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The Image of Siberia in Soviet, Post-Soviet Fiction and Werner Herzog's Documentary Films

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The article studies the concept of Siberia in audio-visual images of cinematography. The research is made on the basis of several films. In Soviet cinematography the concept of Siberia is analyzed on the basis of Ivan Pyr'ev's "Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" ("The saga of Siberia") (1947), in Post-Soviet cinematography this concept is analyzed on the basis of Viacheslav Ross's "Siberia. Mon amour" (2011). Regarding foreign films about Siberia, the author focuses on "Bells from the Deep. Faith and Superstition in Russia" (1993) and "Happy people: a Year in the Taiga" (2011) shot by Werner Herzog, a German film director, in co-directorship with Dmitry Vasyukov, a Russian film director. The research resulted in revealed conceptual images of Siberia translated into the culture of cinematography. The article also provides a review of scientific literature on Siberian cinematography.

Keywords: Siberia, concept, Siberian cinematography, Siberia in cinematography, image of Siberia in films, fiction films about Siberia, "Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" ("The saga of Siberia"), "Siberia. Mon amour", "Bells from the Deep. Faith and Superstition in Russia", "Happy people: a Year in the Taiga".

Research area: culture studies, art history.

Introduction

Modern world often considers Siberia as some mysterious place somewhere in the south-east of the Eurasian continent viewed in the light of mythological concepts, such as never-ending winter, cold and snow; bears wandering in cities; a place of exile and servitude, etc. At that by now the audio-visual culture has generated a great number of documentary and fiction films showing either a more realistic Siberia or, vice versa, enriching this territory with new myths. The present article will focus on the image of Siberia in cinematography. Undoubtedly, there appeared

a great number of films about Siberia: some of them are well known, others are known less. One part of these films is documentary, the other one is fiction. The article will study some fiction films about Siberia, which show the evolution of views on this territory from the Soviet times up to the present. The second focus of research is the attempt of opening up a visual image of Siberia in cinematography. It implies the study of foreign cinematography, depicting the image of Siberia, and namely the analysis of Werner Herzog's film "Bells from the Deep. Faith and Superstition in Russia" and his producer project "Happy people:

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a Year in the Taiga". What explains the interest to fiction films in the research is the interest not to the objective aspects of Siberian life or impassive observations over Siberian nature or a human in Siberia, but to conceptual ideas on "Siberia" phenomenon which are formed in cinematography. These are mythological, associative, and authors' interpretations of Siberian objective reality.

It is important to outline a circle of problems on this or related issue to analyze the films chosen. To begin with it should be noted that the research of the image of Siberia in cinematography is based on a theoretical aspect of the study of the film art: cinematography is viewed as a powerful tool of a socio-cultural development of public ideas on certain phenomena of objective reality. This position is specifically defined in K.V. Reznikova's article "Znachenie kinematografa dlia formirovaniia obshcherossiiskoi natsional'noi identichnosti" ("The significance of cinematography in the formation of All-Russian national identity"): "The scholars, working out a constructivist approach, view cinematography as well as mass media as a most significant force in developing a social reality. Being the largest industry of the modern world, it is cinematography which has the potential of maximum influence on the viewing public. It can productively introduce a certain attitude to a specific situation as well as to the whole epoch, norms and values, behaviour patterns to the society. It is cinematography which makes it possible not only to represent the whole epoch but also to create and form the history and the present" (Reznikova, 2013).

The history of Siberian history and Siberian documentary cinematography is described in "Kinematograf Sibiri: kommunikatsiia, iazyk, tvorchestvo" ("Siberian Cinematography: Communication, Language, Creative Work"), a capacious book by the Omsk researcher N.F. Khil'ko. This book provides a detailed

overview on the development of a documentary film in Omsk, Novosibirsk and Kemerovo regions as well as methodological directives in the field of educational programmes on cinematography for children and youth of Siberia and content analysis of Siberian film festivals. Despite the fact that a Siberian documentary film is not a subject of the present research, it is still vital to pay attention to the thematic areas, singled out by N.F. Khil'ko, which are often shown in Siberian documentary films as these thematic areas will be mentioned in the analysis of fiction films. Thus, according to N.F. Khil'ko's research, a documentary film about Siberia is developed in the following directions: "Availability of similar and identical themes (*both in professional and amateur documentary cinematography – the author's note*): beauty of a native land and love to home town; aesthetics of labour and heroism of everyday work, display of labour trajectories; call for conservancy, national heritage and cultural monuments; beauty and greatness of science; outstanding cultural professionals of the region" (Khil'ko, 2010, p. 101).

The history and image of Siberia in cinematography are dwelt upon in the article by E.N. Savel'eva, doing her research on how the concept of Siberia was changing in cinematography in a historic perspective and analyzing the theme of Siberia in Soviet films of the 1960-1970-s. E.N. Savel'eva writes about informative aspects of early Siberian cinematography: "In cases when Siberia turns out to be a place of significant events (but not an ethnographic entourage or exotic background) a conceptual kernel of the plot is constituted by the idea of primordial essence of natural existence, preserving an ethic constituent of human relations. In other words Siberia becomes a topos of moral and natural existence of a 'country man', resisting an impoverished and artificial 'city man'" (Savel'eva, 2007, p. 82).

In the course of her research of the theme of Siberia in films E.N. Savel'eva concludes that the reference to regional themes was extremely urgent in Soviet cinematography of the 1960s when the task of the formation of the Soviet multinational community, integral vision of the Soviet people was set on the level of the state socio-cultural development: "The phenomenon of national cinematography was called into being by the pathos of "familiarizing with the origins" as a variant of a traditional collectivist self-sentiment. They started to search for the example of such total dilution of a human in the world in folklore and in folk poetic work. Correspondingly, specific principles of poetics, characteristic to practically all regional professionals, are being developed. These are convincingness of narration, documentalism, aiming at the vision trustworthiness, authenticity of objective reality in films, and its impressive nature. For completeness of the feeling of "truth" of the local colouring they often engage non-professional actors, introduce local dialects and tunes. As a result, each shot shows the triumph of life" (Savel'eva, 2007a, p. 82). E.N. Savel'eva gives a detailed analysis of such films about Siberia as "Siberiade" by A. Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky (1978), "By the lake" ("U ozera") (Lake Baikal) by S. Gerasimov (1970), "The Red Snowball Tree" ("Kalina Krasnaia") by V. Shukshin (1973), etc.: "This focus is peculiar for A. Konchalovsky and V. Shukshin who devoted a part of their creative life to Siberia. In their films Siberia is not a mere geographical background for certain events but a topos, designing a conceptual idea of their development. In this case it would be allowable to design some neutral quasi-space that doesn't imply those moral connotations of "Kalina Krasnaia", "Pechki-Lavochki", "Siberiade". It is discursive convincingness that helps the film directors to bundle ethnographic characteristics of Siberian territories and their residents with the mission of

a spiritual search, placed on this topos. Thus, in his "Siberiade" A. Konchalovsky is very precise about absolute honesty of nature, costumes, sound, and psychology. V. Shukshin embodies the image of a Siberian village with maximum accuracy and trustworthiness practically in all his films. Altaian landscapes, villages with Siberian izbas (peasants' houses) are depicted not in passing like some exotic things but with precise consideration, with an eye of an artistic individual who knows this territory from inside. Non-professional actors are often engaged to display the completeness of the "truth of life". Shukshin reconstructs the objective realities of the national culture, realities of life of the people's spirit" (Savel'eva, 2007b, pp. 62-66). The author's attempt to analyze the films about Siberia from the point of genre preferences in this sphere is also interesting. Thus, the researcher comes to the conclusion that in most cases a dramatic film is an appropriate genre for cinematography to give an image of Siberia. Thus, it can be assumed that the basis for Siberian plots is often constituted by tragedy and drama of life which also uncovers the content of the concept of Siberia in cinematography.

As the present article is an attempt to analyze the images of Siberia in foreign cinematography through Werner Herzog's documentary and live-action films, the essential stratum of the research literature is connected with the German film director's creative work. An exotic and original vision of the Earth planet as if with an alien's eyes, disclosure of the theme of a human, whose picture of the world is opposed to the average men's sluggish opinions, co-creative work with "the disabled", hermits and eccentric personalities, which are beyond other film directors' comprehension, make W. Herzog's cinematography incredibly attractive for the analysis. There are quite a number of articles by foreign researchers, which are devoted to W. Herzog. Lutz Koepnick, Brad Prager, William

F. van Wert, Dr. Andrew W. Hurley, Dylan Trigg, P. Kronin are among them. P. Kronin's "Meet Werner Herzog", a book of interviews with Werner Herzog, is of a greater interest in the context of the present research as it contains the film director's stories about a number of matters, and namely: how he got interested in the Russian legend of the Kitezh city, what inspired him for the trip to Russia and to Krasnoyarsk Krai, in particular, to get acquainted with the Russian beliefs and superstitions (Kronin, 2010). As for the Russian research literature, numerous leading magazines about cinematography publish the articles about Werner Herzog's creative work. These are "Iskusstvo kino" ("The art of cinematography") by Iu. Leiderman, N. Pal'tsev, "Kinovedcheskie zapiski" ("Writings about the study of the film art") by N. Samutin, G. Zhdanskin, "Seans" ("Performance") by I. Utekhin. As the focus of the present article is given to the research of the image of Siberia in fiction but not in documentary cinematography, it is scientifically grounded to quote several research conclusions that makes it possible to consider Werner Herzog's documentary films as the author's artistic interpretation of the reality: "In essence Werner Herzog doesn't divide his films into documentary and live-action ones. He is completely indifferent to theoretical discussions on this issue, he knows distinguished live-action films with a "documentary" origin and, vice versa, he knows no less outstanding documentary films (it could be probably write to term them as "document based" ones), which represent the so-called "staged document". In his own documentary films the film-director doesn't at times reject stage dramatizations and stylizations. And regarding live-action films, he often concentrates on real stories. (...) Herzog's films are sort of immersed into "documentary reality". However, an outer "stratum of the truth" is clearly not enough for him. The German artist regards a documentary film to be not only (and

at times not so much) a "copy" of news-and-documentary material, but a sphere of a personal self-expression, which is, however, non-self-sufficient but sort of "developing" a documentary "basis", portraying it on the level of metaphors and allegories" (Zhdankina, 2002). In the transcript of I. Utekhin's lectures-discussions, published in "Seans" ("Performance") magazine, they communicate about the "Bells from the Deep" film and the lecturer also notes: "Herzog as well as an ordinary viewer is not a specialist in religious rituals though he shot so many films of such a kind that may God make it possible for every religious scholar to see them with their own eyes. I agree that there are enough risqué things in the film, but we have no right to make scientific claims on it as the film is first and foremost a piece of art. Herzog doesn't draw a boundary line between the documentary and the fiction" (Utekhin, 2011).

Thus, we have found out that the analysis of the image of Siberia in cinematography is a long-term and actively developing area of research. There are a great number of gaps a researcher can plunge into. As for the present article, we'll focus on Ivan Pyr'ev's "placard" Soviet film about Siberia which, practically, has been studied neither in Russian nor in foreign researches. It can be probably explained by the fact that the epoch of scarcity of films and of plotless films was given up for lost due to the extremely ideologized and made-to-order character of films produced at that time. The focus of research will be also given to "Siberia. Mon amour", Viacheslav Ross's dramatic film, which is given chiefly pressurized reviews so far. They do not integrate the film in the context of cinematographic views on Siberia.

Methodology

The research presupposes the analysis of some films, revealing conceptual ideas of Siberia, and a subsequent generalizing verbalization

of mental views on Siberia aroused by fiction films. Thus, the research is based on a set of methodological approaches:

- 1) Semiotic analysis for the interpretation of sign content of pieces of cinematography. Semiotic methods for understanding films are traditionally applied in the study of the film art. It is sufficient to mention the most fundamental works, serving the basis for the present research. These are Iu. Lotman's "Semiotika kino i problem kinoestetiki" ("Semiotics of cinematography and problems of cinema aesthetics"), Ch. Metz's "Film language: a semiotics of the cinema".
- 2) An important methodological approach to the present research is concept analysis. It is justified by the aim of the present research to uncover the meanings of the concept of Siberia, represented by visual images in films. Such methodology of the analysis of cultural concepts is developed in Russian humanitarian science by Iu.S. Stepanov. It suggests the analysis of mental views on cultural phenomena regarding the degree to which these views are imprinted in a modern human's consciousness. In our case cinematography is regarded as a tool of translating certain conceptions to the viewers. Consequently, films are regarded as a "cradle" of conceptual understanding of certain phenomena by the viewing public, a source of the concepts in the making.
- 3) Narrow methodological approaches, focusing on the film analysis from the point of specificity of the characters and objects portrayed in films, are widespread in Russian and especially in foreign theory of the cinema. One of these is the gender approach to the film analysis,

presupposing concentration on the analysis of the image of a woman in films and female viewing public. Among other narrow approaches there exist practices of analysis of post-colonial, national and transnational cinema. These approaches are given a detailed description in the book "Understanding film theory" (2011) by Ch. Etherington-Write, R. Doughty. It presupposes the following: A) the analysis of cinematography of the "third world" countries or cinematography of the countries where local film production has recently appeared; B) generalizing analysis of how a certain race, ethnoses, ethnic minorities as well as some geographical spaces, territories are portrayed in films more often, which iconic signs determine the representation of ethnoses and territories in the cinema, which symbolic meanings are hidden in the images of these signs, etc. Such approaches are helpful in the context of the present research as Siberia is partly a "terra incognita" for cinematography: territory, ethnoses inhabiting Siberia, people living here do not often become portrayed objects in films. At that some "Siberian images in films" imply certain meanings which will be elicited in the present article.

Main part

The article is titled "The image of Siberia in Werner Herzog's Soviet, post-Soviet fiction and documentary films". The image of Siberia in Soviet cinematography will be analyzed on the basis of Ivan Pyr'ev's film "Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" ("The saga of Siberia") (1947), in post-Soviet cinematography – on the basis of Viacheslav Ross's "Siberia. Mon amour" (2011). The image of Siberia in foreign cinematography

is analyzed on the basis of Werner Herzog's documentary and live-action film "Bells from the Deep. Faith and Superstition in Russia" (1993) and Dmitry Vasyukov's and Werner Herzog's joint film "Happy people: a Year in the Taiga" (2011).

The image of Siberia in Soviet fiction cinematography

Ivan Pyr'ev's film "Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" ("The saga of Siberia") was shot in 1947, the year of the so-called epoch of scarcity of films (1945 – 1953). It was the period when Soviet film studios released an extremely limited number of films (only 9 films were released in 1951), all the films being shot by order. It was Politburo that suggested the themes for the film directors. Thus, in post-war period they set a task to make films about all the territories of the country to emphasize their importance for the state, their consolidation efforts in the Great Patriotic war. Thus, the Resolution of Politburo of the Central Committee of C.P.S.U. (B.) "On the plan of producing fiction, documentary and landscape films in 1948" runs: "The production of such documentaries as "Sovetskii Kazakhstan" ("Soviet Kazakhstan"), "Sovetskii Uzbekistan" ("Soviet Uzbekistan"), "Sovetskaia Sibir" ("Soviet Siberia") to be postponed up to 1949" (Povysit' kachestvo..., 2011). In 1946 Aleksandr Fadeev, a writer, publishes a book "Molodaia gvardiia" ("Young Guard") which was also ordered by the state. The book was aimed at presenting the Ukrainian youth fighting against fascism. It was expected to ruin the belief that the Ukrainians didn't stand up to the fascists during the war. In 1948 Sergey Gerasimov, a prominent master of Soviet cinematography, produces a film with the same name. "Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" ("The saga of Siberia") ranks with the other films devoted to the Soviet territories and regions, often being out of the focus of cinematography.

Ivan Pyr'ev was already recognized as a leading Soviet film director, though he predominantly worked in the genre of comedy films, his plots and characters giving a subtle portrayal of a Soviet man's values. His films clearly show simple schemes, patterns of life which could be easily followed in people's everyday life. For example, a hard-working, ascetic, and cheerful young girl meets a selfless, patient young man, a best worker in his village, and refuses a pseudo-fiancé's pseudo-proposal. These films are optimistic and musical that also encourages a viewer to follow a cheerful mood and introduce it in a person's life. I. Pyr'ev's films are placard, some ideas are embodied so grotesque that everything in the films turns into the absurdity (for example, when all the film characters sing or speak in verses). At the same time the film director makes a good film projection of socio-cultural values of a Soviet person. The epoch of scarcity of films is also known as a period of "plotless" cinematography when it was allowed to show the conflict no other than the conflict between the good and the best.

"Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" ("The saga of Siberia") was shot on a Czechoslovak film studio, in Moscow area and on the banks of the Yenisei (the latter was probably chosen due to the fact that Marina Ladygina, a leading actress of I. Pyr'ev's films, was born in Nazarovo city of Krasnoyarsk Krai and, consequently, knew the place well).

The plot of the film is a story of a musician-participant of the Great Patriotic War who opposed himself to Moscow intellectual elite, having left for the Siberian out-of-the-way territory and farther for the polar region, made friends with the workers and got a gift of a composer. "Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi" is an example of the Soviet early colour cinematography (S.M. Eisenstein was the first to try the colour in the second part of "Ivan Groznyi" ("Ivan the Terrible"), which was shot in 1945; later other film directors gradually turned to a colour film, I. Pyr'ev being among the

first). The role of colour in the film is similar to a musical accompaniment. It “colours the life with bright colours”, adds cheerfulness to the film as colours are bright and often numerous in their number: for example, in the scene of Natasha's and Nastya's conversation in a Siberian izba (a peasant's log hut) Natasha is in a green dress, Nastya is in a white one with red ornaments and in a red jacket, the objects of interior are everywhere (there are flowers on the windowsills, warm and bright colours being dominating ones and standing for the orgy of life (Fig. 1)). A visual style of the film fully meets the principles of socialist realism: placard production shots, schematic emotions (the characters either smile even in the hardest working situations or they are shown as thoughtful or experiencing grief if it is the need of the plot), the workers wear new and clean clothes in performance situations, the main characters are always in the centre of a scene, their faces being often happy, staring beyond the shot into “bright future”, etc. (Fig. 2).

The chronotopos of the film can be categorized as a romantic double world. The first world is constituted by the intellectual creative

community of the capital (composers, musicians, participants and fans of the musical contests), who are professional and talented but avoiding a direct conflict with life (many of them never served at the front, were disparaging towards working people) (Fig. 3). The second world is a Siberian province, “new life”, which starts on undeveloped territories where one has to subjugate the nature, work on construction sites. This life is dull and devoid of cultural extravagances from the capital elite's point of view but can give a person solitude and a possibility to face both natural elements (Andrey, the main character, composes his musical piece while romantically and pensively wandering in a snow storm) (Fig. 4) and working people, emotionally open to the world (Fig. 5). As the film was produced in the epoch of “plotless” films, these worlds do not conflict with each other: Andrey respects the talent of Boris, a bohemian musician. As for a Siberian province, it is shown here as a world of a romantic dream, escape from civilization, deprived of truth, into new future where one can obtain the source of true inspiration. It is not without reason that in the end of the film Andrey, a composer, with Natasha, his



Fig. 1. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”



Fig. 2. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”



Fig. 3. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”

wife, leaves for Krasnoyarsk, for that new Siberian life, when blending of classes is possible, working class and intellectual elite communicate sincerely and with good respect. Thus, in a final scene of the film Andrey and Natasha meet their friends, a married couple of Yakov, a driver, and Nastya, a waitress, and sing a happy song together (Fig. 6). It should be noted that the signs of romanticism in

the film also manifest themselves in a synergetic consolidation of various types of arts, peculiar for romanticism. These are music, painting (epos about Siberia is accompanied by the paintings in the spirit of Vasily Surikov and socialist realism), poetry (poems about Siberia), cinematography.

The culminating scene is Andrey Balashov's performance in a concert hall with his epic piece



Fig. 4. A frame from the film "The Saga of Siberia"



Fig. 5. A frame from the film "The Saga of Siberia"

"Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi". It depicts another interesting aspect of the concept of Siberia. Thus, the scenes of a concert hall with the main character's triumph are changed by a photo-film that narrates about the history of Siberia from the times of Yermak's march (Fig. 7) to grandiose construction projects of Soviet times (Fig. 8). Poems about Siberia sound against the background

of epic films (Fig. 9). There are the following lines there: "The Pugachevs, Decembrists, members of the "Narodnaya Volya" were here. And here were the Bolsheviks. Chernyshevsky on the river Lena was thinking over his creations here. And it is here where Lenin developed the plan of armed revolt, foreseeing proletarian battles. It is from here, seized with the storm of knowledge, he went



Fig. 6. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”



Fig. 7. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”

to Russia to be at the head of the battles...”. These lines lead to a non-traditional understanding of Siberia which is viewed not only as a place of exile but a place to which Russia’s most progressive representatives were exiled and from which advanced views returned to Russia some time later to introduce revolutionary changes into the life of the whole country.

Thus, the concept of Siberia in I. Pyr’ev’s film is shown the following way: a) Siberia is a romantic place which makes it possible to break loose from the limits of the norms of civilized world, to gain solitude for creative work, to know about life through unfriendly nature which shows its true face here; through ordinary people, their emotions and feelings



Fig. 8. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”



Fig. 9. A frame from the film “The Saga of Siberia”

which are not hidden behind social norms and rules; b) Siberia is a “kettle” in which social classes (and namely creative intelligentsia and workers) melt; c) Siberia is a place of exile of progressive ideas, leaving their time behind, a place from which they return afterwards, bringing revolutionary reforms to the whole country.

The image of Siberia in post-Soviet fiction cinematography

“Siberia. Mon amour” was shot in 2011 not far from Ungut village of Mansky district of Krasnoyarsk Krai. Apart from producing the film in real village they made the set – a small deserted village “Monamur” of a few houses (Fig. 10). The film got many awards on Russian and international



Fig. 10. A frame from the film “Siberia. Mon amour”



Fig. 11. A frame from the film “Siberia. Mon amour”

film festivals, was noticed by Luc Besson who initiated the film's cinema distribution in France. In the long run, the film turned to be one of the most unprofitable in Russian cinema distribution. This fact along with its festival awards makes it possible to consider it to be art house. In France the film was more successful in its cinema distribution than in Russia. This fact, probably, proves that the target audience of a Siberian film had to be foreign viewers who are still interested in drama films in which the events unfold in the exotic places of the planet (for example, Africa, Thailand, Siberia, etc.). This phenomenon is devoted some lines in N. Sputnitskaia's article in which she ironically criticizes the film, turning its plot and dramatic basis into a caricature by her words: “Nevertheless, Luc Besson, a European, has become an accomplice of cutting the film about

an incoherent country and its lost people as well as of its distribution. And indeed there is a French sentimentality and signs of commercial films in the idea of the film. These, probably, attracted the author of “The Fifth Element” and “Nikita” to a new Russian ballad about a boy and a soldier, and “EuropaCorp”, the largest distributional film company in Europe, bought the rights on distribution of the Russian film. Perhaps, it will be possible to remove a Siberian territory from a non-housing stock to the foreground of the world cash cinema...” (Sputnitskaia, 2011).

Three plotlines intermingle in the film. The first plotline (Fig. 11) is about an old man, a hermit, old believer (everything in an old man's life is guided by religion; everything occurs with the God's assistance), misanthrope, who lives with Alyoshka in taiga wilderness, in that deserted

“Monamur” village. Their life is subject to the necessity to survive (the grandfather is unable to hunt anymore, their only goat is eaten by the dogs, they fail to bring food products from a large village before winter); escaped convicts as well as bandits, who had stolen an icon, their only value, broke into their house; it is the necessity to help the grandson who fell into a well (the situation similar to Menander’s “Dyskolos” (“The Grouch” or “Old Cantankerous”), an antique comedy) that made the grandfather give up his misanthropic principles and go to the village people. The second plotline (Fig. 12) is about Ann and Yury’s family, living in a village, who are on the verge of survival (they are scared by the necessity to take Alyoshka from the taiga as it will become impossible to feed him and their two daughters; as for Alyoshka, he is not willing to go to them as he

is afraid of being reproached by Anna for eating their family away). At that some basic values are broken in the family: Anna has got a lover, she forbids her husband to help Alyoshka and his grandfather in Monamur as they had enough problems of their own. The third plotline (Fig. 13) is about the story about compassion arousing a human’s consciousness. It happened to a soldier-nationalist who returned from the Caucasus wars, an open-hearted young recruit and a prostitute, whom both militaries start defending in a military unit. All the plotlines meet with each other: the story about Yury and Anna’s family has a tragic end: Yury is torn to pieces by the dogs in the wood, Anna is stuck in the snow-covered taiga without knowing how to find her way out of it but she manages to revenge on the bandits who stole the icon. As for the lines of the grandfather,



Fig. 12. A frame from the film “Siberia. Mon amour”



Fig. 13. A frame from the film “Siberia. Mon amour”

grandson, soldier and prostitute, they end happily: Alyoshka finds a father in the person of a soldier who came back from the Caucasus and gained his consciousness.

At the level of dramatic composition the film brutally manipulates with the viewers' emotions: Siberian unfair nature always turns a person down not to the level of life but to the level of survival; the dogs, woodland cleaners, constantly tear somebody to pieces from the first shot to final episodes (first it was an animal, then it was Yury's grandfather, at the end of the film they try to tear even the grandfather, an old believer, to pieces) (Fig. 14). The story of a pure boy, hopelessly waiting for his father, trying to make friends with a dog and, in the end, fallen to a well with practically no hope to be saved, is no less dramatic. A military unit's cruelty

towards a prostitute instantly arouses the viewers' sympathy.

Everything in the film (a visual image of the shots, on the one hand, and a "tall tale" about Siberia and Russia, on the whole: vodka, shabby wooden houses, an old man in a cap with earflaps, constant trust in God) develops against the background of monumental Siberian nature (high mountains, a cold river, pitch-dark forests with hardly penetrable paths) (Fig. 15). Practically all the texture of the film is artificially made and shot with a photographic admiration: Monamur village is built especially for the film, the sculpture of huge hammer and sickle on the mountain, against the background of which the grandfather, an old believer, dies, is made from cardboard (Fig. 16), cruel abandoned dogs were played by real trained Canadian huskies, etc.



Fig. 14. A frame from the film "Siberia. Mon amour"

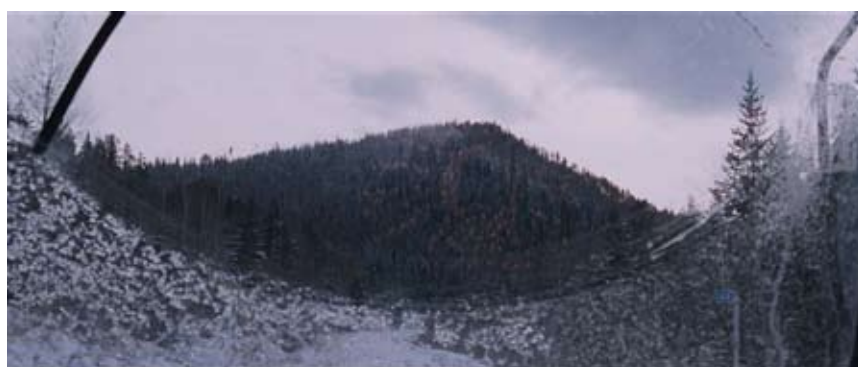


Fig. 15. A frame from the film "Siberia. Mon amour"

Reference to stereotypes and other works of art (manipulation with the viewers' emotions is picked up from Lars von Trier's cinematography, a story with a prostitute refers to Dostoevsky's literature, the shots are filled with "the art": the scene between a Caucasian and a cook in a village café takes place against the background of a copy of I. Kramskoi's "Portrait of an Unknown Woman", cut out of a magazine (Fig. 17), another scene shows Raphael's angels (Fig. 18), one more scene gives a focus of Alyoshka, drawing an icon in pencils instead of a stolen one in order to cure his grandmother (Fig. 19)) create a feeling that the film is shot in post-modernism aesthetics: the plot is plunged into a common cultural context, accumulating a great number of allusions and associations.

Thus, a key concept of the film is in the idea that Siberia is a territory where life shows its true cruel face, a person in this world is in a constant struggle for existence. Consciousness, love, sympathy, family values are the ways, helping a person to survive in a severe reality. On the contrast with the Soviet views on Siberia as a romantic place, where a person can start a new life and the nature will be a source of creative inspiration, the film does not present a placard Siberia. On the contrary, it shows its "dark" and gloomy sides. Siberia in the film is a place where a person is on the verge of survival. Probably, the producers purposely meant to emphasize this contrast: it is not by accident that the grandfather, an old-believer, nearly dies against the background of huge hammer and sickle – Soviet dreams about the conquest

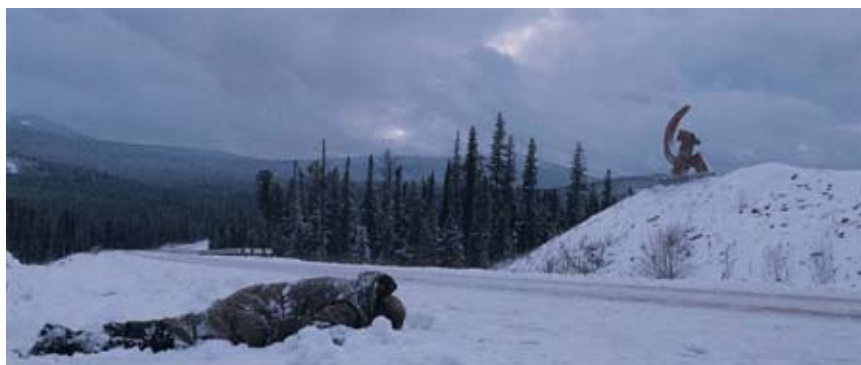


Fig. 16. A frame from the film "Siberia. Mon amour"



Fig. 17. A frame from the film "Siberia. Mon amour"



Fig. 18. A frame from the film “Siberia. Mon amour”



Fig. 19. A frame from the film “Siberia. Mon amour”

of Siberian nature didn't come true, the nature here gained its victory over a human.

The concept of Siberia in the film is presented in several dimensions:

Firstly, Siberia is shown as an exotic territory in modern world where there is no civilization, where a human found himself but failed to change the nature and the world according to his own patterns. If we understand the film as a model of Siberia, then the characters, inhabiting it, reflect a region's social situation: the region is inhabited by religious hermits, convicts, prostitutes, unfaithful wives, military men, alcoholics, and only children keep purity.

Secondly, Siberia is a place of escape from civilization, a territory for hermitry. Hermitry for misanthropes and sociopaths who can't get on in social community or hermitry for the faithful

who run to asceticism from modern society of consumption, stuck in a foodstuff feast, to ascetic limitation of life up to a limiting state when only God can help to survive.

The image of Siberia in Werner Herzog's fiction and documentary cinematography

Werner Herzog is a German director of fiction and documentary films. Basing upon the research commentaries on his creative work, it should be mentioned that there is often a realistic base in his fiction films; there are many production and live-action decisions in his documentary projects. A fundamental approach in his films is presenting the exotic places of the planet on the screen: Werner Herzog makes his films in Peru, Sahara desert, jungles on

the Amazon river, on the research base in the Antarctic, etc. His camera “looks” at the world with the eyes of an alien who first finds himself on the Earth, on these exotic territories, ignorant of common cultural and stereotyped views on one or another place. That’s why even the most terrible events (oil fires in Kuwait, for example) are viewed with curiosity but without emotional empathy. The characters of Werner Herzog’s film (both fiction and documentary ones) are people whose thinking of the world and its view of it are essentially different from these of the others. In this regard they are either crazy or outstanding personalities. Kaspar Hauser is an autistic, grown far from the society, in a dark closed room and, consequently, completely unfamiliar with traditional human views on natural phenomena and ethics of social interaction (the fact that Kaspar Hauser is played by a real autistic, found by the film director in a psychiatric hospital, proves a documentary nature of W. Herzog’s live-action films). In his documentary “Land of Science and Darkness” the film director makes a research of how a blind and deaf woman interacts with the world. In his famous films with Klaus

Kinski starring he creates a character, who is over obsessed with an unfeasible dream, etc. That’s why the film “Bells from the Deep. Faith and Superstition in Russia” is logically built in the sphere of his creative interests: he travels to such exotic places as Siberia (to the huskies dwelling in the upper reaches of the Yenisey, to Kuragino village where Vissarion, a founder of “The Church of the Last Testament”, lives with his community) and, probably, the Lake Svetloyar in Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, where, according to the legend, the city of Kitezh submerged.

“Bells from the Deep” presents a great number of “wild” religious rituals. In it, like in his other films, W. Herzog dispassionately watches certain phenomena with curiosity but without empathy and penetration to their heart. Religious rituals or interviewed characters turn out to be the exhibits of the museum of unusual rarities: first we see the pilgrims to Kitezh, crawling on ice of the Lake Svetloyar and trying to hear the ringing of the bells from under it (Fig. 20); then we see the Khakass shamans performing their purificatory rituals to fight with evil spirits in the house to the sound of deep-throat singing



Fig. 20. A frame from the film “Bells from the Deep”



Fig. 21. A frame from the film “Bells from the Deep”



Fig. 22. A frame from the film “Bells from the Deep”

(Fig. 21); then he shows Vissarion, preaching against the background of the landscape of the Yenisei (Fig. 22) , Alan Chumak, charging the water, exorcist Yury Tarasov, exorcising the devil from the women in the hall of some municipal palace of culture or club, a bell-ringer Yury Yur'evich Yur'ev, an orphan who looks forward to finding his father (Fig. 23); the next

are praying old men, crawling on their knees around Kitezsh submerged into the lake (Fig. 24). Thus, religious rituals, presented to the viewers without penetration into their essence, turn into the echoes of a human's madness caused by the need to gain a mystic connection with the world. Fiction origin of W. Herzog's documentary films is fully revealed in this film: a scene with the man,



Fig. 23. A frame from the film “Bells from the Deep”



Fig. 24. A frame from the film “Bells from the Deep”

crawling on the ice of the Lake Svetloyar, stages the desire to turn unusual religiousness into more complicated and absurd one. At that this film can be by no means regarded to be a vision of Russian religiousness as some madness. This is the way the film director presents religious rituals around the world. For example, catholic religion is adopted by the African tribes the same absurd way as the

tribes borrowed only external basis of the rituals for their divine service without understanding the essence of Christian religion.

Thus, “Bells from the Deep” show Siberia as one more exotic place on the map of the world, being a virgin territory with a great number of rare unknown things which are first and foremost connected with religious rituals. It is the place to

observe, try to understand why people chose such a way of life, to believe in prayers, legends, and religious sermons or not to believe.

“Happy People: a Year in the Taiga” is of a greater interest in the context of this research. This film was shot by Dmitry Vasyukov, a Russian cameraman, in Bakhta village of Turukhansk district. It was later seen by Werner Herzog who cut it and prepared for an international distribution or, in other words, made it potentially interesting for foreign viewers.

The author's approach to the documentary material is already felt in the name of the film (“Happy People”). Thus, the possibility of existence almost on the world's end, far from civilization is understood as happiness of a modern human who is so immersed into the system of social interrelations (they not only give a human a consumer paradise but require a great number of social obligations) that becomes deprived of the right on free relations with the world. The film is divided into four parts, giving a subtle portrayal of a cyclic system of life in the taiga: spring is the time to prepare materials and traps for successful hunting in summer and autumn; summer is the time of growing, harvesting and storage for autumn and winter; autumn is the preparation time for winter hunting; winter is the

time when hunters leave their houses and hunt in the taiga. In every part of the film different characters tell about their way of life in the taiga: a hunter, who came to the taiga in the Soviet times of enthusiastic conquest of northern nature; the Turukhansk Kets who regret forgetting their traditional trades; Mikhail Tarkovsky (Fig. 25), a famous film director's nephew, who left his life in the capital to lead an eremitical way of life in the taiga; hunters from Bakhta village who were forced to leave their families for the whole winter to do their trades.

A key accent of the film is a story about trades, which hunters and fishermen in the taiga are good at. The trades are dwelt upon in such a detailed way that the viewers seem to practically apply this knowledge themselves in case it is needed. The trades, the secrets of which are opened by the interviewed, are the following ones: the secret of setting hunters' traps in the forest – how to make a trap, how to get an animal trapped, how to find a trap in the taiga; the secret of making skis for various seasons (Fig. 26); the secret of making boats, starting from choosing a log and finishing with the method of its burning for a boat to have its form (Fig. 27), the technique of driving a boat; the secret of gathering and mass processing



Fig. 25. A frame from the film “Happy People”



Fig. 26. A frame from the film “Happy People”



Fig. 27. A frame from the film “Happy People”



Fig. 28. A frame from the film “Happy People”

of cones and berries (Fig. 28); the method of protection from insects with the help of birch-bark brew; the ethics of hunting and fishing aimed at taking from nature what a human needs but no more; the principles of co-existence with the bears; the secret of cooperation between a man and a dog in the taiga – how to train a dog, how to organize a dog's life, the necessity of a respectful attitude towards a dog of a pension age (Fig. 29); the secret of storage for winter in the taiga (Fig. 30), etc. In the light of post-apocalyptic disposition of mankind there appear a feeling that the film is about the ways of survival in the world where all the achievements

of civilization disappeared. It is not without reason that a minor people – the Kets – grieve for having forgotten their own trades and being busy with one thing only. This thing is chopping firewood. Together with alcoholism it leads this people to extinction. The film renders the idea that the people, who forget their traditional trades, die out. That's why the film gives a special focus to a story of one Ket old woman, who hasn't forgotten traditional practices. What she can do is making dolls-the house keepers (Fig. 31). Being archaic nowadays, this practice turns out to be extremely valuable as its vanishing leads to dying out of the whole



Fig. 29. A frame from the film “Happy People”



Fig. 30. A frame from the film “Happy People”



Fig. 31. A frame from the film “Happy People”



Fig. 32. A frame from the film “Happy People”

people. The off-screen commentary on the portrait of Mikhail Tarkovsky, a writer, gives the following explanation of the reason of his life in the taiga: “... there are neither rules, laws, taxes nor telephones, radios here; there are only personal values and norms of behaviour...”.

Indubitably, there are also epic Siberian landscape sceneries in the film. These are drifting on the river Yenisei (Fig. 32), snowy plains, and endless taiga. They are demonstrated to the viewers to the sound of classical music. This renders the idea of the greatness of the nature, surpassing life in a human's dimension. There are also scenes about main holidays of Bakhta

village. These are the Victory Day with the veterans' tragic recollections and the New Year with morning performances for children.

Thus, in “Happy People: a Year in the Taiga” Siberia is again shown as a unique place on the Earth with no civilization. It is here where a person can understand life as it is, without superstructures and conveniences of civilization. The lack of civilization is not a problem. It is a source of happiness as in this case a human turns out to be submerged in a natural constant flow of life. Siberia is also viewed as the territory where people are masters of technologies and skills of survival which must not be forgotten as

they can always turn out to be in high demand everywhere.

Conclusion

The analysis of the films chosen resulted in the following conceptual image of Siberia in cinematography:

- 1) Siberia nowadays is still “terra incognita” for the “large” world. Its undiscovered territory is exotic and rare for the viewers of the capital and, to the largest extent, for foreign viewers. The texture looks exotic: shabby villages, total alcoholism, quilted coats and caps with ear-flaps, unconcealed banditry, etc. The Siberians’ religious beliefs (sectarian branches of Christian religion, Old Belief, shamanism, etc.) look also exotic. The focus of cinematography is to show something from the Siberian life, that was unknown before, or to strengthen the existing stereotyped views. The films about Siberia seldom show ordinary Siberian cities, the Siberians’ everyday life. From this point of view Siberia is a museum of exotic rare things which are interesting to observe.
- 2) From the Soviet times Siberia has been partly given a romantic image. It is the possibility to escape from boring civilized world with its social norms, principles and obligations to the world of ingenuous feelings and co-existence with nature.
- 3) Siberia is a place for hermitry in modern world. It is the possibility to escape from civilization due to various reasons: misanthropy and sociopathy
- as impossibility to live in global social systems; religious hermitry as it is only in out-of-the-way place and in solitude one can gain true belief, set hopes upon God; romantic hermitry as search for one’s own unique way of life, which is not imposed by civilization.
- 4) Siberia is the territory where nature opens its savage face placing a person into the situation of survival, not life. At that a Siberian, coexisting with severe nature, is a person who is good at technologies of survival valuable for the rest of the world.
- 5) Siberia is a historic place of exile. It is interesting that Soviet cinematography has been giving a positive focus of this stereotypical image. Siberia is a place of exile of progressive social, scientific and creative ideas which some day come back to Russia and introduce revolutionary changes to the Russian way of life.
- 6) Siberia is a “kettle” of social classes in which workers, scientific elite, creative intelligentsia, etc. equally coexist. A positive conception of social classes’ cooperation in Siberia in Soviet cinematography changed a post-Soviet cinematography’s views that Siberian space is inhabited mainly by marginal persons, hermits and military men. In any case, if America is a “kettle”, melting various nationalities and ethnoses, then Siberia is a “kettle” for blending and washing out the barriers between social classes.

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Образ Сибири в художественном советском, постсоветском и документально-игровом кинематографе Вернера Херцога

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Статья посвящена исследованию концепта «Сибирь» в аудиовизуальных образах киноискусства. В качестве основы для исследования выбраны отдельные кинокартины: образ Сибири в советском кино рассматривается на примере анализа фильма Ивана Пырьева «Сказание о земле Сибирской» 1947 г., образ Сибири в постсоветском кинематографе – на примере фильма Вячеслава Росса «Сибирь. Монамур» 2011 г. Среди зарубежных фильмов о Сибири автор останавливается на фильмах немецкого режиссера Вернера Херцога – «Колокола из глубины. Вера и суеверия в России» (1993) и «Счастливые люди: год в тайге» (2011), созданный в соавторстве с российским режиссером Дмитрием Васюковым. В результате автор раскрывает целый спектр концептуальных представлений о Сибири, которые транслируются в культуру киноискусством. Также в статье представлен обзор научной литературы, посвященной сибирскому кинематографу.

Ключевые слова: Сибирь, концепт, сибирский кинематограф, Сибирь в кинематографе, образ Сибири в кино, художественные фильмы о Сибири, «Сказание о земле Сибирской», «Сибирь. Монамур», «Колокола из глубины», «Счастливые люди: год в тайге».

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология, 17.00.00 – искусствоведение.
