuality of the social actress and play a role in the color scheme within the camera shot.

Her self-representation is reflected in her appearance as well as in her speech. She acts with a surprising confidence and it is obvious that she endeavors to look

¹⁴¹ Vis. Table 1 in chapter Methodology

feminine. Her blond haircut, tanned face, clothing style, confident gait really fascinates if a viewer takes her age into account.

With the help of the following scene Müller depicts the power of influence, which Arnold Fanck, the pioneer of the mountain film genre, has made on Riefenstahl's life. Müller has located the scene to the empty movie-theatre, where he records Leni, sitting alone and watching Fanck's film *The Holy Mountain* (1926). During the film screening, Leni is commenting on Fanck's innovations with regard to the contemporary film industry. It is necessary to notice that her comments relate to the technical patterns of Fanck's lighting strategy, which obviously marks her competence in film equipment, although she admits that she was not an expert on this at that time. The voice-over enters this scene again, giving additional information about the historical significance of the *Bergfilm*, interrupting Leni's narration.

It is curious to notice that Leni is a unique narrator in general. She does not need to be supported by auxiliary questions all the time. She is completely capable of leading the first-person storytelling¹⁴² by herself.

When the voice-over fascinatedly comments on the shots, where young Riefenstahl climbs up to the top of a mountain (16:55 min.), her courage, strengths of her will, fearlessness and ability to succeed in the typically male sport of rock climbing are emphasized. An interesting parallel is made by comparing her desire to conquer the basics of alpinism (the sport in which men prevailed at that time) with her conquering of the film industry as the only female film-maker under the NSDAP party.

Afterwards, Müller continues to narrate Leni's story and for a while he involves a new narrator to the scene - Luis Trenker, the actor of the leading role in Fanck's film and Riefenstahl's colleague. Trenker comments on Leni's insistent trait of character, remembering the passion with which she pursued her goal of playing in *The Holy Mountain* without having an adequate education. Here we can observe how a director plays with the shots of Trenker and Leni with an intention to show his and her interpretation of the story of getting a role.

¹⁴² Term first-person storytelling was deeply explored by Patricia Aufderheide

Using the shots of Leni's and Luis's kiss from *The Holy Mountain* as a connecting link between the scenes (9:30 min.), Müller transfers us to the next scene, located in the snowy mountains. Here we see present-day Riefenstahl in a winter coat remembering the complications of *The Holy Mountain* shooting of the avalanche scene. She emphasizes the struggles caused by the shooting conditions, which she nevertheless was ready to deal with for the benefit of Fanck's artistic idea. Müller complements her speech with the named shots from the film.

Unexpectedly, at 18:30, Leni even allows herself to be sarcastic, allegedly warning the crew that when she points at mountains during the shooting it does not mean she shows a Nazi greeting. We could suggest her fear of the wrong interpretations she had to face in the past.



Image 6. Riefenstahl argues with Müller about the composition of the shot

Combining Leni's speech about the extraordinary spirit of mountains and the feeling of the unforgettable achievement in the moment of climbing to the top of the rock, with the shots of her from another silent mountain film *White Hell of Pitz Palu* (1929), the dramatization is increased by using the orchestra incidental music (19:02 min.).

In the following sequence we become the witnesses of Leni's analytical thinking. She compares the directorial approaches of Pabst and Fanck, comparing them from the perspective of her experience of co-working with both of them (20:25 min.). We can notice her ability to be evaluative towards the authorities from whom she has learned the basics of the film shooting process.

During the moments of her personal narration an audience is able to evaluate her traits of character – the distinctive details helping us to perceive the documentary

representation of the portrait. For example, in the scene starting at 21:08 min. Leni seems to admit her own disobedience as an actress with regard to Pabst's directions on the set. She intentionally puts accent on it in order to show her cravings for directing. Again, she concentrates maximum attention on her individuality reminding the viewer of her primary perception of herself as a director, not an actress.

Sometimes the voice-over and Leni's narration mutually overlap. It is noticeable in the sequence starting at 21:20-23:00 min. Likewise, in this particular montage of scenes: a black and white shot of the avalanche is accompanied with the voice-over claiming a statement about the realism required by Fanck, and his will for authenticity during the filming process. In the next shot Leni agrees with the statement and continues her narration. Such mutual complementation contributes into the complexity of the combined narrative. Vice versa, during the following minutes of the documentary, Müller complements her speech about the bad weather conditions while shooting *White Hell Pitz Palu* with the mentioned shots from the film, exactly depicting what she is currently saying.

In the same manner, Müller composes a sequence, which takes place in the UFA studio, when Leni talks about her complicated relationships on the set of von Sternberg's film with her colleague Marlene Dietrich. She remembers reviews and words of von Sternberg about the absolutely different temperaments of her and Dietrich as well as the opposite style of their acting. Meanwhile, Müller offers the viewer a visual comparison consisting of the black-and-white footage showing from the films, where these two women acted, depicting the exact words of Leni. It seems like in different sequences the director either shows us a visual support of her words, or disagreement with the portrayed person, remaining silent.

Speaking about Fanck's obsession with the natural, improvised, non-artificial style of filming (24:40 min.), Riefenstahl mentions the harm and injuries she lived through during their cooperation. Commenting on the scene where a real avalanche is falling on her body, tied to the mountain rock, she even allows herself to show her anger and admits that she is irritated by Fanck's inhumanity.

When she remembers her confrontations with Hitler and Goebbels there is a sense they have become something like a poem learned by heart. There is a

subjective impression that she has been repeating the same strategic answer to questions of this character too many times to sound sincere. In several scenes Ray Müller engages her in the sensitive topic about the matter of her apolitical proclamation. Their mutual on-screen debates resemble a political one. When Müller tries to narrate his assumptions and point of view, Riefenstahl immediately gives a denial. Despite this fact, Müller still shows the viewer the archival material that appears to support his previous assumptions or statements. By this example I am making a reference to the combined construction of the narrative, which is constantly led by both of them. Even though Müller is responsible for the visual representation and editing, Riefenstahl remains the only medium of what was really happening then.

3.1.5. The Fifth Convention

Stylistics of camerawork and lighting are mostly focused on the physiognomy and follow the gestures of the main social actor. The prevalence of medium close-ups and mid shots.

Comparing to fiction films, the flashy techniques of shooting or special effects aren't that important in documentaries, because the stylistics of camerawork in the documentary serve rather to convey somebody else's testimony, than to fascinate with the richness of intensive technical innovations. One of the recognizable conventions of a documentary of the portrait genre is the specific way of shooting the main narrative agent: the composition of camera angles, the sizes of shots. In this particular film, the dominant attention in front of the lens is paid mainly to the central protagonist, who speaks either directly or indirectly to the camera from the location. That is why the camera style in this film provides the viewers a full engagement with the main narrator. Too intensive camera features or exaggerated varicolouring only distract the audience from the story.

Medium shots and medium close-ups

The technique of direct interviewing, which is widely used in this documentary, leads to the prevalence of medium close-ups in the film. The consideration of them as one of the convention elements rises mostly from their function to witness facial expressions and the body language of person. The conveying of Riefenstahl's

emotions is integral to her portrayal and to capturing a maximally sincere response. Lellis writes that the question of both character and background is paramount in portrait; the character's appearance, clothing, the choice of props and the surrounding in which the character is presented, determine his or her psychology.¹⁴³ With the help of mid shots and mid close-ups, a director has a chance to fully display the psychological state of a person, especially during an unstructured interview.

Medium shots mostly emphasize the body of Riefenstahl from the waist up in order to make her gestures and face expressions more visible. In such way, medium shots isolate the main subject matter from the surrounding environment to a greater extent. Medium shots in this particular documentary almost always offer an angle of view which allows the viewer to see her gestures, while medium close-ups frame her from the chest up. Close-ups and extreme close-ups are less used in this film in order to keep a natural distance between the interviewer and interviewee. The camera distance also plays a significant role in the credibility of the main protagonist within the portrait genre. This distance changes depending on the scene and the tension arising from the topic of interview. When the main social actress acts arrogantly or even aggressively in a few scenes, reacting to the provocative questions about her cooperation with Nazis, it is clear that she prefers not to let the interviewer to get too close with her during the conversation. She defends her private space as much as it is possible.

Several times the viewer can observe the technique of camera tracking (dolly shots). Steady camera rides alongside with Leni, or slowly following her steps as if it was stalking her. The examples of such technique may be noticed at the beginning of the first and the second parts of the film. At the beginning of the first part, the camera slowly follows her shadowy figure from the outside. When the second part of the documentary starts, we can see the same technique following Leni, entering the stadium in Berlin (the present location of her film *Olympia*) (1:37:17min.).

¹⁴³ LELLIS, cit.33, *Ibid*



Image 7. Camera tracking shot

The wide shots of the locations could also be helpful to the process of portraying. The location in the documentary I am analyzing is mostly represented by the original place of events – the mountains and the famous German UFA studio, where Leni began her acting career; her private home workroom, where she spent a long time cutting and editing her masterpieces; the observational sequences of the empty stadium in Berlin, where she once filmed *Olympia*, etc. Sometimes Müller uses observational shots of mountains in order to complement Leni's storytelling. For instance, when she narrates flying in a helicopter above the locations of Fanck's film (15:55 min).

However, the locations play an auxiliary, descriptive role in this film in order to give the viewer a maximal feeling of being present at the shot scene. Also, by bringing Riefenstahl to the places where she worked, the director makes an attempt to record her spontaneous memorizing. That is why the shooting of locations in a documentary of this genre is rather secondary, but it is still helpful for portraying and contributes to the authenticity of scenes.

Starting from 1:38:04 min. we can observe slow zooming focusing the viewer's attention on Leni's story about her fascination with the ancient, antique Greek world, from which the idea and the plot of her *Olympia* film derived. Her active gestures mark her desire to share the story about the first phase of making that film.

A little bit later in the next scene on the stadium (1:44:03 min.), the camera moves around her and her former colleagues, marking her in the process of communication with them. While remembering the use of different innovative techniques during *Olympia* filming, the camera provides sequences showing her intensively waving her arms and pointing to the different corners of locations where the cameras were positioned. Due to these shots we can notice her ability to lead the narration, drawing the other social actors present in shot into the conversation. When she remembers the exact troubles and difficulties during their co-working, it is perceptible that she used to be dominant and to rule the filming process on the set of *Olympia*.

The other remarkable thing about the camera style is breaking the illusion of the film flow by the appearance of the film crew and their equipment within a shot. We can observe the presence of camera and its rails for instance during 26:00 min., when camera raids, following her entering the Marlen Dietrich pavilion at UFA studio, or at 33:20 min., when she talks about her experience as a scriptwriter. The viewer can even hear the order “action“ at the beginning of several shots. Also, the presence of the camera crew on the set is notable starting at 2:21:50 min, while managing the lighting for the scene, in which Leni discusses the film *Tiefland* (1954).

The same effect of unofficial or off-record footage can be observed during the scene at the stadium where Leni's former colleagues Guzzi Lantschner and Walter Frenz appear in shot with her. The audience is notified that it is unofficial, because at the beginning of the brackets reappearing, the voice-over informs the viewers about the coffee break on set. Moreover, the main social actress does not seem to suspect that they are being recorded. The camera intentionally focuses on her conversation with her colleagues to mark the unplanned storytelling of Leni about that time's politics: “In 1935, Churchill said “I envy the Germans for their Führer”....”, “Two years later, he said “The German swine must now be slaughtered” (1:47:45 min.). Even if her words sound more like a sarcastic joke, they contradict with her previous statements about her disinterest and indifference in relation to political topics. As you can see, in this particular scene she becomes an initiator of the talk on such topic with her colleagues. Such small contradictions only emphasize her possibility of being dishonest time after time.

The camera position during the scene in the editing room (1:54:32 min.) is chosen to be like that to create a sense of visual depth, showing the interior with editing devices in the background. After the presentation of archival footage of Riefenstahl and her team working on *Olympia* film in the editing room, the medium shot shows the same placement of the main heroine into the space, where she was directly working almost half of a century before (1:55:24 min.). Such composition of “then and now” shots, which you can see on Image 8 marking the same location in the frame serves to reconstruct the aura of her actions while editing.



Image 8. The reconstruction of the editing process

While observing her detailed explanation of the editing process, the camera also captures details of the devices and equipment in the room and then slowly swivels horizontally to record the reiteration of the editing process. This scene contributes to the portrayal of her pedantry and prudence. The voice-over additionally comments on her concern with every single detail and planning every shot beforehand while the archival footage is being screened.

The lighting during the indoor medium close-ups is mostly dim and shadowy to create a more dramatic effect on her narration. It is especially remarkable when she speaks in order to show her attempt to be critical nowadays in regards to the fascist perception of Jewish art.

During the outdoor scenes, direct sunlight is avoided to prevent excessive shadows on her face. In one of the off-record scenes Riefenstahl even shares her preference for professional lighting for herself in films, comparing the different styles of lighting necessary for her and Dietrich's facial type : “I needed the soft front light – quite high...” (2:21:15 min.). We can assume that this was one of the reasons

for camera crew to use soft front lighting during several next scenes of this documentary.

The sequence in which Müller shows a viewer the archive document - the telegram Riefenstahl sent to Hitler after his invasion to Paris expressing her admiration and congratulations - is shown with the help of a reaction shot. (2:13:50 min.). Her emotional response to that provocation seems to be ironical as far as the camera captures her light smile. With the help of a cutaway montage Müller records her explanation about the reason for sending it. “For three days the bells rang and people kissed on the streets .We all believed this terrible war was over.”(2:14:07 min.) she says, trying to justify the enthusiastic content of the telegram.

Kalow points out that the uneven movement of a hand-held or shoulder-mounted camera has become so recognizable as a convention of documentary that its usage gives the scene an aura of documentary actuality.¹⁴⁴ I have mentioned his statement, because within the portrait genre the convention of camera style is opposite. The uneven movements mostly distract the viewer from focusing on the storytelling of the main narrator. Steady positioning of the camera in this particular documentary, for instance, on the contrary emphasizes the thematic importance of the speaker's narration. Any distraction provided by a hand-held camera could be perceived as an intrusion of the director and to misrepresent the emotional resonance and the richness of the protagonist's expression.

The direct gaze of Riefenstahl into the camera can be noticed during the scene, where she describes her impressions from spending almost 8 months in isolation with the African Nuba tribe (2:38:35 min.). For the first time during the film, she looks directly into the camera, sharing her unforgettable experience and reflecting her acquaintance with the culture of the tribes. Her explanation about the meaning of rituals and masks (2:45:10 min.) signifies her genuine interest in anthropological subjects.

¹⁴⁴ KALOW, Nancy. *Visual Storytelling: The Digital Video Documentary* [online]. Durham: Duke University. 2011 [cit. 2016-04-11]. Dostupné z: https://documentarystudies.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/visual-storytelling-the-digital-video-documentary.original.pdf.



Image 9. Direct gaze into the camera

In her famous article *Fascinating Fascism* (1975), Susan Sontag presents the assaulting critical answer to Riefenstahl's photographic collection *The Last of the Nuba*, insisting on the projection of the fascist body perfection cult into her photos of African tribes. Sontag wrote: “Although the Nuba are black, not Aryan, Riefenstahl's portrait of them is consistent with some of the larger themes of Nazi ideology: the contrast between the clean and the impure, the incorruptible and the defiled, the physical and the mental, the joyful and the critical ... The Last of the Nuba, an elegy for the soon-to-be-extinguished beauty and mystic powers of primitives, can be seen as the third in Riefenstahl's triptych of fascist visuals”.¹⁴⁵ It is no wonder that Müller decides to mention Sontag's provocative address, asking Riefenstahl about her attitude to it, in order to observe her reaction. As a result, broadly smiling Leni calls Sontag's analysis simply rubbish and decides to act like she cannot even imagine what meaning a fascist aesthetic could imply. She makes it clear that she considers the concept of fascist aesthetic not comprehensible. Riefenstahl insists, that she did not change the images of tribe members, photos of whom she captured. I assume by these words she meant that she does not see any fault in the simple capturing of photos without the distortion of the subjects she photographs, and she refuses to perceive that the mere choice of her photographic subjects can a priori embody a

¹⁴⁵ SONTAG, Susan. Fascinating Fascism. In *The New York Review of Books* [online]. 1975 [cit. 2016-04-12]. Available from:: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1975/02/06/fascinating-fascism/>

fascist aesthetic ideal of body perfectionism. “They are healthy and beautiful human beings. Many of them just happen to be beautiful, but I did not create them. God did.” (2:49:55 min.) After these words, Müller continues to lead the narrative visually, without voice-over comments, juxtaposing the footage of physically beautiful sportsmen in action from her film *Olympia* with the static images of Nuba tribe men. The impression from the coherent flow of images hints on the parallel between these two works of art.

Carl Rollyson has even noted that it was the mission of “*Fascinating Fascism*” to remove Riefenstahl from the nimbus of her own self-regard and wrench her back into history.¹⁴⁶ Same as Sontag tried to destroy Riefenstahl's long lasting self-justification strategy, Ray Müller tries to awaken the notes of her self-criticism.

As far as Müller's film is organized chronologically according to the released filmography of Riefenstahl, one of the last locations of the documentary takes place in a boat, swimming in the middle of the ocean, capturing Riefenstahl and her life partner Horst Kettner during their preparations for the diving shootings. The underwater filming of wild, exotic marine life has become the last of Riefenstahl's hobbies. The sequences of Leni underwater depict the finishing strokes of her documentary portrait: a ninety-year-old woman, who can be considered one of the most aged divers in the world, who is still infected with her creative ideas to a huge extent. One of the last shots shows us Leni underwater shooting and touching a ray (3:03:19 min.), which is commonly known as a dangerous fish with a poisonous tail. This scene presents an incredible bravery of Riefenstahl, once more emphasizing her willingness to go to any length for the benefit of the perfect shot.

¹⁴⁶ ROLLYSON, Carl, “*Fascinated Fascism*” *Revisited: An Exercise in Biographical Criticism*, [online]. [cit. 2016-04-12]. Available from: http://journals.ucfv.ca/jhb/Volume_5/Volume_5_Rollyson.pdf

The last scene

Ruth Starkman has used the word “spectacle” referring Riefenstahl's self-performance to Debord's theory¹⁴⁷. However, she emphasizes that she uses this word with regard to Riefenstahl's claims about the hermetically sealed world of art.¹⁴⁸ The last scene of the film exactly reflects the hermetic seal Starkman was writing about.

This last scene of the film reveals Riefenstahl's view with regard to the social accusations. This scene is located back at the house of Riefenstahl, where the first scenes of this documentary took place. Voice-over narration concludes all of her previous claims motivated by the provocation regime. Here we see Ray Müller's face for the first time within the over-the-shoulder shot. Müller softly assumes that in Germany people might still want her public excuse for her mistake (3:06:03 min.). On one hand, Riefenstahl seems to feel guilty, saying that her burden is too heavy to ask for forgiveness. But on the other hand, she refuses to operate with the words “guilt” or “mistake” and she herself still continues to look for answers.

-Müller: “I think that people wait for an admission of guilt for you”(3:07:03 min.)

-Riefenstahl: “What am I guilty of? I can and do regret making the film of the 1934 Party Congress, Triumph of the Will,. I can't regret that I was alive in that period. But no words of anti-Semitism ever passed my lips. Nor did I write them. I was never anti-Semitic and I never joined the Nazi Party. So what am I guilty of? Tell me that. Where does my guilt lie?”.

The documentary ends up with these last lines, which give spectators the holistic impression of her feelings about the burden, or curse, with which she needed to live for more than half of a century.

The very fact that she was not afraid to be interviewed and witnessed, giving responses to questions of such character deserves respect and honor.

¹⁴⁷ DEBORD, Guy. *Comments on the society of the spectacle*. 1st pub. London: Verso, 1990. Verso classics

¹⁴⁸ STARKMAN, cit.6,p. 27

CONCLUSION

This research was primarily motivated by the reason that there are plenty of publications, monographs or biographies which are dedicated to her life and the reflection of fascist aesthetics in the work of Leni Riefenstahl, but she was rarely a subject of exploration within the documentary film. Considering the concept of portrait an interdisciplinary one, the portrayal of Riefenstahl was provided in the spheres of literary publicism, painting, photography and media, but her portrait was never rendered through the prism of documentary film. Exploring the basic studies of genre theory, I have realized how unstable and changeable the genre categories, styles and modes are, but nevertheless according to Daniel Chandler, Bill Nichols and John Corner, every genre has its own features, recognizable from one film to another. Among the classical conventions of the documentary genre in general (interview, voice-over, hand-held camerawork, archive materials, etc.), it is necessary to distinguish also the narrower, inside documentary genre conventions for each sub-genre. That is why I am assured that the genre features must be included to the list of documentary specification the same way it was adopted in fiction film analysis.

The primary source of my research and its analytical part is a German three-hour documentary film *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* / *germ. Die Macht der Bilder* (1993), the director and scriptwriter of which is Ray Müller. Despite the fact that it is often referred to such sub-genres as biographical or historical, in my research I am exploring this particular documentary from the perspective of the portrait genre and making an attempt to summarize the outstanding conventions of the film-portrait genre within the documentary film branch. In my point of view, the documentary portrait creates a full-value artistic and journalistic image of a person or community, creating the specific synthesis of pure recorded facts, the autobiographical narration of the hero themselves and the vision of an auteur - of the director as the main creating mind. Furthermore, the documentary portrait genre is based on a dominant narration from the first person.

Leni Riefenstahl's personality is definitely worth writing another cultural product about, mainly due to her extraordinary life, the diversity of her person, and her ill-fated label of a Nazi film-maker. A majority of critics and historians,

including Siegfried Kracauer or Susan Sontag, have categorized her work attaching it to fascist aesthetics.¹⁴⁹ Despite blaming her for the glorification of the Führer and celebration of the fascist physical ideal, her cinematic masterpieces nevertheless always remain eternal to the history of cinematography. The archival footage from the silent and early sound films such as *The Blue Light* and *White Hell of Pitz Pallu* contribute to her representation as an actress. The black and white sequences from her two widely famous films *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia* and her own comments and explanations about their shooting and editing process are included in this documentary and perfectly depict her professionalism. This documentary primarily intends to show us the diversity of one single person, who marked history with her controversial art. On the one hand, this documentary works with the reconstruction of her biography and to some extent embodies the dramatization of the presented material. It stresses the drama of a woman whose obsession with filming led to accusations of crimes against humanity. On the other hand, her personality is capable of spectacle and she may have elaborated the strategy of explaining her behavior and the content of her art.

She has reached success in different spheres of visual, media art: as a talented photographer and anthropologist visiting and capturing photos of the Nuba tribe; as a devoted professional, knowing her business; as a scuba-diving photographer conquering the depth of the Indian Ocean. Until her last breath at 101 years old, she tried to remain professionally active. Riefenstahl was regularly honored at various film festivals worldwide and her contribution to cinematography is undoubtable. This extraordinary woman deserves to become a subject of portrayal as well as the subject of research. Her success is a mirror of her endless capabilities.

However, Ray Müller's *Die Macht der Bilder* (1993) illustrates the most informative, descriptive and exhaustive portrait of a person, covering all sides of her personality in detail. Even the author of the film himself has confessed that he wanted to be maximally fair in regards to her representation. Despite the fact that people are mostly interested in her personality because of the films she made during the Third Reich, he decided not to portray her only fragmentally: "*I mean, she had a*

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.26

creative life for seventy years, and to show only eight years she worked under Hitler is not fair to her personality. Even if the other stuff may be less controversial, it's still what she did."¹⁵⁰ As I have already mentioned, this film represents the most complete visual collection of material about her life, organized chronologically with regard to her life. The documentary combines both her own prevailing personal narrative and the director's artistic composition of the documentary as a whole. The final impression from the cinematic solution of the main social actress's representation by the director remains vague and neutral. He neither supports, nor stays biased, and that fact can also be considered an important feature of the portrait genre. A true documentary portrait offers a depiction of a person supported by informative facts, but leaves space for the viewer's rethinking; it does not have to be necessarily expository.

Besides, this Emmy-winning film was highly-evaluated by a majority of authoritative movie databases and did not leave film critics indifferent.

While Riefenstahl convinces both herself and the world that the chronicle genre of film has nothing to do with the politics, the majority of society does not differentiate art and the socially-historical circumstances of its creation. Her answers remain unshakable from interview to interview: in her point of view, her film work was never meant to support the political dogmas of National Socialism. She almost always refused to admit or strongly argument accusations against her. The question of the political indifference of the main social actress still stays debatable in the analyzed film. Such debates only contribute to the revealing of her traits of character.

This thought has become central not only to the biographical publications about her, but also to our analyzed documentary.

Based on the particular statements of Chandler and Nichols, this research generally offers one of the new approaches to generic analysis with a method of tracing its potential conventions. The theoretical background serves 1) to confirm and justify the reference of this particular documentary to the portrait genre itself 2) to explain the rationality of each suggested convention and their formulation.

¹⁵⁰ Müller, Ray In cit. 148, Ibid

My documentary analysis is represented by the conventions of the portrait genre, traced in the documentary *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl*.

Needless to say, the list of familiar conventions of this genre offered in this research could be expanded. Moreover, these conventions could sometimes be recognizable within one sequence:

- 1) The presence and dominance of a single social actor/actress (protagonist, main character, central hero); the focus of the documentary film-portrait on the central narrator of their own story.
- 2) The documentary film-portrait genre is based on the simultaneous description and exploration of a personality and provocation regime provided by a director.
- 3) Reference to a broader socially-historical context. The reflection of the portrayed person's character and their life within the broader social discourse (issue, historical event, etc.).
- 4) Combined narrative construction. The combination of the personal, autobiographical narrative (storytelling) of the social actress provided by her self-presentation with the narrative organized by the film-maker and his vision of the person, whom he portrays provided by different elements, such as voice-over, interview, etc.
- 5) Stylistics of camerawork and lighting are mostly focused on the physiognomy and follow the gestures of the social actor central to the portraying. The prevalence of medium close-up shots and mid shots.

These conventions inspired me to form a dichotomous, but fascinating image of a person, who denies her complicity in establishing the Nazi aesthetic ideals in visual culture. The portrait which is finally formed seems to be very complex. There is space for the viewer's reconsideration after watching this documentary. Viewers are free to form their own impression from her personality; either to perceive her sceptically with suspicion, or with an admiration, but nonetheless the author does not impose his final concluding point of view. The meanings which come out of this film as a visual text do not carry an intrusive nature.

Müller's investigative cinematic solutions of provocation regime and his attempts to see things objectively create a portrait of a woman through the film sequences. Such documentary portrait of a person remains dialogical per se, because the filming of her body language, gestures and spontaneous responses to the questions speak for themselves. Within on-screen debates with the film's director, Riefenstahl reveals herself during the recording of their negotiations.

My research led me one step closer to a better understanding of documentary film production and an understanding of the relevance of previous theoretical notions. It also helped me to keep in mind that documentary genres are as rich and multilateral as fictional genres are. Genre theory with regard to documentary film is still full of unstable, changeable categories, which could be expanded. This research is useful and helpful for everyone interested in genre theory, documentary practices and any type of exploring human lives, because it offers a fresh view on the concept of portraiture in the documentary field of motion arts.

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