



## Reality and Fiction

### Sequence analysis from *The Happiest Girls in the World*, by Radu Jude

#### ➤ Introduction

What is at stake in the relationship between reality and fiction in the cinema?

Here, it is not a matter of contrasting the documentary with the fiction, but rather, through a sequence from Radu Jude's film *the Happiest Girl in the World* (2008), about analysing how reality (the world, as it exists) and fiction (the world of the film and its characters) are captured, on various levels and in every film.

Whether it be sought after by the film maker (through precise mechanisms) or accidentally recorded, the presence of the world gives a particular dimension to the story told in the film.

You don't need to have seen Radu Jude's film entirely to use this educational film in class: the chosen extract enables, without context, to tackle the different aspects of the problematic through general questioning, which can be reused for other films.

This choice of making reality and fiction existing together is at the heart of many films of the CINED collection (especially in *Tall Stories (Uma Pedra no Bolso)* by J. Pinto, *Rentrée des classes* by J. Rozier, *Little Light (Petite lumière)* by A. Gomis, *The Interval (L'intervallo)* by L. di Costanzo, *Pierrot le fou* by J.L. Godard, *Aniki Bobo* by M. de Oliveira).

#### ➤ The choice of the place

By its simple mechanical capacity of recording, and since its origins (the images of the Lumière operators), the cinema has been documenting the world as it is, in a given place and time. Radu Jude has chosen to place this sequence in a popular public place (a square in Bucharest), in broad daylight, in the summer (or in the spring) which has a major impact on the atmosphere of the sequence.

#### ➤ The shot range

In each of these three shots, the choice of a rather wide shot range and the situation of the camera allow to capture a forever living testimony of these inhabitants' daily life: the passers-by that we see crossing the road, in the depth of field, the bystanders settled on the public benches. The sequence tells the story of Délia, a fictional character, but also gives to see the life in Bucharest, in the years 2000.

#### ➤ A discreet filming

These key choices (the filming place in a natural setting or not, the time and hour, the season and weather conditions) raise the question on the filming system put in place. The choice of a discreet and small film crew allows to blend in the daily entertainment taking place on this public square whilst avoiding what could disrupt the filming: looks to the camera, intrusions, ... In order to know exactly where to place the camera without being noticed, there must have been, most certainly, a long work around the recon.

The storyline choice of a mise en abyme reinforces this system even more: the character of Délia takes part in the filming of an advert, there is a second film set in the film's space, which allows the film maker to create confusion amongst the passers-by and the bystanders around: which one is the "true film set" space?

➤ **A filming freedom welcoming hazards**

The question of the intrusion of reality within the fiction, its articulation, is not set in stones; it is dynamic, at the core of the film, just like at the heart of a sequence, linked to the systems put in place by the film maker. The choice of a sequence shot, which enables to set up a duration, to pay attention and welcome any unforeseen and unmanageable event which could make the scene better, lead here a tilting movement between fiction and reality: therefore, when the film maker (by chance or premeditation?) suddenly abandons his main character to follow a passer-by who was crossing in front of the camera.

➤ **The lapse between the camera and the character: raising empathy**

The scenario plans a precise situation: a conflict between a teenager and her parents. The extent of the conflict is not mentioned in a spectacular way. The (large) shot range and the distance between the camera and the character enable the spectator to feel Délia's loneliness, her feeling of helplessness. The passers-by carrying on their way, masking her silhouette from time to time, the bystanders enjoying the warm rays of sunshine, the pigeons dance animating the square: the real world seems to be a complete stranger to the internal drama taking place inside the character, which the spectator witnesses.

➤ **Character's body, actor's body**

The conflict's situation is associated with precise emotional challenges for the character (anger, tension, frustration, expectation...) which the actor must act out and pass on to the spectator. The film maker doesn't opt for a psychologizing exposure, through long discussions, but he gives his actress (who is non-professional) precise tasks to do (gestures, movements), and he films her in a still shot, over a period of time, vacant. By doing so, he enables the spectator to observe, beyond the character, a young teenager (body type, way of walking, skinned knee, ...), to project himself/herself on her emotionless face.

➤ **From the sound perspective: what do we hear and what do we perceive?**

Délia's internal monologue, her loneliness and her dismay do not come across through her actress's words. Words and silences mix up with the sounds of the world, very present, recorded by the camera, then mixed in the studio: the passers-by's steps, the birds, the fireman's siren, the hubbub of the traffic...

