

Audio-visual Discourses

Call for Papers – *Montage AV* (31/02, 2022)

Films or series that tell stories about exploitation in labour relationships or about environmental disasters need to be seen not only as artistic works or entertaining fiction, but also as taking positions in current debates and dealing with real problems. This is true for offbeat parodies or dark dystopias as well as for social realism, for sitcoms and entertainment series as well as for documentaries (most of which deal most obviously with real social issues). In times of crisis like the current pandemic it also becomes evident that audio-visual narratives serve as imaginative crystallizations of diffuse fears and as shared stocks of knowledge that make it possible to communicate about abstract threats.

Looking at films, series, and other forms of moving pictures as discourses in a theoretically-based rather than just intuitive way appears to be a plausible and worthwhile approach for several reasons. First, viewing films and other audio-visual productions as discursive can help analyse how socially critical topics are dealt with across genres and formats. For example, both documentaries and fictional films may thematize the same issues, albeit by different means and with different implications. Second, this avoids simple models of reflection. The films do not simply take up and represent social developments, but themselves are part of and contribute to understanding reality and shape our images of it. Third, ties to and interrelationships with discourses in other media may become visible and possible to investigate. Similar topics may be dealt with both verbally and audio-visually; images may diffuse into language while a literary motif may be turned into a filmic form.

A possible problem with making use of the concept of discourse in film and media studies is to be found in its notorious ubiquity and imprecision. Many different concepts of discourse are circulating and various more-or-less well worked out theories of discourse exist, aiming at different issues. Semiotic or narratological notions of discourse (e.g. those of Benveniste, Metz, or Odin) may help answer quite different questions about film and audio-visual media than socio-philosophical ones do (e.g. Foucault, Pêcheux, Laclau, Mouffe, etc.). More analytically oriented concepts and methods that have been developed in social, cultural, and communication sciences (e.g. by Jäger, Link, Fairclough, or van Dijk) show different strengths and blind spots in their heuristic approaches.

For this issue of the journal, we are looking for articles that show awareness of this conceptual jungle and undertake theoretical expeditions or explore it using analytic case studies. They might, for instance, consider the following topics and questions:

What defines the political or ethical perspective of an audio-visual text? What kinds of referential and discursive connections can be found? How can we think of the

relationships between reading a film and socio-philosophical argumentation? How can we conceive of the participation of audio-visual media in the way various topics are worked out in social and cultural negotiations?

In which discursive formations are the analysed films situated? What do audio-visual discourses take as given reality and what do such axiomatic assumptions show us? For example, how do discriminatory stereotypes and clichés arise and how can they be criticized and counteracted?

How do audio-visual media function rhetorically and persuasively and what means of suggestion or of emotional manipulation do they use? To what extent can we speak of specific *audio-visual* forms of discursivization here? How is the stylistic level of the film related to the discursive level?

We would welcome manuscripts of up to 35,000 characters (about 6800 words). Christoph Büttner (c.buettner [at] filmuniversitaet.de) and Guido Kirsten (g.kirsten [at] filmuniversitaet.de) will be glad to answer any questions and provide further information. Please submit manuscripts by 16 May 2022 to the above addresses or montage [at] snafu.de.