

Biphasic Methodology for the Study of the Aesthetics of a Film Author
Metodología bifásica para el estudio de la estética de un autor cinematográfico

Rubén de la Prida. Complutense University of Madrid (Spain)

PhD Candidate in Audiovisual Communication, Publicity and PR. He graduated in Mechanical Engineering at the Carlos III University of Madrid, where he is a lecturer, and balances his professional career as a railway consultant with research and teaching in Cinema as well as Mechanics.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4217-8048>

Article received: 31/10/2021 – Accepted: 27/11/2021

Abstract:

The systematic study of the filmic text can be carried out according to various analytic approaches. However, up to now, no methodology has been defined for the study of the aesthetics of the complete works of a film auteur. The method here proposed consists of two well-defined phases; its character is eminently inductive, and it is indebted both to the scientific method and to the film critic. The first phase is based on the analysis of style, sequence by sequence, of a title representative of the auteur's filmography. The second comprises the verification of the recurrent elements found in the first phase in the remaining filmography; said elements being grouped around broader categories – corresponding to various methodologies of analysis –, in order to determine the constants of the auteur's aesthetics. The application of the proposed method to Wes Anderson's filmography allows us to expose its particularities and to demonstrate its validity.

Keywords:

Film Analysis; Film Aesthetics; Auteur Theory; Scientific Method; Wes Anderson.

Resumen:

El estudio sistemático del texto cinematográfico se puede llevar a cabo según diversos enfoques analíticos. No se ha definido hasta ahora, sin embargo, metodología alguna para el estudio de la estética del corpus completo un autor cinematográfico. Se propone aquí un método en dos fases bien definidas, de carácter eminentemente inductivo, y deudor tanto del método científico como de la crítica cinematográfica. La primera fase consiste en el análisis de estilo, secuencia por secuencia, de un film representativo de la filmografía del autor. La segunda comprende la verificación de los elementos recurrentes hallados en la primera fase en el resto de la filmografía; dichos elementos son agrupados en torno a categorías más amplias -correspondientes a diversas metodologías de análisis- a fin de determinar las constantes de la estética del

autor. La aplicación del método propuesto a la filmografía de Wes Anderson permite exponer sus particularidades y demostrar su validez.

Palabras clave:

Análisis fílmico; Estética cinematográfica; Teoría de los autores; Método científico; Wes Anderson.

1. Introduction

Since the very dawn of the seventh art, the cinematographic text has been the object of systematic study, with various methodologies of analysis being proposed. Sergei M. Eisenstein (1942) can be considered as one of the pioneers in this field with his book *The Film Sense*, among other works, where he carefully dissects certain sequences of his own filmography, underlining film editing questions, as it was to be expected from the Soviet master. The film analyst Lauro Zavala (2010), on the other hand, proposes Marcel Martin's (1954) work *Le langage cinématographique*, as “one of the first didactic manuals for the interpretative analysis of cinema”. Since then, various methodological approaches have been proposed for the study of a given film or, at least, of a given sequence. Thus, Aumont & Marie (1988), gather different methodologies in their classic *L'analyse des films*, such as textual analysis, image and sound analysis, psychoanalytical analysis and intertextual analysis. On the other hand, Bordwell and Thompson (2020), in their reference work *Film Art. An Introduction* opt for a neoformalist analysis of style, not very distant from the one presented by Casetti & Di Chio (1990) in their manual *Analisi del film*; however the Italians place greater emphasis on issues of narratological and communication analysis. In a similar way, although with a somewhat more abstract character, we find the mainly codic approach advocated by the conglomerate of authors under the pseudonym of Ramón Carmona (2016) in *Cómo se comenta un texto fílmico*. Finally, mention can be made of the German Werner Faulstich (2013), whose very interesting volume *Grundkurs Filmanalyse*, although showing many traces in common with the aforementioned works, provides some elements of novelty, particularly with regard to the analysis of the plot. Beyond all these approaches to the filmic text, generally rooted in its forms, we find the advocates of semiotic-structuralist studies; among them Christian Metz (1968; 1973), with his *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, written between 1964 and 1972, or Peter Wollen (1972), with his fundamental work *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, stand out.

As Bordwell (1989, pp. 17-18) states in *Making Meaning. Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*, it should not be forgotten that a good part of the techniques of analysis come from literature. This fact would explain the importance of works such as *Figures III*, by Gérard Genette (1972), for the study of the narratology of the filmic text, as can be inferred, for example, from the classic manuals by Sánchez Noriega (2000) or Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis (1992). All these methodological tendencies, however, are oriented towards the analysis of *one* film, or, as the case may be, of part of it, for example, of a sequence representative of the totality of a film or of certain expressive resources of an auteur, such as what Santos Zunzunegui (2017) calls filmic microanalysis.

Thus, while the method to apply when analyzing a unique film is clear, what to do when one wants to analyze the aesthetics of a filmmaker's entire filmography? Which guidelines should be followed, which criteria should be applied?

A possible approach to this problem can be established on the basis of the fact that the internal coherence of the works of some auteurs makes it possible to contemplate their entire cinematographic creation as a single film. Jean Renoir himself, when asked by the critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* if he considered *The Great Illusion* (*La Grande Illusion*, 1937) his best film, answered:

I feel that sometimes voluntarily, often involuntarily, I've been following the same line ever since I began making films. I've basically shot one film, I've continued to shoot one film, ever since I began, and it's always the same film. (Renoir, 1989, p. 250)

Certainly, *Cahiers* has had a fundamental role in the development and spreading of the so-called auteur theory. One of the fundamental corollaries of this theory is the assumption that the works of a filmmaker can be considered, in essence, as a single great film, insofar as it presents a coherent aesthetic throughout. This is certainly the case with Renoir himself, as well as with other filmmakers such as Yasujiro Ozu, Ingmar Bergman, Alfred Hitchcock, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Martin Scorsese, Aki Kaurismäki or, of course, Wes Anderson. The latter, from whose works the practical application of the theoretical method proposed in this article will be carried out, not only falls within the postulates of auteur theory, as proposed, among others, by Devin Orgeron (2007) or Thomas Elsaesser (2012, p. 364n5), but he is indeed a self-conscious auteur, as it can be observed in his films as well as in the paratexts accompanying them. Moreover, as the first scholar argues, Anderson is a renovator – and indeed a contradictory and conflictive one – of the very concept of auteur. His authorial idiosyncrasy is so strong that one could justifiably speak of *Andersonianism*¹.

Before continuing, we must dwell for a moment on the term aesthetics, since it is often used – even in academic literature – in a highly reductionist way. The correct formulation of this concept is fundamental, since it allows us to understand not only the extent of the problem we are dealing with but, above all, its depth. Thus, on the one hand, we can go back to the etymology of the word aesthetics, which, according to the dictionary of the Real Academia Española (RAE, 2019), comes from:

modern Latin *aestheticus*, and this from Greek αἰσθητικός *aisthētikós* 'that is perceived by the senses'; the feminine form comes from the modern Latin *aesthetica*, and this from the Greek [ἐπιστήμη] αἰσθητική [*epistēmē*] *aisthētikḗ* '[knowledge] that is acquired by the senses'.

The feminine form referred to in the previous quotation is the closest to the use we are going to make of the term here: aesthetics does not only constitute a certain sensory perception of an auteur's formal expression by the spectator, but it is, above all, a certain knowledge of reality – a worldview – revealed and transmitted from certain forms

1. See de la Prida (2021), on the concept of Andersonianism and some of its defining characteristics.

perceptible by the senses. In this sense, the notion of aesthetics that interests us corresponds to the sixth meaning of the RAE dictionary entry (2019), which reads:

6. f. The set of stylistic and thematic elements that characterize a certain author or artistic movement. *The aesthetics of modernism.*

Even more concretely, and insofar as it is applied to the particular case of a cinematographic auteur, we embrace for our purpose the definition of aesthetics proposed by Sánchez Noriega (2017, p. 190, italics in the original), which is preceded by an introductory paragraph that criticizes the aforementioned reductionism and casually mentions the auteur himself on whom we will concentrate afterwards:

When we refer to aesthetics there is a tendency to emphasize the artistic form or the most external part of the style [...]. If we approach current filmmakers it seems that only personalities such as Wes Anderson or Tim Burton possess aesthetics because, in effect, they are image builders. But this position is insufficient insofar as the aesthetics of a filmmaker is the set of elements that identify his authorship and the creative world that constitutes his works. Therefore, along with the visual aspects, other elements of style must be taken into account, such as the spatial-temporal vertebration of the story or the elaboration of the dialogues.

[...] In short, *a filmmaker's aesthetics is his idiosyncratic form of artistic expression in films that reveal a vision of the world based on the conflicts, characters and themes present in the stories told.*

To the best of my knowledge, no publication so far has dealt with the methodology of analyzing the complete works of a cinematographic auteur. It is true that books on filmmakers generally present a similar structure, consisting of a biographical – and sometimes historical – sketch of the director in question, an analysis of his or her defining stylistic features and predominant themes, plus a more or less extensive section for each of the films in his or her filmography, which is highlighted and contextualized. This would be, roughly speaking, the scheme of most of the directors' biographies in the collection of the Spanish publishing house *Cátedra*, for example. In some cases, a predominant aesthetic aspect of the filmmaker is chosen to account for his or her distinctive features, as Kornhaber (2017) does in her monograph on Wes Anderson, by contemplating the Texan's work from the perspective of a collector's aesthetics. In all cases, however, it is possible to assume that the exhaustive viewing of all of an auteur's films precedes the determination of their characteristic traits. Thus, we can probably assume that the method followed is a deductive one, as in statistics: from a sample of *n* elements, the characteristics shared by all are extracted, as well as defining those that cannot be included in the "average", i.e. those in which the standard deviation is too high to follow the statistical analogy, and why.

The method we propose here is, however, essentially inductive: it is closer to the scientific method, on the one hand, and to film criticism, on the other. It takes the direction of problem solving (from the particular to the general) and the essential phases of research based on experience from the former: yet, from the latter, it takes its generalist character while unavoidably resorting to intuition. One could say, moreover,

that the first phase of the method to be presented shares the metonymic character of the microanalysis proposed by Zunzunegui, as it analyzes the part in order to explain the whole.

2. Methodology

In order to properly understand the originality of the proposed methodology, it is necessary to distinguish it, first of all, from the approaches to cinema related to quantitative methods. In this field, the efforts of the discipline known as *cinematics*, which analyzes different variables – such as the Average Shot Length (ASL) – to carry out a comparative study between the films of different auteurs, or to analyze the evolution of an auteur’s filmography, should be highlighted. In this regard, and among many others, the publications by Rubio Alcover & Samit (2013) or, more recently, by Gutiérrez Martínez (2019), can be mentioned. Along the same lines, other essentially quantitative approaches can also be pointed out, such as the stylometric analysis of screenplays with computational methods, like the one carried out by Buckland (2019) precisely on one of Wes Anderson’s screenplays, *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007).

Although the proposed methodology does not apply this type of quantitative analysis, we consider, nevertheless, that it brings the scientific method – in its original formulation indebted to the work of Isaac Newton and William Whewell, who coined the term – closer to film analysis. In particular, the model of scientific method that comes closest to the proposals of the two aforementioned physicists is the hypothetico-deductive method. Despite its name, it is indeed a highly inductive methodology, since it goes from the particular to the general, and also since the second and fourth steps of its fundamental scheme – described below - are eminently inductive:

1. Observation of the phenomenon to be studied.
2. Formulation of a hypothesis to explain the phenomenon.
3. Deduction of the elementary consequences of such a hypothesis.
4. Verification or refutation of the hypothesis, by means of experience.

In our case, steps 2 and 3 are given a priori through the postulate of the auteur theory that a filmmaker, by generating a film corpus with idiosyncratic stylistic and thematic features, repeats over and over throughout his or her filmography the same formal elements and the same basic concerns. In a certain way, this repeatability, which constitutes one of the experimental premises of the scientific method, has in the methodology proposed here an axiomatic – although not arbitrary – character, as shown by the monographs on various directors mentioned above, as well as by the cited definition by Sánchez Noriega (2019, p. 190). Therefore, the biphasic and inductive character of the method is necessarily given by the fact that it is derived from the first and fourth steps of the previous list. However, it does not stop here, since its object of study is not that of the empirical sciences, and also because in each of the two stages different tools of analysis are used.

Moreover, as already mentioned, the proposed methodology is not only indebted to the scientific method – according to the concept proposed above – but more so to film criticism, both in its undeniable component of intuition and subjectivity, which mainly affects its first phase, and in its polyhedral and generalist character, which is shown in

the second one. Both influences are brought together through the rigorous and systematic application of diverse methodologies of film analysis.

The following is an analysis of the implications of each of the phases in the study of the aesthetics of a cinematographic auteur.

2.1 Observation of the phenomenon to be studied

In the case at hand, the starting phenomenon is necessarily one of the director's films. As in the hypothetico-deductive method, this first phase involves both the study of the state of the art and the compiling of data. Accordingly, once the film to be studied has been selected, the task is twofold: first, to gather as much information as possible about what has already been said about it and, second, to carry out this particular "data compilation", which in our case is equivalent to the analysis of the film. Given that the object of study is the aesthetics of a cinematographic auteur, we consider that such analysis should be focused mainly on style, according to the model proposed by Bordwell & Thompson (2020), especially in Part Three of their handbook (pp. 112-327).

Thus, the difficulty of this first step derives not so much from the application of the indicated analytical methodology, which is well known, but from the choice of the appropriate film. Since the analysis of a medium-length film sequence by sequence takes, according to Faulstich (2013, pp. 73-77)², a whole month working eight hours daily and five days weekly, it is important not to make a mistake in this selection. However, since this is an a priori choice, a component of subjectivity is unavoidable. This subjectivity is mainly due to the fact that it is not an arbitrary decision, albeit one with an intuitive component. However, in order to ensure that it is not entirely subjective and can have some repeatability, the following criteria can be followed for the choice of the film to be analyzed:

1. The film must be representative of the auteur's filmography. Perhaps it is more practical to state this principle in a negative way: marginal films or outliers should not be chosen, precisely because this kind of games – or mistakes – can be found in practically any filmography. To give a few examples: it is clear that, if one wants to study Alfred Hitchcock's aesthetics, it is out of place to select minor works like *Topaz* (1969) or *Frenzy* (1972), directed with a relatively weak pulse by an already tired Hitchcock. However, it is necessary to question whether the central subjects of his filmography (the guilt of the supposedly innocent man, the psychoanalytic approach to sexuality, etc.) and their more idiosyncratic forms (such as the use of representative shots of a character's subjective point of view, for example) are better expressed in *North by Northwest* (1959) or in *Vertigo* (1958). Likewise, it makes little sense to choose the forgotten *Kundun* (1997) or the ill-treated *Hugo* (2011) for an analysis of
2. The German analyst proposes what he calls *Filmprotokoll* and Aumont & Marie (1988) call *découpage*, i.e. the compilation of a chart with the exact description of all the elements of the image and sound tracks, shot by shot. Although the sequence-by-sequence analysis derived from the segmentation does not reach this level of detail, it is necessary, in order to be able to perform the stratification, to describe the basic elements of each of both components in each sequence. Experience shows that there is no great difference in the time required to analyze an entire film, regardless of whether or not it is carried out in the form of *découpage*.

Scorsese's work, although one may wonder whether the sordid atmospheres in which his losers roam, or his innovative filmic resources, are better represented in *Mean Streets* (1973) or *Raging Bull* (1980). In both cases, however, it seems difficult to go wrong with either of these examples. At most, we will come to the conclusion that this or that idiosyncratic trait – which we will later call an aesthetic constant – does not yet appear or is not present in the chosen film, but is present in the rest; this result is an unavoidable part of the second phase of the method. But we can reasonably suspect that the conclusions will be very similar in the different cases, and that there will be very few variations between them. With some directors, the choice is somehow self-evident: it is almost inconceivable to study in depth the aesthetics of Truffaut's cinema without starting in that “matrixial work” (Marie, 2012, p. 148) that is *The 400 Blows* (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, 1959); likewise, it does seem appropriate to study Welles' aesthetics from *Citizen Kane* (1941).

2. The position of the film in the auteur's filmography should be taken into account. The last two cases are clear examples of how first works are good candidates for the choice of film, since they often function as artistic manifestos of the auteur in question. The turning points of the filmography – especially those in its early stages – or its critical moments are also susceptible of being chosen.
3. The impact of the film on the History of Cinema should be taken into account. If we take the above examples relating to Hitchcock and Scorsese, and when in doubt, we would be more inclined to choose *Vertigo* and *Mean Streets*, as they are works with a presumably greater resonance than the rest. It is not relevant that the first one is pivotal to Hitchcock's style and the second, a third film with a less refined aesthetics than that of Scorsese's later filmography.
4. The chosen film must, besides fulfilling the above requirements, be one of the analyst's favorite. The exhaustive analysis of a film is a race of endurance. Taking into account the 160 hours of work mentioned by Faulstich, it is evident that the object of study, given the multiplicity of options, should not be a film that offers a particular resistance to the analyst himself.

Once the film has been chosen, it must be dissected by means of the first tool of any analysis: segmentation. After dismembering the film into its constituent parts, the recurring elements and their variations must be identified, depending on the type of analysis: stratification then takes place. The nature of these elements, logically, will depend on the type of analysis. As we said previously, we defend that, for the study of the auteur's aesthetics, the most appropriate way is analyzing the style according to the neoformalist perspective proposed by Bordwell & Thompson.

2.2 Verification or refutation of the hypothesis, by means of experience

Logically, the axiomatic starting hypothesis must be demonstrated, namely that the repetitive elements of the chosen film and its variations are found in the rest of an auteur's filmography, with the exception of the outliers, which can also be pinpointed. These elements, identified through the analysis of style, can then be associated, in a

more precise and at the same time more general way, to other analytical categories, such as narratology, communication analysis, intertextuality, etc., depending on the aspects to be emphasized. It is clear that certain models of analysis, such as the psychoanalytic or the semiotic-structural ones, will ordinarily have less weight when evaluating the aesthetics of a filmmaker, without necessarily being excluded for that reason. Nor should we overlook here the analysis of style, although it predominated in the previous phase.

Accordingly, the search of the elements found in the entire works in the first phase, as well as regrouping them around certain categories, makes it possible to reduce the aesthetics of an auteur to a limited number of distinctive constants. These, logically, will be present in a variable way throughout his filmography; it may be that some of them have not been identified in the first phase, but according to the very nature of the method, not only verification, but also refutation is possible. However, given the more general nature of these constants, composed of several recurring elements, it is more likely that some of the latter will not be present in the selected film, or will have an exclusive representation. In our case, neither of these possibilities constitutes a problem, since both verification and refutation are useful for the knowledge and definition of the auteur's aesthetics.

3. Results

The application of the described method to Wes Anderson's filmography allows for its positive assessment. It is possible, through its consistent use, to detach the complex and idiosyncratic aesthetics of this auteur to a reasonable group of defining constants.

3.1. Results of the first phase: choice and analysis of *Rushmore*.

At the time this research began, Wes Anderson had already released nine feature films, from *Bottle Rocket* (1996) to *Isle of Dogs* (2018), as well as two short films, *Bottle Rocket* (1994) and *Hotel Chevalier* (2007). Choosing *Rushmore* (1998) as the starting film for the analysis of his aesthetics seemed nevertheless somewhat obvious, as this film fulfilled all four of the above criteria:

1. *Rushmore* is, without a doubt, a work representative of Wes Anderson's aesthetics. A glance at the author's complete filmography allows us to intuit that practically all of his characteristic stylistic features and relevant subjects appear in his second film, although in some cases in embryonic form.
2. *Rushmore* constitutes a turning point in Anderson's filmography only comparable, so far, to *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009). The reasons for this statement are beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, one thing is evident to the average viewer of Anderson's work; according to Matt Zoller Seitz, (2013 p. 58): the feature film *Bottle Rocket* "still doesn't quite feel like a Wes Anderson film". In *Rushmore*, however, there is a quantum leap in his style, to such a recognizable extent that his fan club website is called rushmoreacademy.com. On the other hand, the study of the state of the art on the auteur leaves little room for doubt: *Rushmore* is not only one of the most frequently cited film in all literature about him, but it is also among those that are recurrently studied in the most relevant articles.

3. Of all of Wes Anderson's films, only *Rushmore* has been elected by the United States' Library of Congress for its preservation in the *United States Film National Film Registry*. The election took place in 2016, and this film was prioritized over others indisputably significant and representative of the author, such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).
4. The fourth criterion, the most subjective of all, was also met. Of all Anderson's films, we consider *Rushmore* to be the most hilarious, followed by *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and the most original one, along with *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012).

In spite of all these aspects pro *Rushmore*, there was no lack, however, of arguments in favor of other films. On the one hand, it was clear that *Bottle Rocket* and its homonymous short film, or the *Hotel Chevalier/The Darjeeling Limited* diptych and *Isle of Dogs* were automatically excluded because of their atypical nature, or that *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004) and *Moonrise Kingdom* should not be considered as they are very personal works. On the other hand, however, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* or *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) were certainly possible choices, as they are works that, in addition to enjoying a large box-office success and critical acclaim, are undeniable examples of Andersonianism in its purest form. Moreover, the latter posed the problem that some relevant scholars – such as Donna Kornhaber (2017, p. 43) – consider it the true starting point of Andersonian aesthetics. Nevertheless, the commitment to *Rushmore* was maintained because, while it is possible to agree with the defenders of *The Royal Tenenbaums* that all Andersonian stylistic features are present in this film, albeit with a more defined character than in that other one, it can also be stated, consistently with Seitz's (2013, p. 110) intuition, that all of them are already present in *Rushmore*. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the election of *The Royal Tenenbaums*, or *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, would not have been misleading, but would have led to similar conclusions. *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, on the other hand, has been described – quite wrongly, in my opinion – as Wes Anderson's artistic manifesto (O'Brien, 2014), and, while it is true that in many aspects it can be considered as an anthological synthesis of the auteur's aesthetics, it is also undeniable that it shows unrepeatable singularities within the Andersonian filmography. However, it is quite possible that its analysis would also have led to similar results.

There is another argument in favor of *Rushmore*, also shared by *Fantastic Mr. Fox*: in both cases, the narrative structure (completely lacking flashbacks, for example) is substantially more transparent to analysis than that of the other two aforementioned films.

Once all of the above was taken into consideration, and the choice of *Rushmore* was clear, the segmentation of the film – that is, the sequence-by-sequence analysis that allows stratification – was carried out. As a consequence of both the segmentation and the stratification, all recurring elements throughout the film were identified, as well as their different variations. Only then did the second phase of the method start.

3.2. Results of the second phase: extrapolation to the rest of the filmography and determination if the aesthetic constants.

Both the search for the recurring elements identified in *Rushmore* in the rest of the filmography and their association to different categories of analysis led to results that were not obvious at first.

We have widely documented, in a previous paper (de la Prida, 2021), a particularly significant example in that regard. Thus, the stylistic analysis of *Rushmore* allowed us to discover certain resources associated with theatricality, such as the film being conceived as a play, the theatrical performances within the film, Max's own existential performance, or some of his glances towards the camera. The examination of these elements with the tools of narratological and communication analysis makes it possible to identify them as belonging to the same variant of *mise-en-abyme*³. Theatricality is only one of the possible variants of *mise-en-abyme*; others, such as mirror games or nested filmic techniques, to cite just a few examples, could also be mentioned. The various modalities of representation within representation are, in short, so nuclear, and their purpose so precise, that it is possible to conclude that the *mise-en-abyme* constitutes a fundamental narrative strategy in Wes Anderson's cinema. Accordingly, elements of a very diverse nature, identified through the analysis of style, make it possible to determine one of the author's aesthetic constants, when examined from the point of view of another analytical methodology. Another of these constants, for instance, links such recognizable styles as symmetry, the use of flat colors, clean editing cuts, the frontal or zenithal position of objects and characters within the frame, or the preferred directions of film and camera movements. In this case, the analysis of the kinematic space makes it possible to group all these features under the common label of the diedric representation system⁴, which summarizes the spatial concept behind Wes Anderson's cinema.

Thus, the second phase of the method allows us not only to confirm that the elements found in the first phase are recurrent throughout the filmography, but also to group them around those constants – up to a total of twenty-two, in Anderson's case – that make it possible to precisely define the aesthetics of the auteur under study. Not having found clear refutations in any of the cases, it is true that the presence of some relevant expressions of style – such as the use of color – is somewhat reduced in *Rushmore*, and only assessable in view of the subsequent films. Accordingly, we ascertain that the grouping of the different elements around the broader – and also more representative –

3. The French writer André Gide (2012, p. 49) coined the concept of *mise-en-abyme* in an entry in his diary from 1893, in which the Nobel Prize winner proposes a heraldic analogy to define various types of representation within representation: "I rather like that in a work of art the theme of the work itself is thus transposed to the scale of the characters. Nothing enhances it better or establishes more clearly the proportions of the whole. Thus in the paintings by Memling or Quentin Metzys, a small dark convex mirror reflects, in turn, the interior of the room where the painted scene takes place. Something similar (albeit with slight differences) takes place in Velázquez's *Las Meninas*. Finally, in literature, there is the dumbshow scene in *Hamlet*; and in many other plays ... None of these examples is completely accurate. What would be much more so, and would better express what I was looking for in my Cahiers, in my *Narcisse* and in *La Tentative*, is the comparison with a coat of arms where a second one is placed «in abyme» in the first one".

4. The diedric system is one of the characteristic representation systems in descriptive geometry, usually used in architecture and engineering.

categories that constitute the aesthetic constants, makes it possible to make up for the deficient – or excessive – presence of some of these in the original film.

4. Conclusions

The methodology proposed for the analysis of the aesthetics of the complete works of a cinematographic auteur allows for its precise definition through the execution of two well-defined phases. In the first phase, considering the state of the art, as well as the analyst's previous knowledge and his or her own intuition, a film must be chosen to serve as a starting point. The decomposition of this film in extension (segmentation) and thickness (stratification) allows the identification of recurrent elements and their variations. For this first part, an approach based on a neoformalist analysis of style is favored. In the second phase, the presence of the identified elements in the remaining filmmaker's filmography must be verified (or refuted). Grouping these elements in categories corresponding to different analytical methodologies enables the determination of the different constants that define the filmmaker's aesthetics.

The method has been successfully applied to Wes Anderson's filmography. The verification of the elements defined through the analysis of *Rushmore* in the remaining filmography, as well as the assimilation of these elements to broader categories, has made it possible to precisely state the aesthetics of this idiosyncratic author by means of a total of twenty-two aesthetic constants, present, with different emphasis, throughout his entire filmography.

5. References

- Aumont, J. y Marie, M. (1990). *Análisis del Film*. Paidós.
- Bordwell, D. (1995). *El significado del filme*. Paidós.
- Bordwell, D., y Thompson, K. (2010). *El arte cinematográfico. Una introducción*. Paidós.
- Buckland, W. (2019). "Mind our mouths and beware our talk": Stylometric analysis of character dialogue in *The Darjeeling Limited*', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 10(2), 131–147.
- Carmona, R. (2016). *Cómo se comenta un texto fílmico*. Cátedra.
- Casetti, F., y Di Chio, F. (1994). *Cómo analizar un film*. Paidós.
- Eisenstein, S. M. (1942). *The Film Sense*. Harcourt, Brace & Comp.
- Elsaesser, T. (2012). *The Persistence of Hollywood*. Routledge.
- Faulstich, W. (2013). *Grundkurs Filmanalyse*. 3., aktualisierte Auflage. Wilhelm Fink.
- Genette, G. (1989). *Figuras III*. Lumen.
- Gide, A. (2012). *Journal. Une anthologie (1889-1949)*. París: Éditions Gallimard.
- Gutiérrez Martínez, B. (2019). Dialécticas de los personajes femeninos y masculinos en'

- Mad men': un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 10(2), 257-279. <https://doi.org/10.5209/infe.66493>
- Kornhaber, D. (2017). *Wes Anderson*. University of Illinois Press.
- de la Prida, R. (2021). 'Mise-en-abyme as narrative strategy in the films of Wes Anderson', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2021.1967682>
- Marie, M. (2012). *La Nouvelle Vague*. Alianza editorial.
- Martin, M. (1954). *La langage cinématographique*. Les Éditions du CERF.
- Metz, C. (1968). *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*. Volume 1. Klincksieck.
- Metz, C. (1973). *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*. Volume 2. Klincksieck.
- O'Brien, G. (2014). 'Lost Continent', *Film Comment*, 50(2), 21–24.
- Orgeron, D. (2007). 'La camera-crayola: Authorship comes of age in the cinema of Wes Anderson', *Cinema Journal*, 40–65. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2007.0016>.
- RAE (2019). *Diccionario de la lengua española - Edición del tricentenario*. RAE
- Renoir, J. (1989). *Renoir on Renoir*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rubio Alcover, A., y Samit, A. (2013). Three Neoclassicisms. Exploring the Possibilities of a Comparative Average Shot Length Through Clint Eastwood, Brian De Palma and Woody Allen. *Revista ICONO 14*, 11(2), 295-329. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v11i2.163>
- Sánchez Noriega, J. L. (2000). *De la literatura al cine. Teoría y análisis de la adaptación*. Paidós.
- Sánchez Noriega, J. L. (2017). *Universo Almodóvar. Estética de la pasión en un cineasta posmoderno*. Alianza editorial.
- Seitz, M. Z. (2013). *The Wes Anderson Collection*. Abrams.
- Stam, R., Burgoyne, R., y Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1999). *Nuevos conceptos de la teoría del cine*. Paidós.
- Wollen, P. (1972). *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. Secker and Warburg/British Film Institute.
- Zavala, L. (2010). 'El análisis cinematográfico y su diversidad metodológica', *Casa del tiempo*, 65–68.
- Zunzunegui, S. (2016). *La mirada cercana: microanálisis fílmico*. Shangrila.

Conflict of interest: the author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

English translation: provided by the author.

HOW TO CITE (APA 7^a)

De la Prida Caballero, R. (2021). Biphasic Methodology for the Study of the Aesthetics of a Film Author. *Communication & Methods*, 3(2), 111-123.
<https://doi.org/10.35951/v3i2.129>