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**CINEMA AS A SYMBOL OF UNSPIRITUALITY IN THE NOVEL
“THE DEVIL’S DOLL”**

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Abstract

The mutual influence of literature and cinematic art has appeared since the early days of cinema. At the beginning of the XX century, lots of literary texts acquired some elements and features of cinema. The complex of cinematic techniques and practices along with certain poetic and stylistic peculiarities brought together literary art and cinema. All this led to the formation of cinematic literature which is being successfully developed for well over a century. The novel “The Devil’s Doll” by Zinaida Gippius (1911) is a striking example of literary cinematography in the texts of the Russian Symbolism. Despite the strong research interest in issues of interaction between literature and cinematography, no one has ever analyzed the novel in this regard. However, it can be affirmed that the structural, compositional, and poetic features of the novel were greatly influenced by cinema. In the meantime, the novel presented cinema, one of significant phenomena of the cultural life of society, as a symbol of loss of spirituality by many people after the defeat of 1905 Revolution. Understanding the symbolism of this phenomenon in the literary work of Gippius and uncovering the cinematographic features of the novel at multiple levels makes it possible to reveal the meaning of the novel and to interpret it following the author’s intention.

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of cinematography is changing other forms of art. The Russian literature did not escape the influence of the Great Mute at the beginning of the XX century. But this influence was not one-sided. Literature also actively mastered the features inherent in the new art and successfully adapted them. What were the reasons for it? Cinema is becoming available to the broad layers of population, turning into a democratic art, and it is through the cinema that new life values are now being comprehended (Ustyugova, 2016). The issues of spiritual crisis and rethinking of universal human values have become especially acute (Akhmatov, 2021; Maidanskaya, 2020; Magomedova, 2018). The industrialization of the media (publications, films) and the mass replication of works of art launched the processes of “standardization and leveling of life forms, attitudes, behavior of people, which led to the emergence of a mass person” (Ustyugova, 2017, p. 7). The methods and techniques of cinematography were used by writers to express ideas and create new forms of displaying the reality in the period of reaction: “<...> in the history of literature the periods of style dynamics are interrelated with the search for new expressive opportunities in related arts, with the “translation” of stylistic devices of these arts into the language of literature, <...>” (Kuryaev & Osmukhina, 2018, p. 377).

The technique of montage, which allows structuring the composition of the work in a special way, is becoming relevant. Literature transforms the techniques of cinematography into expressive means of language, forming the “montage” technique of writing: “For this purpose, mainly lexical and syntactic means are used, which allow not only imitating the special visuality of the depicted” (Mikhailovskaya & Strogaleva, 2018, p. 125). The cinematic composition of a literary work shifts or enhances semantic accents and fills the text with new ideas and meanings due to the discontinuity of the composition of the work. “The emphasized fragmentation of the text, its compilation from seemingly unrelated episodes leads to the strengthening of “symbolism, significance, semantic plurality of each detail and their compatibility...” (Vasiyarova, 2013, p. 34). The combination of these effects allows creating a literary text based on the laws of cinematography; it is, in fact, a new look at the familiar phenomena and events of the surrounding reality (Van den Oever & Gunning, 2020). The deliberate enhancement of the cinematic character of the text is due to “the need of the author to dynamize the image of the observed, to detach its fragments in montage conjugation” (Martianova, 2017, p. 138).

The author does not express the personal point of view, but allows the reader to draw own conclusions. This is also a feature of literary cinematography, which Martianova (2017) defines as “a characteristic of a text with a predominantly montage technique of composition, in which a dynamic situation of observation is depicted by various, but primarily compositional-syntactic means” (p. 138). And if the techniques and techniques used by the author turn out to be effective, then the attentive, thoughtful reader will discover new meanings of the literary work, which is doubly important for the symbolist’s work.

2. Problem Statement

In 1908, Chukovsky (2012) compared “... cinema with fiction of the Artsybashev’s “Sanin” type...” (p. 125). It is a well-known fact that the author of the novel “Devil’s Doll” has been repeatedly

accused of imitating “Sanin”. Although both positions are controversial, they were not completely unfounded. Therefore, it seems to us quite logical that one of the most sensational works at the beginning of the XX century “The Devil’s Doll” by Z. N. Gippius became a striking and at the same time unusual example of the interaction between literature and cinema. There are separate references to the elements of the cinematography of the novel in research on the interaction of cinema and literature (Astaschenko, 2015). However, the role of cinematography in this novel has not been enough studied, although the interest in cinematic literature has not waned for a century (Kuryaev & Osmukhina, 2018; Martianova, 2017; Nikolaeva et al., 2019; Vasiyarova, 2013). Nevertheless, the cinema becomes evident in “Devil’s Doll” at several levels of the text at once. On the one hand, it is presented as an object, one of the phenomena of cultural life. At the same time, it influences the poetics of the novel, its composition and style. And, most importantly, it is a symbol of society’s lack of spirituality, which was most significant for Gippius: “She cannot but write about the most important things for her time ...” (Krycka-Michnowska, 2019). It is the third aspect that interests us most, but it manifests itself only due to the first two.

3. Research Questions

In the process of research, we have to answer the following questions:

- 1) What features of the novel allow speaking of its cinematography?
- 2) How does the symbolism of cinematography reveal itself in the novel and what role does it play for understanding the novel?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research purpose is to prove that cinema plays an important role in the novel by Gippius “Devil’s Doll”, and its influence can be traced at different levels of the text (plot, compositional, stylistic, poetic levels). Cinematography becomes one of the main meaning-forming symbols in the worldview of Zinaida Gippius, and in this novel, it personifies the lack of spirituality, the death of society, the loss of religious and moral values after the defeat of the revolution of 1905–1907 (the period of reaction). Due to the cinematic nature of the novel, the artistic and semantic features of cinema as a symbol are meaningful for the interpretation of the novel by the reader and the researcher.

5. Research Methods

In the course of the study, we applied poetic and stylistic analysis of the text, cultural-historical approach, comparative method and hermeneutic-interpretive approach, which allowed us to prove the symbolism of cinema in the artistic concept of Z. Gippius and identify its meaning-forming functions.

6. Findings

“The Devil’s Doll” begins like a scene from a movie. Special stylistic and compositional techniques help the author achieve a complete visualization of the meeting between Natasha and Yuri in the literary text. There is no exposition, no explanations about the characters, about their past lives, about

the current moment - only the dynamic development of the plot. We see the same as the author, as if we are watching a movie episode. The shots replace each other: they almost collided, looked at each other, sat down on the bench, got up, walked slowly down the street, then the emphasis on the figure of the female character, the general background. The “camera” stops, fixing our attention on individual details, as if emphasizing them (eyes, smile) - and again returns to the general background, switches from a close-up or freeze-frame to a general shot.

The cinematic effect is reinforced at the syntactic level: short phrases describing the action without adding any details (“They sat on a bench near the pool. <...> Natasha got up. <...> Natasha laughed. She sat down again” (Gippius, 2001, p. 9)); general scenery for this scene of the meeting (“Winter, pale Parisian twilight hung from the sky. <...> Cold, green-scarlet early sunset over the gray shadows of trees. <...> Yuri went out onto the boulevard, where the lights were now on and the crowd was shimmering blue and yellow” (Gippius, 2001, pp. 8-9, 11)).

Further, the text of the novel is gradually filled with more lengthy sentences; descriptions and explanations, characteristic of verbal art, appear. So, in the second chapter, the author gives a brief description of the life of senator Dvoekurov. Sometimes there are phrases that add a non-rendered detail to general information. For example, the attitude of the protagonist to his father: “Yuri felt friendly regret for his father” (Gippius, 2001, p. 38); Natasha’s feelings: “And she had a keen desire, longing, the need to see Mikhail” (Gippius, 2001, p. 43); Litta’s lifestyle in the countess’s house: “in a gloomy house where no one cared about her, she lived freer than other girls live” (Gippius, 2001, p. 49). These are, of course, literary techniques for reflecting reality. They do not work to enhance the cinematic effect, but we should note that there are very few such author’s remarks in the text. And there are practically no detailed descriptions, epic digressions or the author’s reasoning.

But the cinematography, so clearly manifested in the first chapter of the novel, still remains a striking feature of the work, influencing the text at its various levels (poetic, stylistic, structural and compositional). The entire work is composed of separate fragments, episodes, alternating as if in random order. One gets the impression that the characters, appearing in the next scene, play some role in it (sometimes completely different from the previous one): a meeting of the “Final Questions” society, a date of Yuri disguised as a clerk with Masha, an evening at “Eldorado”.

These fragmentary episodes form a whimsical pattern that gives a variegated, diverse picture of life. Such a combination of diverse episodes is a technique of montage typical for cinematography. It has undoubtedly been used in literature before, but it was during the development of cinema that it acquired a new meaning for literature. The montage principle “... determines the fragmented, snatchy character of the narrative” (Zavyalova, 2018, p. 156). This, in turn, resembles a cinema performance of the early twentieth century, when several short film episodes alternated.

When using the montage technique, syntactic repetition gains importance (Grudeva & Solovyova, 2017). In the novel by Gippius, such a recurring detail is the description of external light and color design: lanterns (a symbol of artificial, inanimate light) and gray or faded tones. Once again, we get a strong connection with cinema: “For residents of the capitals, cinema has become a necessary element of modernity, merging in perception with multi-storey buildings, electric wires, clanking rails, flashing

advertisements and street lights” (Ustyugova, 2016, p. 217). A mechanical semblance of life, artificially illuminated by lifeless light - we see this throughout the novel in one scene or another.

Thus, the cinematic nature of the text is beyond doubt. But what allows one to say that it is used by the author to express the central idea of the novel - the lack of spirituality in society? Let's turn to the sixth chapter of the novel “Variety of Love”. There is an episode, which takes place in the summer park “Eldorado” near the cinema theatre. The light of artificial lanterns, gray shadows, a company of people gathers - and all this is accompanied by showing a film: “On the stage, with a hiss breaking through the music, gray shadows were shaking, the gray dead of cinema” (Gippius, 2001, p. 27). What happens on the screen practically becomes a reflection of real life (in front of the stage). Ryzhikov is pointing at the screen, as if prompting the reader: “Look, is this not a symbol of our current white Petersburg life?” (Gippius, 2001, p. 27).

In 1896, M. Gorky described in detail his impressions of Lumiere's *cinematograph*: “Gray people silently shout, laugh silently, walk silently, kiss silently. <...> Is this not a hint of the life of the future? ” (Gorky, 1953, p. 244). Throughout the text, in which the writer conveys what is happening on the screen, we see funny, sad, gray and mute shadows participating in dramatic events. This is how we see cinematography in the novel by Gippius 15 years after M. Gorky's essay. Her “gray dead” are in tune with the silently laughing shadows of Gorky. Undoubtedly, the grey color, dumbness, unnatural shaking (the image was constantly twitching, shaking) - all this brings up the idea of the living dead. Gippius had a negative attitude towards cinema, but her description cannot be called biased. The above impressions of Gorky serve as a kind of guarantor for us that the writer was extremely accurate.

Fifteen years later, Gippius (2002) will give a new description of cinema: “Alarmingly shaking objects, animals, human figures and faces have only form taken from life: they have no color, that is, no light, for color and light are inseparable: light is always of some color, or not at all. And the chopped, jumping movement of lightless figures is much more like the dance of death than the flow of life” (p. 234). The writer still sees the dance of death in cinema, when all living things are in fact mechanisms, automata, dolls moving according to someone's evil will, only pretending to be alive while you need to play a role.

The majority of the characters of the novel “Devil's Doll” are such inanimate figures. There are no thoughts and feelings behind their actions; they do not act, but only play a role. For example, at a meeting of the “Final Questions” society, they play people who are interested in intellectual arguments - they discuss fashionable topics and talk about them in fashionable phrases. This is confirmed by Verka's “brilliant” performance, which created a real sensation, but Verka acted like an automaton, like a doll (Vanyushkina, 2005). Verka learned her role, played and forgot about it; for Yuri, who directed her performance, such games were familiar. Obviously, many others also played their roles.

When the role ends, a soulless shell remains in front of us: without movement, without a single emotion or thought on the face. In particular, this is the way we see Yuri Dvoekurov after his death: “How simple is pale face. Dead – as if it never were alive. Dead beauty” (Gippius, 2001, p. 142). The scene of Yuri's death is also cinematic: the action takes place in the beam of a red lantern, then - the last frame, the light goes out (Astaschenko, 2015, p. 128).

7. Conclusion

Zinaida Gippius caught new trends very subtly, which was invariably manifested in her works. Therefore, it is not surprising that in one of her most sensational works (multifaceted, deep, containing many semantic layers, but, unfortunately, still insufficiently studied by researchers), an important place is occupied by cinema, which conquered, without exaggeration, the whole world. In the novel, cinema is not only the object to which the author's attention is drawn, one of the described phenomena of life. Cinematography is part of the work of Zinaida Gippius as a set of certain methods and techniques that allow designing a new composition of the text, primarily due to the laws of cinematography. The author finds new techniques and methods for describing the reality that has changed during the reaction period, new characters. Gippius as the artist gives us a description of cinema in one sentence, and the attentive reader is unexpectedly amazed that the entire novel is nothing more than the same kind of cinema, where seemingly living characters turn out to be soulless automata: they reproduce real life with twitching, broken, unnatural movements, till their role ends and their doll beauty becomes dead again. The ultimate cinematography of this novel arises, as we have seen, deliberately, at the will of the author. It is due to the fact that "Devil's Doll" is a novel about the deadness, lack of spirituality of the modern everyman (which Gippius herself speaks about in the preface to the first separate edition of "Devil's Doll" in 1911), and cinema in the perception of Zinaida Gippius is becoming one of the most significant symbols of unspirituality of the society, which after the defeat of the revolution of 1905-1907 experienced a deep spiritual and moral crisis. And a century later, with cinema reaching incredible development, the image of a fake, devoid of spiritual content, empty life is still perceived by readers due to the symbolism of cinema, depicted in the novel "Devil's Doll".

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