Aesthetic Criteria in Journalism in the Aspect of Professional Education

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Abstract

The ability to find aesthetic solutions adequate to the creative concept, social task and target audience becomes an actual competence for journalists. Factors and components of journalistic content aesthetic evaluation, including temporal-stylistic, documentary, artistic, functional characteristics, as well as parameters of mass character / individuality, standard / uniqueness, make it possible to form basic aesthetic criteria clusters to be considered in journalistic creative work. Clusters of integrity, expressiveness, production and impression, correlated with professional coordinates, can serve as a basis for developing further parameters for evaluating aesthetic activity in journalism. The aesthetic and functional components interaction in journalistic education meets challenges of the modern media market, expands the range of professional practices and gives hope for humanistic perspectives of the industry. Unlike the subject disciplines in the curriculums, the aesthetics of journalism permeates professional training, synthesizes interdisciplinary interaction and reveals itself in practical product as the most important result of the pedagogical school activities.

Keywords: aesthetics of journalism, professional standards, aesthetic evaluation, journalistic education.

1. Introduction

The journalism aesthetic function is realized not only through informative or didactic components of publications, but also with the expressive means and components that contribute to the formation of aesthetic impressions, tastes, and ideals. Being genetically interrelated with rhetoric, literature, visual and entertainment arts, journalism manifests itself both in line with the aesthetic perception of reality, in the meaning of Baumgarten sensory cognition (Prozerskiy, 2015: 419-422), and in aspects of correlation with the "ideal", or the idea of the subject (Chernishevsky, 1951: 72). In the new communicative media reality the information glut determines mostly the emotional, sensual, i.e. the aesthetic bases of the content choice by the audience, as well as its impact. (Haak et al., 2012: 2926). The aesthetic criteria identification and formation in journalism is a logical development of its understanding in the modern culture aesthetic space context (Berezhnaia, 2018) and is inevitably connected with an awareness of their penetration into the professional training process.

Studies of the media perception culture in the media education mainstream are reasonably focused on the texts interpretation by the audience and the meanings created by the aesthetic components of the works (Fedorov, 2015). The aesthetic direction in media studies deals, in particular, with the need to analyze the powerful media impact on the public, to reveal the

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aggregate texts and images hidden effects on adolescents and young people, as well as to learn how to relate with media properly and safe. The ability to navigate in the modern media space and the meanings produced in the public field becomes important for a person who lives with a huge and constant information load. But no less important is the professional ability to find aesthetic solutions adequate to the creative concept, social task and target audience, thus it becomes an actual competence for journalists. We are talking not about the analysis of particular aesthetic phenomena, but about the corresponding system of journalistic content evaluation, based on the social aesthetic ideal and initial professional attitudes.

2. Materials and methods

The article is based on research materials in the field of journalism aesthetic practices and media text aesthetics, correlated with works in the field of social functioning of journalism and professional identity, as well as teaching journalism issues. The aesthetic evaluation criteria in journalistic work are defined and the corresponding clusters are described in comparing the theoretical views on the media content aestheticization and its correlation with the current educational practices. General theoretical methods were used: classifications, generalizations, comparisons, functional analysis.

3. Discussion

The formation of aesthetic criteria in journalism faces with contradictions caused by current trends in the media field. Among the discussion areas is the artistic techniques penetration into journalism (Cramerotti, 2009; Novikova, 2014), which expand the range of expressive possibilities, but at the same time signify a retreat from traditional professional standards. This suggests that the loss of documentary features in modern media texts, the substitution of facts by their images, and the emotional impact dominance on the audience instead information blur the line between journalism and art, moreover, this signifies displacement of journalism with art, because the latter "is closer to truth of life" (Cramerotti, 2009: 31-32).

The dysfunctional character of some journalistic practices is also associated with the aestheticization of the ugly, which is in line with modern aesthetic trends. Philosophers note the loss of aesthetic and artistic boundaries (Valitskaya, 2009), and a new status of concepts "traditionally existed outside of aesthetics, such as aversion, absurdity, cruelty, violence, shock, entropy, chaos, etc." (Manjkovskaya, 2002: 7).

Among the contradictory trends, we should mention the influence of technologies. They, firstly, led to the deprofessionalization in journalism (Lukina, 2013), by bringing the author and content consumer closer (prosumer); secondly, they change the emotional relationship between the audience and the publication (interactivity, immersiveness, game) (Novikova, Kirija, 2018; Kovaleva, Levchenko, 2016) and, finally, they are beginning to push people gradually out of the content production creative process (robotization) (Carlson, 2015; Zamkov, Krashennikov et al., 2017).

All this sets the task of forming ideas about the aesthetic criteria specifics for journalism as a special social institution. Such specificity is determined by the *professional coordinates of journalism*, which reflect the objective conditions and processes of its existence.

The correlation of journalism with the current time aesthetics is manifested in the of *current time relevance* coordinates: the interconnection and interaction of journalism and "here and now" life are interpreted, as well as the adequate aesthetic characteristics and forms of journalistic works are revealed. M.I. Styuflyaeva calls the "publicistic present" the most incomplete (Stjufljaeva, 1982: 10); the media text incompleteness is indicated by researchers of modern multimedia journalism (Kachkayeva, Shomova, 2017; Coleman, 2018). V. Baidina notes that time is fixed, visualized and aestheticized in the media with expressive means of a certain communication channel (Baidina, 2013: 2). The time aesthetics can be of a techno-technological nature, which includes an assessment of journalism technical expressive possibilities in a certain period (temporal expressive possibilities spectrum). The image of time, represented as a temporal aesthetic ideal, is reflected in the content&stylistic components of the journalistic work.

Coordinates of *reality* allow to form the attitude to current aesthetic practices of reality reflection and help to understand when an image of the world is created artificially, formalized and turns into a concept (Zhuravleva, 2005: 16; Heikkilä, Ahva, 2015; Korkonosenko, Berezhnaia, 2016). The classifications reveal possible levels of aesthetic understanding of reality: from

documentary to artistic formula (Korkonosenko, 2018). According to M.I. Styuflyaeva, the image-fact exists as a coincidence of the fact with the author's intention, the image-model includes reasoning, explanation, and the image-concentrate gives a meaning focus of a situation or phenomenon. She also notes that such journalistic image acquires both cognitive and aesthetic task, which are equivalent (Stjufljaeva, 1982: 130). Researchers point to the distance between life and art, reality and image, as well as the additional meanings that exist along this distance and, in fact, bring us closer to our reality understanding. Y.N. Usov emphasizes that the subjective reconstruction of an objective fact is a particular complexity of aesthetic information. Sometimes, thanks to this, we not only clarify and form our attitude towards the author, but also "rediscover the world around us in an emotionally-imaginative form of art (Usov, 1980: 20-21).

However, problem of trust in the media is on the agenda, as far as the most popular word of 2016 is "post-truth" and fake news is a commonplace (Raspopova, Bogdan, 2018). D. Freedman points out that professional journalism is under extraordinary pressure, as "it is regularly accused by the Right of peddling 'fake news' and criticized by the Left for failing to play a robust monitorial role" (Freedman, 2019: 2003). The simulacra threaten confidence to journalism, as the process of fantasy media practices multiplication define the image of reality, even before the audience understands the meaning of the text. According to K.E. Razlogov, "the effect of the audiovisual reality image turns into a mechanism of global falsification, which in turn acquires the appearance of absolute reliability" (Razlogov, 2012: 37).

Among the challenges is also the growing fragmentation of journalistic content caused by the consumption practice (Dzjaloshinsky, 2015), which destroys the integrity of reality perception. Aesthetic ideals of the profession relate to the real world, which is far from perfect, but is viewed through the prism of possible perfection. Hence the *integrity* of aesthetic reality in journalism is necessary.

The *social functioning* coordinates determine the pragmatic nature of the aesthetics of journalism in the aspect of this social institution certain tasks. Information, integration, education, public opinion expression, propagandistic, organizational, and other important functions imputed to journalism, are updated in different times, according to the objectives of the current period. These coordinates provide a different perspective for understanding temporal and other aesthetic practices, embedding them in the "function-dysfunction" dichotomy. One cannot but agree with M.K. Mamardashvili: "It is strange and paradoxical that good or badly written things can be related to good and evil" (Mamardashvili, 2000: 14). The form and expressive means need to correspond to the journalistic work functions, to contribute the publication's aim and the author's intention realization.

The coordinates of *targeting* reflect the aesthetic tastes and ideals of the audience. Relying on the ideas of B. Hübner, M.V. Duminskaya represents the ambivalence of the address processes in the modern media environment: the initial aesthetic self-determination is reduced to the formula "I = I" (Duminskaya, 2013: 114-119). This is also indicated by A.V. Ulyanovsky: "Media gives the viewer a direct sense of his own life, that is, the text provides the audience with its reflection, and in perspective – subtle feeling of life itself", which leads to the confusion of "private and public, virtual and real" (Uljanovsky, 2017: 84-85).

Interactive, and now immersive, journalism practices create intersubjective aesthetic phenomena based on the individuality of an author, his personal uniqueness, promoted and then replicated in the media environment. But the "single-self" trend brings media to the loss of an integrative aesthetic ideal. In this context, the journalism coordinates determine the common aesthetic bases that preserve the audience as a community of individuals.

The *replication* coordinates reflect the multiplication of journalistic publications, which determines the journalism aesthetic impact, which has social consequences. It is precisely the *repetition, copying, redundancy and the scheme accordance* U. Eco considers the main characteristics of mass media aesthetics (Usmanova, 1996). The repetition of events, themes, formats, characters, dramatic schemes is the inevitable reality of modern media production. "The need to produce unique items on the conveyor" (Kemarskaya, 2007: 10) is not so obvious nowadays because of the wide variety of ready-made schemes (Nechushkina, 2014), which teach the audience to choose what is already, familiar, and imposes solutions, standards and, in fact, aesthetic ideals. At the same time, uniqueness becomes a competitive advantage of publications, which stimulates the emergence of new creative solutions, techniques, technologies, which, in turn, are renewed and go in circulation.

In the process of understanding how an aesthetic impact occurs harmonizing abilities of journalism are identified, correlated with its nature and associated with its social functioning. Professional coordinates help to understand aesthetics as an internal reality of journalism. They introduce aesthetic ideas into the mainstream of everyday practice, and become the matrix that helps to formulate aesthetic criteria for evaluating a wide range of journalistic works, as well as include aesthetic approaches in professional training of journalists.

In the traditions of national university formed journalistic education, there was an inclusion of a significant set of academic humanity disciplines in the programs (philosophy, psychology, literature, history, art history, sociology, linguistics), as well as the development of new directions of these disciplines in line with the journalism specifics and needs (political science, sociology, psychology, history of journalism) (Korkonosenko et al., 2018). The pragmatic nature of modern education trends is explained by the media market needs (Lozovsky, 2011) and contributes to the dangerous current fragmentation of the professional culture system formation, which forces to look for new opportunities in this direction (Goodman, Steyn, 2017; Vladimirova, 2015; Korkonosenko, 2018).

In this context, the aesthetics of journalism seems to be an integrative component of journalistic education programs. While focusing on a comprehensive, emotional assessment of the achieved practical result, it introduces the tools that contribute to interrelation and synthesis of disciplines in the pedagogical practices, both at the creation stage and at the final impression level of the journalistic "product".

As V.P. Bransky insists, "the ground for aesthetic evaluation is not rational, but emotional one. And this is exactly the unique case when such a proof is the most real and no other is required. As far as it is inappropriate and unacceptable when justifying any facts, it is just as natural and even absolutely necessary when justifying the aesthetic evaluation of these facts." Such an assessment may be 1) positive, 2) negative, 3) ambiguous (controversial), 4) evasive (uncertain) (Bransky, 1999: 178).

Such criteria require clarification in the case of journalism with its traditional compound of "expression and standard" – aesthetics and industry. The general rules that a person relies on in his aesthetic activity are *integrity, structure, symmetry, rhythm, expediency, harmony*; they determine interaction between content and form, as content modification (Novikova, 1976: 74-79). The substantive aspects of a journalistic work, embodied in its form, are precisely acquire expression and meaning in it.

In the consumer market conditions the components of the media aesthetic evaluation can be correlated with the parameters of such an assessment of any product. In the most general terms, it includes *informative expressiveness, rationality of form, composition integrity, perfect of production performance, and stability of the product presentation* (Tsarev, 2004: 88-95). Expressiveness has a fairly wide range of meanings: it implies a reflection of the aesthetic ideas and norms prevailing in society; the ability to evoke certain feelings, create mood, reveal the intentions of a journalistic work. This may include indicators of originality, such as the uniqueness of the form, style conformity, and also the stability of the artistic expression means inherent in a certain historical stage, conformity with the fashion, as temporarily dominant aesthetic tastes. The composition integrity, as a complex indicator, evaluates the unity of the *parts* and the *whole*, the structure harmony. Rationality implies that the form satisfies the producing and consumption conditions; no less important is the assessment of the perfect quality – thoroughness of finish, cleanliness of operations, etc.

An important psychological mechanism for translating emotional-figurative thinking into an aesthetic fous is productive imagination connected with an associative image, fantasy; starting from meaningful components, it routs the imagination in a certain direction (Novikova, 1976: 100-113; Mamardashvili, 2000: 134). A.V. Fedorov, while demonstrating the active learning methods of aesthetic practices in the media, models the situation of the creative process and includes in the aesthetic result conditions a whole range of diverse components: organizational, meaningful, expressive, instructive (text dramaturgy, media text characteristics, technology, expressive means, variants of structure, genre, perception of the audience, etc.) (Fedorov, 2015). Such an approach – through creating one's own content – provides an opportunity to acquire skills in understanding and interpreting media texts. The specificity of journalism, due to its professional coordinates, implies a more obvious goal-setting and relation to social tasks. Aesthetic criteria are tested in

society, and it sets the task of their development and detailing both in the journalistic work evaluation and, accordingly, in the educational process.

4. Results

The combination of the initial factors and components of journalistic content aesthetic evaluation, including temporal-stylistic, documentary, artistic, functional characteristics, as well as parameters of mass character / individuality, standard/ uniqueness, enables us to offer basic clusters of aesthetic criteria to be considered in journalistic work, and which can serve as supporting blocks in the educational process.

The cluster of *integrity* includes the structural and compositional characteristics of the work, which are evaluated in terms of their unity and purposefulness (Beljaev, 2014). The cluster is composed of the criteria of structure, unity of style, compositional unity, rhythm, expediency, harmony. These aesthetic integrity criteria of an object are related to the professional coordinates of *social functionality* and aim setting of a certain publication – both in each of its fragments and in the unity of the whole material.

Cluster of *expressiveness*, correlated with the coordinates of *current time relevance*, *functionality and reality*, includes a set of the form criteria, such as graphic, stylistic components of the text, which embody the main, additional, figurative meanings of the work. The *expressiveness* criteria are the palette of expressive means, their functionality, interrelation with content, naturalness, as well as genre and style adequacy with aesthetic norms (historical time, social environment, fashion) and originality. The form of publication is able to act as an aesthetic signal and can work as a sign that determines the object significance among others.

The *production* cluster is connected with the *replication* coordinates and includes performance criteria, namely: following the certain standards, formats, procedures and technologies. The operations quality, compliance with language rules, photography technique, sound recording, video, lighting, editing; thorough finishing of the product are evaluated. Industrial factors of creating a journalistic work need optimal aesthetic solutions.

The cluster of *impression*, in contrast to the publication evaluating criteria, includes aspects of the interaction with the addressee, i.e. the process of perception, correlated with the *addressing* coordinates. Criteria that can be included in this cluster, are understanding, interpretation, association, emotional evaluation. Actually, this is the "moment of truth" for an author, who reveals his audience reaction. All components of the journalistic publication are tested at this stage, as well as their adequacy to the recipient's perception. The criteria demonstrate the culture level of understanding, which is recognized in a problem context in modern journalism studies and relevant practice (Blokhin, Korkonosenko, 2015).

All the clusters, in essence, cover the basic complex of professional training aspects: the concept – the creative stage – the production – the audience perception, which are realized with the student's creative projects (Vartanova, 2008). The aesthetic approach assumes elaboration of the content and formal components of the process, which can be traced on the example of the "TV and Radio Journalism" profile educational practice at the School of Journalism and Mass Communications (St. Petersburg State University).

Principles for implementing a profile program include:
- interaction of specialized disciplines (the sequence of mastering knowledge, skills and abilities, continuity of professional disciplines, compulsory and elective disciplines correspondence, modeling production activities);
- "horizontal" principle of work planning (parallelism of theoretical and practical disciplines, generalized results of professional growth in each semester);
- cross-checking (collective expert assessment of learning outcomes);
- publicity of results (studies are subject to compulsory public discussion, get access to public space, participate in professional competitions and festivals).

Such classes' organization principles promote the evaluation clusters use at each educational stage.

The stage of mastering news audiovisual formats represents the main course on the "Theory and practice of news journalism" (variability of news feeds, the structure of a news story, the layout of an information program, the work of a news editor, the style of the issue). The parallel elective course "Professional and Creative Studios" includes modeling the production cycle of

radio/TVnews issues (weekly news programs). Issues are presenting online: experts/professors evaluation is complemented by an audience assessment.

The main courses at this stage include the discipline "Sociology of Journalism", which introduces the journalist's work social efficiency aspects in terms of his creative implementation and interaction with the audience. The topics of the course are the following: "Journalism – media – audience: social and creative connections"; "Audience concept"; "The social essence of the journalism, the media and the audience interaction"; "Social aspects of the journalist creative work"; "Social aspects of the journalist personality"; "Journalist identity"; "The essence of the effectiveness of journalistic activity and the media functioning"; "Performance criteria"; "Factors of journalistic effectiveness"; "Communicator, informer, mediator and recipient"; "The social context of information processes".

At the same stage, the elective course "Journalist on TV: Problems of Mastery" is offered, which gives a comprehensive view of the anchor/moderator work on TV in different programs and contains the following topics: "Television presenter as a personality model of the time"; "Professional and personal journalist characteristics"; "Conflict as a dramatic element of TV story"; "TV presenter as an individual brand"; "Creative interview. Formation of the hero and moderator images"; "Entertainment presenter. Playing the game"; "The host role in the structure of popular science program"; "Expert, moderator, actor". The course demonstrates a deep immersion in the aesthetics of the TVpresenter's image, that not only provides additional creative ideas for work in news programs of different types, but also forms a perspective for complex genres producing.

Thus, the stage includes mastering:

- structural and style components of a separate material and program in their unity and integrity;

- an expressive palette of informational genres and formats in relation to ideas about their social content and effectiveness;

- perspective creative formats for presenting personalized information;

- production process of creating a product in accordance with a given format and timing;

- and also contains a stage of evaluation, perception of the created product, both by experts and a wide audience.

Similar programming is also present at the stages of audiovisual analytics mastering, the result of which is the creation of commentary and a special reportage. The main disciplines include a range of topics aimed at preparing specific publication formats: the logic and structure of a monologue, persuasive communication, reportage dramaturgy, the role of the hero in a reportage, the video quotes functions, comic components in analytical material. Classes in "Professional and Creative Studios" provide the shooting stage, preparation of the rough material for editing: video coding, interview cutting, selection of additional illustrative video, script writing, off-screen text editing, visual solution of episodes, etc. "Creative workshop" is focused on speech exercises.

At the same time, students choose disciplines that often become a content and meaning guide in creative work: "Urban culture and lifestyle: the journalistic context"; "High-quality journalism and new media formats"; "Interaction psychology in the media environment"; "Ecological journalism"; "Man and genres in Russian journalism of the XX century".

At the stage of mastering a portrait essay the main courses are connected with elective ones: "Screen Dramaturgy and Screenwriting Mastery", "Genres of Journalism", "Fashion and Lifestyle Journalism: Values and Effective Practices", "Communicative Culture of a Journalist", "Polycode Text in Mass Commencement"" and etc.

Interdependence and complementary character of disciplines form the required set of aesthetic components in the educational process. The final assessment at each of the professional training stages includes the criteria of all clusters, and the substantive integrity of the overall program finds an aesthetic embodiment in the graduates creative results. The aesthetic component seems to be the most important in teaching journalism in higher school, upon completion of which "the graduate must acquire a solid amount of social and humanitarian knowledge, combined with multi sided skills and advanced professional ideology (Korkonosenko, 2018).

5. Conclusion

The specificity of journalism determines the expanded system of aesthetic criteria, i.e. generalized characteristics presented in the form of clusters – integrity, expressiveness, production

and impression, correlated with professional coordinates which can serve as a basis for a common platform for developing analysis parameters as well as for creative work. The combination of aesthetic and functional components in professional training meets the challenges of the modern media market, expands the range of professional practices, gives hope for humanistic perspectives of the industry.

Unlike the subject disciplines in the educational process (Shaposhnikova, 2015), the aesthetics of journalism permeates professional disciplines, synthesizes interdisciplinary interaction and reveals itself in result of the pedagogical school activities.

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