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Theoretical Concepts of Film Studies in *Cinema Art* Journal in the First Post-Soviet Years: 1992–2000

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Abstract

Throughout the 1990s, the content of *Cinema Art* depended quite substantially on political and economic developments in the world and in Russia; theoretical articles about cinematography very often occupied a very modest place on the pages of the journal.

The frequency of theoretical articles in the journal *Cinema Art* in the post-Soviet 1990s ranged from six to thirty-five per year. At the same time, due to the sharp politicization and focus on non-film texts, the minimum of film theory in the journal's texts occurred in the first three post-Soviet years.

Our analysis of film theory concepts (in the context of the sociocultural and political situation, etc.) of the existence of the journal *Cinema Art* in the first post-Soviet decade (1992–2000) showed that theoretical works on cinematic subjects during this period can be divided into the following types:

- articles, discussions devoted mainly to theoretical analysis of the heritage of the classics of Soviet cinema, directing, the problems of Cinema and the Spectator, film criticism and film studies, etc. (L. Anninsky, O. Aronson, Y. Bogomolov, S. Dobrotvorsky, E. Dobrenko, D. Dondurey, V. Matisen, K. Razlogov, M. Turovskaya, M. Zak, M. Zorkaya, and others);
- articles on the theory of foreign cinematography (D. Komm, M. Trofimenkov, N. Tsyркun, etc.).

On the whole, in the 1990s, as well as during the Perestroika period, *Cinema Art* drastically re-evaluated the history of Soviet and world cinematography and tried to objectively analyze the development of the current cinema process.

Keywords: cinema art journal, film studies, film criticism, theoretical concepts, cinema, film, cinematography, Russia.

1. Introduction

In this paper we focus on the analysis of theoretical concepts of film studies in the *Cinema Art* journal in the first post-Soviet years (1991–2000), when its executive editors were K. Scherbakov and D. Dondurey (1947–2017).

Until May 1993, the editor-in-chief of the *Cinema Art* was K. Shcherbakov, who was then appointed Deputy Minister of Culture of Russia. Since July 1993, the sociologist D. Dondurey (1947–2017) became the Editor-in-Chief of *Cinema Art*.

Table 1 provides statistical data reflecting the changes in the journal's scope, circulation, and frequency between 1992 and 2000; the names of the editors-in-chief, the length of time they were

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in charge of the publication, and the number of articles on film theory for each year of the journal's publication are also provided.

Table 1. Journal *Cinema Art* (1992–2000): statistical data

Year of issue of the journal	The organization whose organ was the journal	Circulation (in thousand copies)	Periodicity of the journal (numbers per year)	Editor-in-chief	Number of articles on film theory
1992	Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, the staff of <i>Cinema Art</i>	34,6–50,0	12	K. Scherbakov	8
1993	Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Committee on Cinematography under the Government of the Russian Federation, Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, Cinema Center, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal, Editorial Board of <i>Ogonyok</i>	15,0–25,0	12	K. Scherbakov (№ 1-4) Editorial Board (№№ 5-6) D. Dondurey (№ 7-12)	6
1994	Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Committee on Cinematography under the Government of the Russian Federation, Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, Cinema Center (№ 1–4), Editorial Board of <i>Ogonyok</i> (№ 1-6), Unions of Russian Cinematographers (№ 3–12), Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal	10,0 *	12	D. Dondurey	9
1995	Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Committee of the Russian Federation on Cinematography, Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, Unions of Russian Cinematographers, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal	*	12	D. Dondurey	15
1996	Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Committee of the Russian Federation on Cinematography, Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, Unions of Russian	*	12	D. Dondurey	35

	Cinematographers, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal				
1997	Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Committee of the Russian Federation on Cinematography, Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, Unions of Russian Cinematographers, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal	*	12	D. Dondurey	24
1998	Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, Committee of the Russian Federation on Cinematography, Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers (№ 1–2), Unions of Russian Cinematographers, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal	*	12	D. Dondurey	7
1999	Committee of the Russian Federation on Cinematography, Unions of Russian Cinematographers, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal	*	12	D. Dondurey	9
2000	Committee of the Russian Federation on Cinematography (№ 1–10), Cinematography Service (№ 11–12), Unions of Russian Cinematographers, Editorial Board of <i>Cinema Art</i> journal	*	12	D. Dondurey	19

* Starting in 1994, the circulation of *Cinema Art* ceased to be officially listed in the imprints of its issues. According to data available on the Internet, the circulation of the journal from 1995 to 2000 was about two thousand copies, i.e. even lower than in the 1930s-1940s.

2. Materials and methods

The methodology of the research consists of the key philosophical provisions on the connection, interdependence and integrity of the phenomena of reality, the unity of the historical and social in knowledge; scientific, cinematological, sociocultural, cultural, hermeneutic, semiotic approaches, proposed in the works of leading scientists (Aristarco, 1951; Aronson, 2003; 2007; Bakhtin, 1996; Balázs, 1935; Bazin, 1971; Bessonov, 2012; Bibler, 1990; Buldakov, 2014; Casetti, 1999; Demin, 1966; Eco, 1975; 1976; Eisenstein, 1939; 1940; 1964; Gledhill, Williams, 2000; Hess, 1997; Hill, Gibson, 1998; Khrenov, 2006; 2011; Kuleshov, 1987; Lotman, 1973; 1992; 1994; Mast, Cohen, 1985; Metz, 1974; Razlogov, 1984; Sokolov, 2010; Stam, 2000; Villarejo, 2007 and others).

The project is based on the research content approach (identifying the content of the process under study taking into account the totality of its elements, the interaction between them, their nature, appeal to the facts, analysis and synthesis of theoretical conclusions, etc.), on the historical approach – consideration of the specific and historical development of the declared topic of the project.

Research methods: complex content analysis, comparative interdisciplinary analysis; theoretical research methods: classification, comparison, analogy, induction and deduction, abstraction and concretization, theoretical analysis and synthesis, generalization; empirical research methods: collection of information related to the project topic, comparative-historical and hermeneutical methods.

3. Discussion and results

Theoretical Concepts of Film Studies in “Cinema Art”: 1992–2000

History of Soviet Cinema

Articles on Soviet film classics published between 1992 and 2000 have undergone significant revision of previous views on the work of S. Eisenstein, A. Dovzhenko, D. Vertov, and other famous Soviet directors (Dobrenko, 1997: 59-73; 117-131; 2000: 96-111; Khokhlova, 1992: 21-25, Kleiman, 1992: 9-21; Kleiman et al, 1996: 10-21; Levin, 1996: 27-33; Malkova, 1996: 66-72; Podoroga, 1994: 90-102; Roshal, 1994: 104-113; Vertov's *The Jump*, 1992: 96-108; etc.).

An article by the film scholar E. Levin (1935–1991), for example, argued that “a common misconception led S. Eisenstein to an anticultural conception of art and the spectator, to the conviction that the enlightener in the name of bright ideas can treat the spectator as he sees fit, for he knows what he needs, while the spectator himself must not think. Thus enlightenment without a true understanding of culture and man is associated with arrogance, a kind of aristocratism, with contempt for the masses, with the imposition of ideas, with a tyrannical intolerance of other ideas, with the proclamation of the exclusivity of his concept: the only true, scientific, etc. ... The dictatorship that has been carried over into the realm of culture as a result of a lack of culture (not to be confused with a lack of education!) inevitably destroys culture from within with its totalitarian monotony, whereas culture is above all tradition, diversity, tolerance and respect for the spiritual independence of the individual. That is why for many years S. Eisenstein viewed art as violence! ... Aggressiveness was for S. Eisenstein the essence of the new art not through aesthetic incomprehension, but through the general understanding of society, where violence in the course of the class struggle was beyond any doubt considered the only and universal form of existence, the natural system of relations and the complete system of all values. But this was not everyone's understanding of history and modernity. Why did S. Eisenstein not rise above time, but merrily dissolved into it, coincided with it? Precisely because he was part of the anti-cultural movement. And why did he become part of it? There are many reasons. Not the least of them: the temperament, the rebellion against patriarchy in the broad sense, the sadistic complex, the absence of artistic roots and personal position in culture, ambition, the desire to get ahead, to play the first role, to take the lead – all this mixed up with a fiery enthusiasm, with faith in the people and in the revolution, with the desire to create for millions, to dissolve in them, with the search for their roots, kindred traditions” (Levin, 1996: 33).

The view that S. Eisenstein was a brilliant artist who consciously concluded an alliance with the forces of evil was also discussed in a discussion of his work, which was launched by the journal *Cinema Art* in 1996 (Kleiman et al., 1996: 10-21).

Film historian E. Dobrenko wrote rather harshly about the work of A. Dovzhenko, a “poet of the screen” who was so praised not so long ago. He believed that if his films (especially of his last period) are treated without “breathing air”, then “the shining world of Alexander Dovzhenko will appear before us in all its gaping emptiness” (Dobrenko, 1997: 73).

In a previously unthinkable perspective in relation to Soviet film classics was the article by S. Gurko's “Pudovkin's Erotic Films” (Gurko, 1993: 61-64), which boldly argued that *A Simple Case* and *Vasily Bortnikov's Return* are “really two erotic films, in the sense that they aim to attract my emotion, to capture me entirely, and offer me, on the one hand, to consume them, while, on the other, they consume me themselves” (Gurko, 1993: 61).

In the 1990s *Cinema Art* journal repeatedly returned to the work of I. Pyriev (1901–1968) and G. Alexandrov (1903–1983).

Film historian E. Dobrenko wrote that “Ivan Pyriev created not films but a genre in the Stalinist era. Not only did Pyriev create his own space, but as a talented and passionate mythological storyteller he also created his own mythology of Soviet space. These spatial models germinated in his films out of an outstanding social responsiveness, out of a truly irreproachable cultural sensibility, which was almost always defined by the word conjuncture, and which may seem strange in the context of a discussion of Pyriev, whose films are almost synonymous in

contemporary consciousness with kitsch and blunt tastelessness. But this famous blandness of Pyriev's films, and the often monstrous farce of his directorial decisions, was also, it seems, the result of his cultural super-sensitivity. Pyriev, apparently lacking artistic taste, never betrayed his intrinsic sense of time" (Dobrenko, 1996: 109).

Analyzing Alexandrov's film *Circus* (1936) the film critic K. Dobrotvorskaya noted that "the basis of the collective worldview of the 1930s is reality that turned into a myth, and one of the dominant motives of this mythology is the advent of the Golden Age. There is no point in talking about the contradiction between reality and its screen reflection – the form of conventionality is already embedded in the very consciousness of the time. On this path the traditional genres, already declared a bourgeois relic by theorists of the twenties, are being discarded. The needs of the viewer and his stereotypes of perception are reprogrammed by ideological reality, while life itself offers a formal-mythological system. At the same time genre mechanisms continue to function, producing specific formations: a historical revolutionary film, a funny comedy with a collective positive hero, a defense film. The peculiarity of G.V. Alexandrov's film *Circus* against this background is that the Soviet mythology, formed as if outside the field of culture, "meets" here the cultural mythology of the traditional genre of melodrama, which includes the film in a number of general cultural archetypes and associations" (Dobrotvorskaya, 1992: 28).

Referring to G. Alexandrov's last feature film, *Starling and the Lyre* (1974), film historians M. Kushnirov and A. Shpagin very accurately stressed that in it director G. Alexandrov and actress L. Orlova created "the last and most explicit variation on their favorite theme – 'the world of our dreams'. Its ideality is emphasized above all by its lack of time – a sense of "beginnings" and "ends". We have here three impressively extended chronotopes: a three-hour chronotope of the film itself, a long chronotope of the action taking place in the film (the 1940s and 1970s), and a certain chronotope of eternity, in which Orlova's heroine resides, remaining "eternally young" in all eras. This is indeed eerie, like any sense of timelessness, of the abyss. ... Without even wanting to, Alexandrov mirrored the phenomenon of Soviet consciousness and subconsciousness. ... This world – in its ideal state – did not suggest in its inhabitants any true, non-minimal passions, hobbies, priorities... except one, to be among the chosen by power – first and foremost, and consequently, by wealth, fame, honor. But certainly not ideology. This is the world our entire elite sphere has tried to live in, trying to build a paradise on earth for itself and at the same time not tired of fighting against the things that provided this "paradise" with proper comfort and "legality" – the pernicious influence of the West. ... Indeed: the only living purpose of all these espionage games and political intricacies was only one: to enable a beautiful woman and her chosen one to live up to her ambitions and innermost desires. Among bankers, generals, aristocrats, capitalist ministers. In chic mansions, ancient castles, fashionable hotels. In the most picturesque corners of Europe" (Kushnirov, Shpagin, 1993: 11).

The cinematic view of the work of the leading Soviet filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s was also unorthodox.

Literary scholar and film critic L. Anninsky (1934–2019) analyzed religious motifs in V. Shukshin's works. He emphasized that "Vasily Shukshin became an iconic figure of Russian self-consciousness, torn for a thousand years between his mother's feminine, Christ-embodied "gentle" human-loving culture and his father's tough, warlike, rebellious, not yielding to any "gentle" male temperament" (Anninsky, 1990: 90).

Literary scholar I. Zolotussky wrote that in his films "Tarkovsky prefers culture to civilization. In his opinion, the divine plan reveals itself most of all in it: in the Gospel, which he considers the greatest creation of poetry, in music, in painting. At the center of the convergence of this plan with man is the image, which, unlike the symbol, cannot be comprehended to the end. Of course, such an interpretation is very far from the Church's interpretation of Christianity. But the artist is unable to express his view of the idea of God other than through paint, sound, or the silence of film. Tarkovsky confirmed this with his experience. And let the orthodox say that this is not pure faith but "mixing," there is no other way for the artist to comprehend God" (Zolotussky, 2000: 69).

Musicologist S. Sarkisian was convinced that "the peculiarities of the subconscious world of Paradzhanov's art are in the developed system of mythological thinking, and archetypal thinking, not specifically national thinking. ... Paradzhanov's methodological approach to texture is similar to the described musical approach. The composition of shots in his films can be analyzed through the prism of musical texture. In expository episodes Paradzhanov prefers to use a type of melodic texture that allows him to individualize individual lines of imagery or subject sequences, switching

the viewer's attention from one to another. "Skips", fixation of vision on different objects are natural for cinematography and do not look as abrupt a method of material development as in music. The polyphonic and harmonic types of texture used to develop or develop the material are more favored by Paradzhanov. ... Sergey Paradzhanov entered the history of cinema as a reformer of its language. Overcoming the literary narrative, he brought the poetics of painting, music, choreographic and pantomimic plastics into his films, thus enriching cinema with new patterns of art synthesis" (Sarkisian, 1995: 140, 142, 145).

A new cinematic perspective was also presented in the *Cinema Art* in relation to the work of L. Gaidai (1923–1993).

Film scholar M. Zak (1929–2011) insisted that in L. Gaidai's comedies "traditional "masks" only ostensibly remained unchanged, in fact they changed, moved toward voluminous comedic characters. The energy of movement stemmed from our way of life, their screen biographies were in their own way typological. Three comedy characters, like all Soviet people, worked hard in the sweat of their brow, even though their "occupations" were not listed in the social register. This trio was a comic projection of very serious concerns and problems" (Zak, 1996: 19).

And film critic S. Dobrotvorsky (1959–1997) was sure that "Gaidai, who never explained his own work, had a completely Hitchcockian attitude toward cinema. That is, if you recall Hitchcock's famous maxim, not as a piece of life, but as a piece of cake. Only this attitude, quite cynical, is capable of giving rise to the inescapable "pleasantness" of the film factuality, the heightened playfulness and technicality of the image as unconditional and authentic" (Dobrotvorsky, 1996: 13).

On this "monographic" and thematic background the film critic Y. Bogomolov dared to make bold generalizations, daring to publish on the pages of the *Cinema Art* an innovative "Brief synopsis of the long history of the Soviet cinema" (Bogomolov, 1995: 16-23).

In this article Y. Bogomolov convincingly argued that "pre-revolutionary cinema in Russia (as well as all over the world) was folklore-mythological (in the common parlance of the time – fairground). And in this sense it was a collective unconscious artistic creation. It was not yet to the full extent of the individual-author. As a consequence, the screen was dominated by archetypal heroes, archetypal motifs and mass, "low" genres" (Bogomolov, 1995: 17).

But then, gradually, the "collective stylistic myth-making transformed into an individual author's myth-making. Next to the fairground attraction, together with it (but not instead of it) and directly out of it, a spectacle was born that proved capable of forming the crowd's vague dreams of happiness, its latent notions of beauty and nobility, its social complexes, humanistic instincts and political reflexes. The viewer gradually begins to distinguish the films not only by their genre and the names of their (usually archetypal) protagonists, but also by their individual authorship, that is, by the direction. This is when the outlines of what would later be referred to as "auteur cinema" began to emerge" (Bogomolov, 1995: 17).

Y. Bogomolov argues that the confrontation of individual artistic consciousness and the collective-mythological subconscious largely determines the nature of the development of aesthetic motifs in world cinema in general and in Soviet cinema in particular, but it is in Russia that the 1917 Revolution gave this collision an exceptional tension, a level of conflict uncharacteristic for other cinemas (Bogomolov 1995: 17), which was soon manifest in the films of the 1920s leaders of Soviet cinema: S. Eisenstein, V. Pudovkin, A. Dovzhenko and others.

Evaluating the situation in the Soviet cinematography of the 1930s, Y. Bogomolov came to the conclusion that during this period, "first, the myth world is thoroughly material and sensual. Everything mental in it is material. In it metaphors, tropes, abstract concepts are things, physical beings. Sleep is a being. And death is a being. And memory is a being. In view of this, everything supernatural is natural, the contingent is unconditional. Second, the foundation and consequence of mythworld is the absolute freedom of desire. Then there is the freedom to deal with Time and the freedom to move in Space. Freedom from moral tendentiousness. Mythic creation is, in a sense, an inverted universe. What in the latter was regarded as a superstructure acquires the meaning of the basis, and what was called the basis turns out to be a completely ghostly superstructure" (Bogomolov, 1995: 19).

In this connection, film scholar V. Mikhalkovich (1937–2006) wrote that Stalin's myth as the Father of Nations is not an obsession, not a malign invention of the System; this myth is of folkloric origin. In the art and press of the 1930s Stalin acquires all the features of the folklore Ancestor (Mikhalkovich, 1996: 111).

And film critic S. Dobrotvorsky argued that “myth is a direct and natural product of total realism, which declares reality completed and frozen. Turning to the aesthetics of the 1930s, we find in it just such a stable cosmogonic model of the world, where there is a place for the founding demiurge (Lenin) and his deputy on earth (Stalin), where the myth of creation (revolution and civil war) and the coming "golden age" (modernity) is present, where the pantheon of heroes and their antagonists (the myth of "pests") is formed. Ideology itself becomes mythology, forming a special kind of worldview, close to archaic ideas about the world and man's place in it. In this situation ideology also absorbs history, rewriting it in accordance with the demands of the "social order" (Dobrotvorsky, 1992: 25).

And then, in the post-Stalin era, as the mythocracy withered away and the mythworld increasingly lost its former monolithic character, opportunities for legal artistic dissidence also emerged, the first manifestation of which was the so-called Thaw cinematography. That was the real rise of auteur cinema (Bogomolov, 1995: 21).

Analyzing cinematic trends in the Soviet cinema of the 1970s, Y. Bogomolov draws readers' attention to the abundance of screen adaptations of classic literary works in this "stagnant" era because “for major masters the classics served not only as a shelter from thought- and feeling-drying ideological dogmas, but also as a tool of polemic (often unconscious) with the establishment clichés of socialist humanism and Soviet patriotism” (Bogomolov, 1995: 23).

In addition, another tendency emerged at this time – “it could be called meticulous or pedantic historicism combined with an equally meticulous and equally pedantic psychologism. The most indicative example in this regard is the films of Alexei German... Historical authenticity and meticulousness in depicting the past is an inadvertent and disguised challenge to the social imaginaries and moral ambiguities of the present, which dated back to the birth of the pictures” (Bogomolov, 1995: 23).

M. Brashinsky, a film critic and film director, generally agreed with this point of view. He believed that in the USSR of the 1970s “the idyllic 'Chekhov-Goncharov' style was so pure that it permitted the spirituality, psychology and morality in general to unfold without having recourse to ideology – this was exactly what the Soviet retro was trying to achieve. It sought not to be composed, not to participate, but to disappear into the psychological detail, into the timeless experience, into the sunbeams on the open curtains, into the spicy expressiveness of the Art Nouveau style. It must be said that our retromakers were excellent at it” (Brashinsky, 1999: 92).

In this context, film scholar O. Aronson wrote that “there is a special realism of 'Soviet film'... Realism is not as a direction in art or a style mimicking reality, but a special situation, perhaps social – or rather social – which finds its embodiment in the insignificant details of the image itself. Their insignificance at the moment of watching the film is due to their habituality, to the already formed automatism of not seeing them, to the working mechanism of exclusion. The result of this neurotic sociality turned into an image, an image smoldering, fading, disappearing at the very moment of perception, turns out to be surprising and strange: the image of "Soviet film" is as if deprived of the most important thing – a sense of visibility, the ability to connect it with a certain imaginable whole. This image disintegrates into a series of titles of specific films by specific directors, into rare stylistic and pictorial successes. Each of us can easily list these individual episodes of that film era. But they remain mere facts, exceptions from which history is made. For example, the history of cinema” (Aronson, 1996: 147).

In his article, the writer and publicist D. Bykov harshly revises one of the flagship themes of Soviet cinema – labor – emphasizing that the main task of all Soviet art – and cinema art above all – was to prove “that joy can also come from an activity which is charged as an obligatory duty. Moreover, it was the obligation of the process that was supposed to evoke joy – the elation of fusion with a kind of collective body and collective work. Here, too, there is a common-sense moment, since it is precisely labor that allows for that collective fusion that, for a time, is truly capable of saving us from existential loneliness. Labor was a patented remedy for reflection, a panacea for superfluous reflection, and in this sense it faithfully fulfills its role in all Soviet films... The idea of competition is an intuitive attempt to replace the altruistic motive of labor with an egoistic desire for superiority and fame. It is not that stupid. Only ascetics and saints can work for altruistic reasons, while any normal person can work out of egoism, and he cannot help but enjoy the apotheosis of national recognition. The Soviet cinema of the 1930s was not stingy with such apotheosis” (Bykov 1996: 123-124).

D. Bykov went on to show that the subject of labor was gradually transformed and the "thaw" Soviet cinema of the 1960s poetized the process of labor, abandoning the pathos of tearing heroics and replacing it with a more "civilized lyricism. ... From a work first heroic and then festive, labor becomes a romantic-poetic affair, and thus its portrayal either acquires a deliberately theatrical, conventional character... or is diluted with a landscape, the taiga construction sites contributing to it" (Bykov, 1996: 123-124).

And then, as D. Bykov rightly argued, the labor themes of the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s were subjected to considerable corrosion: "An outlook crisis of the seemingly secure proletarian became apparent: work brought no joy or consciousness of its heroism. ... Labor as a monotonous, tiresome and ultimately fruitless process is on full display in the cinematography of the 1970s, where the heroes work hard to fulfill the ruling ideology's aims, but this labor brings them neither joy nor satisfaction, for it does not remove the traditional psychological problems" (Bykov, 1996: 125).

In this context, film critic V. Matizen gave a sweep of the Soviet ersatz-genre "production-labor" film scheme, which looked as follows: 1) the hero comes to the production object "from outside," usually as a result of a "new assignment"; 2) notices a "separate defect" in the object and tries to eliminate it; 3) encounters the opposition of the antagonist "pest" or conservator; 4) meets an assistant and overcomes opposition; 5) produces the object improvement he seeks (Matizen, 1993: 125).

Film scholar V. Fomin lamented that during the period of "perestroika" in Soviet cinema, in fact, remained untapped spectacular possibilities of folk traditions: "Not only the "author's" movies, but also films popular spectator genres have not guessed or did not want to accept the true social order of its audience. Perestroika film did not find sufficient strength and courage to confront the tragic reality. With few exceptions, it was ruled by the same destructive moods of despair, horror and pessimism that swept society. Instead of confronting the gathering gloom, Perestroika cinematography itself continued to exacerbate and aggravate it, usually limiting its task to a superficial depiction of the horrors and nightmares of a collapsed Soviet civilization. The public was already fleeing the cinema, while detectives, melodramas and action movies about the all-powerful mafia just as stubbornly and blindly continued to pour salt on the wounds that were already bleeding, and to heighten fear, despair and revulsion of life. What people needed in these years was a Fairy Tale – mischievous, kind, full of faith in life, in the victory of the good. These were the years when our cinema could have benefited from the lessons of folklore culture, its spiritual and aesthetic experience of confrontation with harsh reality. Unfortunately, it did not happen..." (Fomin, 1997: 49).

Some journal articles on the history of cinema were devoted to the pre-revolutionary period (Kazakova, Kazakov, 1995: 62-68; Turovskaya, 1997: 108-113; Yangirov, 1995: 56-61), the Great Mute of the 1920s (Mikhalkovich, 1995: 4-9; 218-221; Nusinova, Tsivian, 1996: 30-26; Turovskaya, 1997: 108-113), the sound cinema of the 1930s (Dobrenko, 1996: 97-102), the phenomenology of Soviet cinema (Anninsky, 1996: 95-96), Soviet films forbidden by censorship (Margolit, Shmyrov, 1992: 26-36), ideological film mythology (Matizen, 1996: 141-143), the themes of heroism (Dobrotvorsky, 1996: 113-116), espionage (Tsyrukun, 1996: 131-134), and love (Abdullaeva, 1996: 135-140), Lenin as a hero of the *cinematic thaw* (Margolit, 2000: 84-94), etc.

The article by the film critic E. Stishova, "Cinderella's Adventures in the Land of the Bolsheviks" (Stishova, 1997: 99-107), where she reasonably stresses that in Soviet cinema as well as in Soviet cultural policy in general the prototype of Cinderella as a sign of an oppressed woman liberated by the Soviet power for a new happy life was actualized in the consciousness of society at the instigation of the revolutionary leader himself, when he made his careless remark about a cook who is not weak to rule the state (Stishova, 1997: 99-100).

The problem of film mythology in its concrete refraction was also touched upon in the article by the film critic S. Dobrotvorsky (1959–1997), "Film *Chapaev*. The Experience of Structuring Total Realism" (Dobrotvorsky 1992: 22-280), in which he suggested that the term myth-making that now frequented the Soviet art of the 1930s should be concretized in the sense of "total" or "universal" realism. This reveals the main characteristic of the realist method-its claim to the absolute and final authenticity of the depicted, the mandatory for all plausibility, which is in principle characteristic of the classic myth, which interprets the world in unconditional, perfect forms that transcend experience and logic. "Chapaev by the Vasiliev brothers is an impressive example of the fully realized possibilities of totalitarian aesthetics" (Dobrotvorsky, 1992: 22).

A new perspective on Soviet films of the 1930s-1950s intended for children's audiences was presented in an article by film critic V. Pritulenko (Pritulenko, 1993: 98-107). She noted that these films for children were dominated by a “cult-like reverence for living 'gods' – members of the government or, at worst, 'demigods' – shock workers, Stakhanovites, record-breakers who embodied the possibility of a 'bright way' for every ordinary citizen” (Pritulenko, 1993: 99).

It was in these kinds of films that the Bolshevik morality was vividly “distorted, parodied Christian morality: it is not enough to see the log in your own eye, it must be found in the eye of your brother... Most of its "principledness" (especially in the films of the 1930s) extended to the attitude toward adults, mostly toward parents. This inherently monstrous distortion of centuries-old morality is presented as a necessary component of the new mentality. The goal is simple and obvious: a totalitarian regime is by nature bound to permeate everything, including the family. This is why the family is erased as a value in the mind. In cinema this is not always done directly and blatantly. Very often the action takes place in a collective, non-familial environment: in an orphanage, a commune, a pioneer camp, a school class. Thus, the family becomes a collective... If the conflict unfolds in the family, then in the overwhelming majority of cases it has a destructive force” (Pritulenko, 1993: 100-101).

One can probably agree with the fact that up until the early 1960s, “the young viewer was constantly indoctrinated: 'one is zero'. Dozens of plots varied the conflict of the arrogant loner with the team. Perhaps no other postulate (with the exception of the sacramental "beware!") has not been hammered into children's heads with such consistency as a categorical demand not to break away from the majority in any way. Any aspiration to independent manifestation of personality was seen as an opposition to the majority, subordination to its interests and equal possibility for all to be crushed, ground up at the slightest attempt of personal confrontation” (Pritulenko, 1993: 102).

We also agree with V. Pritulenko that “totalitarian ideology seems attractive also due to the fact that it rests as if on a healthy basis. However, it reflects the generally accepted moral norms as in a crooked mirror. Whereas, for example, patriotism is the love of one's homeland and thus service to the call of conscience, the totalitarian system requires not so much love for the fatherland as for the political system and the ruling party. Patriotic education thus becomes demonstrative propaganda, open recruitment under the banner of the System, whose dark sides are constantly being hidden. But despite the fact that the world on the screen of the 1930s-1950s appears stable, joyful and radiant, it is constantly exposed to the machinations of hidden enemies” (Pritulenko, 1993: 104).

The *Cinema Art* journal of the 1990s published many film critics of the relatively younger generation. However, the "old guard" of the 1960s did not give up their positions either. For example, cultural studies scholar and film critic M. Turovskaya (1924–2019) published one of her best works on the history of Soviet cinema: “Cold War Films” (Turovskaya, 1996: 99-106).

In it she reminded readers that “cinema as a state monopolistic branch of culture had to respond – and did respond – to the style of the Soviet empire. Costume, historical and biographical films about national genius made up an essential part of the production... Although the "Cold War" movies in templar offered as if a sharp modern, publicistic counterpoint to the historical films, in fact they represented the same costume, setting part of the repertoire. Between the newspaper, propaganda acuteness of the task and the individual handwriting of the director (and these films were directed by masters) lay a layer of ideological and aesthetic stereotypes, very precisely dated by the last "five years" of Stalinist rule. The agitational purpose of the films was to present the yesterday's ally in the anti-fascist struggle as an enemy. ... The identification of Americans with Nazis is the only "secret" of the whole package of Soviet Cold War films” (Turovskaya, 1996: 100).

On the other hand, “what we know now about relations in the upper echelons of power”, M. Turovskaya continued, “is rougher and scarier than the fictional squabbles of the 'sharks of capitalism. But the atmosphere of mutual suspicion, boorishness, cynicism, fear, complicity, and dissociation that colored the final years of Stalinism and was completely displaced from domestic themes, could only be realized in the construction of an enemy image. The possibility to speak in plain language about experiments on human beings, to provoke riots and arrests, and to blackmail one another was a real consequence of totalitarian regimes, a depletion of the cultural and moral layer, of the natural resources of man” (Turovskaya, 1996: 106).

Discussing the history of Soviet cinema in the 1970s, literary critic and culture expert M. Lipovetsky discussed the image of the protagonist of the famous Soviet film series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973) and explained his "long-lasting" popularity: “Stirlitz was not lost in

folklore and not lost in the era that gave birth to him. This character has formalized the paradoxical archetype of our non. The main thing in Stirlitz is the contradiction between what we know about him and how he behaves. We know that he is "ours" and that he works for "us." And yet in everything – in the way his civilian suit or his SS uniform sits, in the way he talks to his superiors with dignity, in the way he drives his car, in the way he drinks coffee and cognac, and of course in the way he smokes elegantly... – in all this one can sense a non-Western man, or rather, the way this Western man is drawn in the Soviet collective subcortex. ... Stirlitz also embodied such a Western trait as rationality (everyone remembers how he plays with matches) with maximally subdued emotionality (meeting his wife), which is archetypically equivalent to "Russianness". Emphasized "non-ours" Stirlitz expresses itself in the undisguised admiration with which the camera follows him in the bars where he sits, on the clean streets on which he walks, in the office and home interiors, which pass his life. We almost forget that it takes place at the end of the war, under bombs, etc. Here there is a desolation of form characteristic of myth, what Roland Barthes called the "decay of historicity": in the myth of Stirlitz the destroyed Berlin and the defeat of the very "ordnung" that is so persistently aestheticized disappears" (Lipovetsky, 2000: 73-74).

All this, according to M. Lipovetsky, "allows us to see in Stirlitz a second archetypal plan, which uses the model of the spy as a metaphor: this hero created a symbolic alibi for the ideal Soviet intellectual, justifying and heroizing his metaphysical non-membership of the system (not Nazi, but Soviet, of course) to which he physically and historically belongs, his carefully cultivated "our", which, in fact, is meaningless and empty outside the gravity of "our". In a word, Stirlitz is an ideal mediator who unites the Western and the native Soviet world... He proves that it is possible to combine service to "ours" and being "not ours"; it is possible to serve but not to belong, and vice versa, it is possible to belong but to serve something else. ... This whole Stirlitz mythology proved to be surprisingly necessary today, when practical attempts to combine the skills of Soviet existence ("our") with Western style and relations ("not our") proved their problematic, to put it mildly, when the Perestroika dream of Russia immediately becoming America, if it got rid of the Communists in power, painfully proved its groundlessness repeatedly. On the ruins of these utopias, the Stirlitz archetype gained unprecedented relevance" (Lipovetsky, 2000: 74).

Theoretical Film Concepts

Articles on film theory in the *Cinema Art* journal in the first post-Soviet years were quite rare.

Film critic V. Matizen offered his readers a "Brief course in the paratheory of Soviet cinema" (Matizen 1993: 122-126), reminding them that, beginning in the 1960s, the Soviet "bureaucracy permitted vulgar sweetening of ideological pills. Of course, this could not but affect the quality of partisanship. A typical example of this degeneration (not without pernicious Western influence) are the historical revolutionary films, which have become mere action movies in which "ours" won by apt shooting and slyly playing with the enemy, rather than with the all-powerful-but-true ideas of the author of Communist Party Organization and Communist Party Literature. By the mid-seventies, as a result of the blurring of the single Communist Party channel, three class streams had formed in Soviet cinema: "Party" educational cinema (PC), "author's" intelligentsia cinema (AC), and "genre" democratic cinema (GC). (Note that the most powerful flow was that of 'grayness' or 'light', which arose from the mixing of these organically incompatible substances and occupied up to four-fifths of the repertoire)" (Matizen, 1993: 122).

Further, V. Matizen gave rather clear definitions of the concepts he highlighted: "PC can be defined as ersatz folk. It also prefers answer to question, result to process, optimism to pessimism, simplicity to complexity and clarity to vagueness. AC corresponds to the innovative function that intellectuals perform in society: it is the art of doubts and agonizing reflections, of last questions and the search for the meaning of life. It is eternally searching and not finding, denying itself, and from time to time throwing its ancestors off the ship of modernity. GC, on the contrary, is the art of affirming the old and repeating the past. It prefers truth to fiction, reflection of life in the forms of life itself to frank conventionality, final questions to final answers, complexity to simplicity, knowledge to entertainment" (Matizen 1993: 123).

As a result, Matizen concluded that "on the whole, Soviet PC expressed the dominant Bolshevik mentality – the ideological myth of transformation, which created a stable model of a world constantly changing for the better, and which expressed a sense of social optimism and an irrational confidence in the all-powerfulness of the will, which the Bolsheviks shared with the Nazis and which went back to the occult. This ideological myth, which became a video myth in cinema,

had three aspects: the transformation of nature..., the transformation of civilization... and the transformation of man” (Matizen, 1993: 125).

In contrast to V. Matizen's article, which to a large extent continued the critical film trends of the "perestroika" era, the publication of an article by film scholar N. Izvolov entitled “What is a Frame?” was quite unexpected (Izvolov, 2000: 26-33). As we noted earlier (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022), this kind of subject matter was very characteristic and relevant for the *Cinema Art* journal in the 1930s, but then for many decades went into the shade.

However, this did not embarrass N. Izvolov, and he offered his own definition of "frame": “The frame is a psychological barrier that separates the viewer from the spectacle. A frame is a system defined by the geometry of a rectangle. Frame is a system which preserves the illusion of three-dimensionality, but is able to instantly destroy it by focusing the viewer's attention on the flat surface of the screen, that is, on the frame itself. The frame is a system stretched in time... Since a single snapshot from the film produces a certain momentary effect (residual vision), it should be taken as a starting point for further reasoning. The frame is a system that changes the real relations of objects to each other and their movement in life. Frame is a minimal material piece of film structure. The frame is a criterion for the "documentality" of cinema, a document of a pre-camera fact. ... Thus, the frame is one of the possible structures of human consciousness, gravitating toward the mutual substitution of perceived time and space in a geometrical frame, balanced by the mechanical pressure of external interference tending to decompose the visual message into minimal units, and the internal pull toward expansion, the accumulation of natural changes. The frame is definitely an out-of-film formation” (Izvolov, 2000: 120, 126).

But then N. Izvolov passed to the point in which the "frame" in cinematography differs from the "frame" in videosphere noting that the videotape “moves continuously, there are no phase skips. Discretization does not occur between frames, but within frames (lines). This is important for speed-changing effects. There is no optical image on the film. ... There is no sense of the viewer's inclusion in the box-camera, which means that there is no identification of consciousness with the mechanism of fixing reality and, as a consequence, other reactions of the viewer to the intraframe movement. A different sense of a still frame... In general, the texture of a video image has a very different nature than that of a film image. Brownian arrangement of photoemulsion microcrystals is replaced here by mathematically boring lines” (Izvolov, 2000: 126-127).

And further, moving on to digital audiovisual technologies, N. Izvolov reminded that a “digital signal can be recorded on any magnetic carrier. Of the three components of the film frame (time, space – length and speed) only time remains. Space is replaced by capacity, and speed can be anything. The texture of the digital image is close to the cine-image in its richness but there is nothing "Brownian" about it. Each point of an individual frame has its own once and for all established place. Thus, the natural world itself becomes discrete, its image is deprived of internal borders, "seams", it is fluid and can be easily falsified. This image has no defects of mechanical origin. Any digital image can be copied an infinite number of times without loss of quality just as a computer file is copied. The internal "cultural layer" ceases to exist. ... The nature of digital video is remarkably reminiscent of the possibility of cloning living organisms – hardly a coincidence” (Izvolov, 2000: 127).

The theoretical article by the film scholar O. Aronson, “Kant and Cinema” (Aronson, 2000, 96-99; 75-78; 95-99), in which he argued that “Kant's reflections today are interesting because they imply language as only one of the possible mechanical means of art, whereas we still cannot get beyond the notorious 'language of art'. By "notorious" I mean only that language is preserved as a condition of the continuity of meaning, as a certain technological foundation for the production of truth in the form of a representation or image, which itself is the limit of technology. This is the way Heidegger thought about language and this language ignores cinematographic specificity. He archaizes any art, turning it into an art of the past, and if he speaks of contemporary art, then as a word in a state of extinction, even in the act of extinction leaving ways for the revelation of the hidden, in which Heidegger's "techné" is involved, thought of not just as production, not just as work, but as "production of truth", as "poisis”” (Aronson, 2000: 98).

From the analysis of Kant's philosophical views O. Aronson moves on to the notion of “the image in cinema”, concluding that it “is not produced by montage, perspective, light, but dictates montage, perspective, light, since it is images that constitute the very matter of cinema, which – and in this we can agree with Pasolini – is the same as that of visible reality, dream, and fantasy. It is a matter in which the image is not a rhetorical figure, not a metaphor, not a trope, but

a momentary affect, a fluidity of the world not held in any language. This is why there is so little in the way of technology, the construction of the frame, the movement of the camera to understand the pleasure that comes from film. We make the mistake of looking for cinematographic complexity in technology because we think that technology is language, that is, a set of tools for the production of images, but we forget that the images of cinema are different, they are directly related to perception and are prefigured by the word. If the image is thought of as pro-produced, then we are dealing with metaphorization, symbolization, etc., which, of course, is not uncommon in cinema, but has to do with a very different tradition of understanding art – the tradition of continuity of meaning, primarily literary or, at least, literary-centric” (Aronson, 2000: 99).

Thus, – made a logical conclusion O. Aronson, – that “making in cinema is more 'natural' in the Kantian sense, more related to feeling and instinct. And this is not surprising, since cinematic emotion is not the experience of value... of the work, as in traditionally understood art, but the experience of an image that is not perceived as produced. These images and emotions are not individual, they are actualized only as affecting another, these images are always shared (no matter how "authorially" they are presented), which is what allows them to be film images. The individuality of the filmmaker, who constructs a cinematic statement, is always at odds with the imagery that is used for this purpose. One might even say that the filmmaker-author uses images as a tool always by accident, thinking he is using technology. It is this randomness, being repeated more than once, that allows it to connect with the private phantasm of an individual author or an entire school of cinema. "Made" turns out to be immersed in the realm of the kind of private efficiency that can become an affect-for-everyone. It turns out to be the unthinkable source that feeds our ability to call something art. Such "madness" is technologically irreproducible (though it lacks a Benjamin's aura), but remarkably repeatable. It is repeatable not by virtue of authorship, but by virtue of perception, which no longer belongs to each particular "I", but is common” (Aronson 2000: 99).

It is curious that A. Birger, who turned to the topic of the mutual influence of cinema and theater, so fashionable in Soviet film studies at the turn of the 1950s, argued in his article that “approaches to the new hero in cinematography have been found. They are found thanks to the "theatricalization"... It is a paradoxical situation – in this very respect the theater lags behind the cinema. The theater has everything except a hero, except a living person, without whom the hypnosis of texture will always leave the spectator with a feeling of a certain emptiness, dissatisfaction and resistance to the hypnotic influence of the play” (Birger, 1992: 33).

Reflecting on the current cinematic process, film critic Z. Abdullaeva noted important and very typical post-Soviet tendencies when “contemporary cinema eye – no matter how sharply different specific films and the professional skills of their authors – fixes exactly a subconscious rejection of the matter of everyday life in its unpredictability and otherworldly domesticity. And ultimately, the rejection of human relationships. As if "the exit to the human experience" is closed, and, therefore, the possibility of interpretation of this experience. As if the people who write the stories, making films and playing in them, do not live here. Although you can't call them aliens either. After all, they are not so alienated from the new, long ago natural scenery as to describe with an outside eye what people can dream today, what to talk about, think about, experience, how to dress and what to feel outside of extreme events. The time of human life has been reduced to the time of day, and space to the privatized square meters of new Russians and old nags. But the excited craving for extreme everyday life evaporates one insensibility from perception. That's why it's impossible to discern the fragments of any present and future subjects, self-developing behind the scenes. ... Probably, professional stereotypes blur the gaze that lacks pseudo-fearlessness, since no organic link with reality is given, and everyone is tired of grotesque conventionality, and they induce us to be satisfied with the image - the famous art of our cameramen that is always visible, an aestheticized picture that cancels the ability of non-violent immersion into phenomenal film reality, devoid of stable contextual connections, meanings and implications” (Abdullaeva, 2000: 108-109).

Z. Abdullaeva was sure that this kind of “ban on reality is a cultural ban, not a political one. At the same time, spontaneous or deliberate disdain for reality not only pre-empted hypnotic dependence on it or promoted "free speech", but also determined a hard-to-explain discrepancy between the gaze (the gaze) and the essence (of things). There was no desire to look. The vision had to be extinguished both in exemplary projections of pink, washed-out "realism" and in so-called "black". Not only the instinct of self-preservation was triggered, but also an inner conviction of the

need to decorate (or even disfigure), poeticize or spiritualize the "unaesthetic space". But the main thing is to beat or skip it. Now it seemed reasonable – as a reaction – to abolish the aesthetic relationship with reality, to rinse the film eye from its former conventions. But the boundaries between the imaginary and the hyper-real had been blurred long before postmodernism... But the principle of simulating reality was never as irritating as it is now for some reason. Perhaps this is due to a sense of a new cultural hierarchy. For some people it smacks of another totalitarianism, for others it means a search for a constructive (mythogenic?) assemblage point" (Abdullayeva, 2000: 110-111).

One of the articles of film critic A. Plakhov was dedicated to the theme of grand style in world cinema (Plakhov, 1995: 51-55): "Not so long ago it seemed obvious: grand style has decided to die together with the values of classic humanism and such of its mastodons as Visconti. On the other hand, the grand style in twentieth-century culture remained linked to the attributes of heavily ideologized, let's face it, totalitarian societies. Since nostalgia is a total feeling, it also embraced phenomena once considered avant-garde. To put it in mental quotation marks, the grand style of Antonioni, Truffaut, Godard and, finally, Fassbinder somehow reconciled culture, counterculture, commerce, ideology and authorship. But the efforts of geniuses were not enough, and the bond of time dissolved. There came a post-epoch of conveyer myth-making" (Plakhov, 1995: 51). Moving on to specific examples of cinema from the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, A. Plakhov sees a revival of the "grand style" in the films of B. Bertolucci and N. Mikhalkov.

The film critic A. Doroshevich attempted to theorize about the relationship between such traditional film genres as detective and thriller (Doroshevich 1994: 73-81).

He argued forcefully that "as the film detective as a genre has constantly acquired additional colors in order to be more in line with the cinematic principle of exciting interest and emotional involvement of the viewer at every moment of the unfolding of the action. The main thing becomes not the resolution of the mystery of the past, but the intense anticipation of what will happen in the near future. This technique, which corresponds to "retardation" in literature, is called "suspense" in cinema... Empathizing with the action, the viewer has to be in a kind of "suspended state" all the time. The emotional curiosity about the mystery of the detective is countered by an emotionally colored anxiety about the resolution of the character's next move" (Doroshevich, 1994: 76).

Turning further to the notion of *film noir*, A. Doroshevich wrote that "it is most often the drama of lonely, outcast people, equally alien to both official social institutions and the criminal world. The hero – as a rule, a private detective, a marginal personality, a man of the former, cynical, but possessing certain moral principles. As a character he possesses the same attributes as the outcast tramp, the "cowboy gunfighter" from the western, alone in the fight against evil. However, unlike the hero of the western, the detective in the *film noir* turns out to be a pawn in someone else's game, from which he leaves after discovering the total corruption of society, where rich and respectable people are connected with gangsters and corrupt politicians" (Doroshevich, 1994: 80).

As a result, A. Doroshevich concluded that the thriller in the cinema of the 1990s "embraces all trends simultaneously, addressing audiences with varying degrees of cinematic preparedness. All the techniques of "spice" are carefully worked out according to the plot layer. The subject-matter layer depicts something middle-class and bourgeois, with no particular deviations from the average American standard. The more spectacular is the story's departure from this standard into the realm of the macabre and irrational" (Doroshevich, 1994: 80).

The philosopher V. Podoroga (1946–2020) turned to the theory of the so-called "blockbuster" (Podoroga, 1999: 65-75), emphasizing that "the poetics of blockbusters is the poetics of destruction. Perhaps we are dealing here with a profound archetypal sense of domination over the world (nature), which man has always sought. To dominate is to possess the invulnerability of an outside observer, an alien, while the outside world appears fragile, disappearing, easily rearranged and destroyed by the power that guides the eye of the cinematic camera. What distinguishes the Spectacle from the Non-Spectacle? Probably the obviousness of the impossible (the strange, the monstrous, the horrifying and disproportionate, etc.). You see not just as in a dream or in a dream, but in minute detail what, for example, remains inaccessible when you change dream images.

Of course, all these significant details are deliberately chosen and with a long-range aim – they capture the eye and lead it rigidly to the final scene, leaving the viewer with an extremely narrow range of possibilities for free perception. And what can be an authentic Spectacle? Well, of course, the Event (as in) Catastrophe! Catastrophe is both the plot and sufficient motivation for a

film (as) a Spectacle. You are forced to see, hear, touch as if you were too close to the scene of the catastrophe, so close that it is more our body that knows about it than we ourselves. The shocking discrepancy between what our body "knows" and perception, which lags behind the activation of the defense mechanism, is what creates the matrix of any special effect. After all, to perceive is first of all to protect ourselves from what we perceive. By defending ourselves, we see. If perception lags, we find ourselves at least for a moment in a place where we are unprotected, open. But later we experience this lag as actual, it shocks us. ...In the Hollywood blockbusters of the 1990s, a great deal of importance is attached to the technology of direct impact. Now, along with the "open, watching eye," everything that surrounds him before, during and after the session gets an exchange value. The screen image no longer simply expresses or reflects, it is a target for images. ... Psychogenic can be called artificially compressed time, which speeds up the succession of events, which we experience not so much from within, as from too close to our everyday organic time, unable in these moments to distance ourselves from its crushing magic. It is not about identification – not about psychomimetic experience or imitation – but about the effect of presence” (Podoroga, 1999: 66-67).

B. Podoroga was sure that “blockbusters, turning cinema into an instrument of pure Spectacle, reveal again its forgotten nature (quite sinister for all its naivety and childishness): to be an instrument of psychokinesis. ... It is not the story that is being told "as it really was," but the possibilities of destroying the distant perception (which, incidentally, guaranteed us security, i.e. allowed us to give meaning, to attach or not to attach significance to what we see, and, finally, simply not to accept too crude means of influence on the spectator) are being sought. ... No matter how we feel about Hollywood blockbusters, we probably need to acknowledge: their filmic value is determined by the power of mass shock (impact) and the capture of the pre-screen space (the auditorium) for the sake of achieving this goal” (Podoroga, 1999: 67).

Turning to the cinematic legacy of S. Eisenstein, V. Podoroga came to the conclusion that in the film blockbuster “the montage of attractions replaces the montage of special effects. Yes, we can say that Hollywood has declared a war on images and somehow in its own way is trying to return to the utopia of the 1920s "cinematography as violence" (S. Eisenstein)” (Podoroga, 1999: 68).

In post-Soviet times, the *Cinema Art* journal for the first time addressed even such a film genre as pornography on the level of theoretical concepts. Of course, Soviet film critics were not forbidden to write about pornography in the Soviet Union either, but up until the late "perestroika" stage, film porn was discussed only in the context of the "decay of the bourgeois West" and its categorical unacceptability to the Soviet way of life.

But as early as 1992, in the *Cinema Art*, the priest Y. Krotov analyzed pornography from a conceptual perspective, affirming the opposite of pornography and erotica: “Eroticism only creates a myth of a sublime man, because there exists a myth of a base man. Eroticism and pornography are two ends of the same stick. No other culture, except modern European culture, has known this dualism in the perception of man. And it cannot be that pornography is bad and erotica is good. It cannot be that there is "high art" and there are pictures for the satisfaction of lust. ... Now this is impossible. There is a tragic split in man's self-consciousness. Morality commissions, censorship, asterisks can be established, of course, but the bifurcation does not come from sexuality. Sexuality (like physics and literature) only reflects a spiritual bifurcation. It is possible to delay a child's acquaintance with pornography and erotica, but from the time he is in diapers he will learn to constantly balance between consciousness of himself as an angel and consciousness of himself as a beast, consciousness of himself as a spirit and a steak with blood. The stick of erotica and pornography will tread on us, our culture and our civilization, until we have solved for ourselves the problems of self-knowledge as a being whole, whole in all its manifestations, falls and ecstasies. And in this sense, the influx of pornography, the lifting of the last prohibitions on sex is a sign not of "depravity," but of a desire to experience everything, to bring everything to its logical end and see what is there. Since logical ends are always dead ends, dusty and boring there, then eroticism, pornography, industrial aesthetics and love of cogwheels will soon be in a different and new form, depending on how we and the future generations determine the basic questions of life” (Krotov, 1992: 112).

Film scholar M. Trofimenkov believed that in cinematography “porn solves first of all not aesthetic, but physiological and psychological problems. But it is no more functional than a flowing Western or a standard karate film, just as distant from Creation with a capital letter, just as

predictable, just as much following iron rules: what, how, and in what quantity should be represented on screen” (Trofimenkov, 2000: 73).

And then M. Trofimenkov rightly points out a typical tendency of the second cinematic century in the question of representation of sexual life: “either to abandon imitation altogether, or (which is basically the same thing) to introduce elements of hard-porn into traditional, narrative, actor's, authorial cinema” (Trofimenkov 2000: 73-74), which, in fact, was already done at the turn of the 21st century.

Film critic V. Matizen devoted his article to another relatively new tendency in cinema – banter as a cultural phenomenon (Matizen 1993: 59-6). He defined stoicism as “parody and playful myth-making on the once-sacred material of past cultures” (Matizen 1993: 62) and insisted that “the banter is an original cultural form, and that it became a cultural phenomenon thanks to the generations of the 1970s and 1980s, even if some of its rudiments had been observed before”, and many works of this kind “are either parody remakes or resemble parodies of a non-existent original. This, of course, suggests that banter is an element of postmodern culture that ironizes other people's object languages. But the further into the past the culture on whose wreckage the banter is built, the more obvious it is that the parody is not self-sufficient, is not central, and may not be read at all by people who are not familiar with the original cultural material from which the work is created” (Matizen, 1993: 60).

As before, the *Cinema Art* journal published articles on television theory.

For example, the film scholar and culture expert K. Razlogov (1946-2021) wrote that the existing “state monopoly on television broadcasting in most countries of the world, with the exception of the United States, should seemingly have nullified the subversive effect of the little-respected 'box'. Today, however, it is clear that it has become a catalyst for the rapid transformation of a multitude of interrelated social, cultural and artistic processes that have led to a fundamentally new balance of power in world culture. One of the signs of these changes was the reading crisis, when the written word for the first time in several centuries ceded some of its functions to the audiovisual series. What was only in the cinema was possible with the advent of television, which put the communicative process on its feet. Whereas cinema was dominated by feature-length fiction as a form of fiction and a predominantly artistic phenomenon, television was dominated by communication as such, allowing artistic forms as well, but not reducible to them. And the current structure of television programs in multivoiced screens testifies to the fact that the expansion of the functions of the audiovisual series is proceeding at a rapid pace, literally in geometric progression, “swallowing” more and more spheres of natural language” (Razlogov, 1997: 58).

In this regard, film scholar N. Tsyrukun noted that “long-running” daytime television series – “soap operas” – are an indicator of a certain level of television development. If there are no “soap operas,” then “television has not yet reached the stage of maturity. If there are, it means that, on the one hand, TV has joined the general industrial stream and has become necessary for producers of goods and for sponsors, and, on the other hand, it has itself felt the need and possibility of detailed development of morning and afternoon programs, that is, it has begun to acquire “meat”. In affluent societies the main audience of “soap operas” are well-to-do pensioners and housewives to whom advertisements inserted in the soap are addressed, while in our country pensioners are the poor class, and housewives for the most part are forced to be such, having lost their jobs. It is ridiculous to address advertising to them. That is why “soap operas” seem to be an eyesore for us and we subconsciously want to impute some other social function to them. To make it weighty. To introduce a supra-objective. That is, to cross the “soap” with the TV series we are used to” (Tsyrukun, 1999: 83).

Film scholar O. Aronson turned to one more relatively new phenomenon for the post-Soviet 1990s, music video television (Aronson 1999: 27-29), believing that here “MTV is essentially a 'background' channel that does not claim to capture attention completely, but thanks to this it is in direct contact with everyday life itself, becoming a necessary complement, on a par with the morning cup of coffee or the daily newspaper in the mailbox” (Aronson 1999: 27).

“Now, basically, this field belongs to those young people whose slang, gestures, intonations are reproduced by presenters, whose music fills the airwaves..., – O. Aronson continued, – And this focus on young people is not at all accidental. “Youth” (here) is that community that is open to passive (meaningless) pleasure, open to those signals that carry no information other than purely communicative. A minimal form of reflection introduces criteria of meaning, taste, etc., which are destructive to the perception of this channel” (Aronson, 1999: 29).

The tradition of discussions was continued in the 1990s by the *Cinema Art* journal.

In particular, in 1994, the journal published the discussion “After Empire: National Cinema on Market Conditions” (After..., 1994: 121-128).

In particular, film scholar L. Kozlov (1933–2006) opined that “the slogan that is needed is not the national idea, but the cultural idea. The idea of culture should be the leading one. And the retreat before the flow of foreign, mostly American film expansion, the flow of lowbrow production, which flooded our screens, is not so much the result of some national weakness as of a weakness of culture... Simply put, this lack of culture, which has been exposed, exposed, blossomed in lush color and manifests itself in various forms. This includes the psychology of “temporary workers”, petty pragmatism in deciding the problems of film production, and much more” (Kozlov, 1994: 121-122).

Film critic I. Shilova (1937–2011) reminded us that “when perestroika began, we all got terribly excited that art would finally gain freedom and we would be able to deal with aesthetic problems proper, but now we see where this led. The aesthetic problems were not solved. ... Indeed, the period of freedom did not meet our expectations. Art was deprived of the main thing – the self-discipline of the artist, his inner responsibility for what he produces. What have we discovered in this new reality? That our viewers proved to be unworthy of our attention, that we did not provide a production that could compete not just with American cinema, with Mexican cinema or with God knows what kind of cinema. ... We tested our audiences and found that, on the one hand, our cultural layer was very thin, very thin! ... Now everything has exploded and we have entered the space not of national cultures but of nationalism – something that is absolutely hostile to culture as such. This situation really, I think, needs to be dealt with, because when we talked about universal values, we did not think about the fact that they were suddenly detached from the lower layer of national problems” (Shilova, 1994: 125).

Two years later, similar problems were raised by film scholars and critics in the discussion “Post-Soviet Art in Search of a New Ideology” (Post-Soviet..., 1996: 154-173; 156-173).

Here D. Dondurey (1947–2017), editor-in-chief of the *Cinema Art* journal and film sociologist, rightly noted that “with the collapse of the communist doctrine the established notions of social being, of artistic creation collapsed. Tectonic fluctuations have affected ideals, myths, goals, types of heroes – the very principles of terrain orientation. Films are made that the public refuses to see, festivals are held that only their organizers want. Many works are denied the status of relevance and significance. Television ratings for films made during the Yeltsin era, for example, are ten to fifteen times lower than those produced under the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee. As a consequence, movie attendance dropped twentyfold. Since 1988, cinematographers have been living under the exclusive conditions of self-commissioning. The only editor is the artist himself. The professional stereotypes of the so-called “creative intelligentsia” also have an impact on artistic consciousness. After all, it is the intelligentsia that in recent years has obtained all the rights of the fourth estate and exercises control over the content of TV channels, radio broadcasts, the circulating press, and mass culture. Finally, intellectuals have been given a long-desired legitimate right to any form of opposition, to a variety of program statements. But these statements turned out to be extremely simple (or, more precisely, expected): total catastrophism, confusion, despair, and hopelessness. There is no lacquering, but there is no tragic catharsis. It is simply that the ‘light way’ has become ‘dark’; pseudo-aestheticism and a departure from reality flourish” (Dondurey, 1996: 154-155).

D. Dondurey ruefully points out that post-Soviet cinema has failed to fulfill a very important psychotherapeutic function that is necessary for any socio-cultural process: it has failed to pull its viewers out of the reservoir of fear and psychological subterraneanism on the level of mass positive mythology. The heroes of the pictures are mostly criminals, drug addicts, prostitutes... – people with deviant behavior. One cannot seriously think that the wretched, the neurotic, the rapists are the heroes of our time and that the plots in which these characters act are a condition of commercial success. ... Audiences are horrified that artists are forcing them to identify with disadvantage, with suffering, forcing them to reconsider the values for which generations have lived and died. At the same time, Hollywood productions of every level respond admirably to the needs of our mass audience (Dondurey, 1996: 155).

Film critic E. Stishova was in fact in agreement with D. Dondurey's opinion, emphasizing that the consciousness of Russian post-Soviet cinema “is catastrophic. There is a gaping hole in the place of the future, a blackness decorated with the seductive image of a beautiful life abroad. The thing is that the very idea of cognition and gnosis is absent from our new cinema. Here the past

is not a cognizable object at all, and the author – a mediator who gives free rein to his fantasies by projecting them onto the past, frozen in ruins – takes center stage. Only one parameter is clear: this past was hell on earth, a terrible fairy tale... But how should all this be understood – for good or for bad? ... The Soviet universe has done everything to engender indifference and then nihilism toward native history. Nature demands a breather, to forget the forcible training. So the new myth-consciousness, perhaps, is a way of forgetting, or maybe a way of displacing that memory of the past, which negatively affects self-esteem. Hence the identity crisis, the desire to rewrite one's own lineage and to be different in general” (Stishova, 1996: 169).

On the other hand, the characters of the so-called "New Russians" emerged on the 1990s screen, but, as E. Stishova has noted, it is quite difficult to rationalize the poetics of the 'New Russians'. It is rather dissolved in the semantics of the image than revealed in intellectually conscious images. This poetics consists of subconscious proverbs and spontaneous outbursts, but it is not the result of conceptual thinking, philosophical and world outlook comprehension of life (Stishova, 1996: 169).

However, as E. Stishova continued, “there is a parallel development of another subject, polar to the one described above. ... there is a cinema in which the very code of national mentality becomes the subject of reflection. ... These films do not recognize themselves as a trend, but they are united by a philosophical and worldview commonality that goes back to the fundamental values of national existence. I would like to pay attention to the fact that the Russian discourse had drastically changed, becoming dominated by a merciless self-criticism. This kind of cinema opposes the idea of cultural protection and the right-wing or left-wing national-patriotism or neo-patriotism... At the same time it is sharply polemical towards the Western fashion and westernization. It, this cinema, is identical to the process of acquiring a new consciousness, a new soul that is going on in the depths” (Stishova, 1996: 169).

By the end of the 1990s, the "black" trend analyzed in the two above-mentioned discussions began to gradually recede from Russian cinema. In this connection, the *Cinema Art* journal published the materials of another debate among filmmakers (The End..., 1998: 162-174; 158-174).

In the course of this discussion, D. Dondurey reminded us that “despite its prevalence, the concept of 'blackness'... is quite crude, from the publicist lexicon. This is more of a metaphor, a euphemism, even a pseudonym for a range of problems concerning the mindset of our society. It captures the state of the crisis of values as the dominant paradigm of world perception. Blackslide (they have not found another, more successful term) – a kind of convenient attributive spanner for analyzing the semantic potential of contemporary Russian culture: mass consciousness, author's art, relations between the intelligentsia and the authorities, with show business. "The end of black" is an even less apt phrase, since no end to this ideological coordinate is in sight yet. All recent years have been dominated by an almost unified attitude toward catastrophism, a rejection of the future, a negative interpretation of the present, an attitude that is inherently and functionally repressive toward all other value systems” (Dondurey, 1998: 162-163).

Film critic V. Matizen reminded us that “as soon as after 1986 the cinematographic authority weakened, black films began to appear, and this was, as Marxists put it, a dialectical negation of Soviet cinema, a primitive reaction to its optimism and luminosity. This day's "light" is already the negation of negation. The black stuff of the time only made sense in the last Soviet years, while the viewer, after a long film-paradise, still wanted some film-hell. And they did. And then he was so badly punched that he ran out of theaters like a hematoma. That wasn't the only reason for his escape, and maybe not the main one. Blackness is a work in which the mundane is not purified by the form, and since the purification of affect is catharsis, blackness is a film which pushes affect without purifying it. So blackness can also be naked truth, i.e. devoid of artistic cover” (Matizen, 1998: 173).

A. Plakhov, a film critic, insisted in his presentation that it is in fact still very early to talk about the end of "dark cinema," all the more since similar tendencies were observed in Western cinematography in the 1990s (Plakhov 1998: 174).

Film critic L. Karakhan noted that “black reality shoots and explodes because it is a derivative of our socially closed consciousness. Life has collapsed because we have left no room in it for ourselves. In this situation, art is most often incapable of restoring the distance we have lost. For the most part, authors unwittingly follow the dictates of the social field. In so doing, the cinema screen becomes as flat, dreary, and blackish as reality itself, which it not so much reflects as repeats. A semblance of depth and a tangible presence of authorship tend to emerge only when

artists begin to programmatically insist on their own lack of inner perspective and even, in a sense, to brag about their spiritual emptiness, when social fixation turns into a self-righteously ruinous ideology. A dead end is a dead end in order to bang your head against the wall. This is not a way out, however, but only a way of being deadlocked, bordering sometimes on masochistic pleasure. The way out means, above all, realizing that we ourselves have turned social freedom into a social dictatorship. And only we ourselves can get rid of it by returning to ourselves, to a personal scale” (Karakhan, 1998: 160).

On the problems of film criticism and film studies

Quite a significant volume in the *Cinema Art* journal of the first post-Soviet decade was occupied by theoretical articles on the problems of film criticism and film studies.

Here it was very important to comprehend the experience of Western film studies that had already become classics.

So cinema expert A. Doroshevich devoted his article to the analysis of the creative legacy of A. Bazin (1918–1958). In it he noted that in contrast to Bazin's assertion that editing is violence against the viewer's perception, a conscious imposition of predetermined meanings upon him, which is the main characteristic of the so-called "Russian editing" of the 1920s, that is editing by Eisenstein and his associates, – critics of Bazin himself accused him of a totalitarian imposition of a supposedly objective, but in fact a classically colored picture of reality (Doroshevich, 1993: 64).

A. Doroshevich believed that “in the spirit of Romantic aesthetics, Bazin would like to see cinema as an embodiment of the organic unity of the world, when an organically created work would reproduce the organics of all Creation. Only then does the ordering will of the artist appear invisibly present in the visible chaos, and additional meanings do not arise from the manner of showing, but come from the reproduced reality itself, from what Bazin calls "facts". Only they, these meaningful "facts", must affect the viewer. They create a unified picture of reality, even though they are connected to each other with forced temporal and spatial gaps... Bazin rejects the predominant attention to the connection between "facts" at the level of plot (especially in its Hollywood version) or psychology. In his eyes it looks like an imposition of artificial logic on a living reality (montage, he believes, serves such an unseemly purpose). Therefore, those who reduce his aesthetics to artless pictorial naturalism are wrong” (Doroshevich, 1993: 66).

A. Doroshevich then analyzed the structuralist approaches to Bazin's work, insisting that “if Bazin compared the screen with a window, behind a transparent canvas of which reality is visible, the structuralists with a frame, within which the author's consciousness constructs values and effects, then modern poststructuralism (also deconstructivism) uses another metaphor – a mirror. It reflects only the author and the spectator, who project into it the entire complex of knowledge, notions and unconscious desires of which they are themselves mere reflections and products of reality. Art which corresponds to these perceptions is left with an endless game of mirrors, a labyrinth of mutual reflections that impress the imagination, but only make us dizzy. In the current fog of deconstructive constructions, Bazin's clean-sounding word metaphysics can be a support and help to many people” (Doroshevich, 1993: 68).

The analysis of A. Bazin's legacy was continued in an article by film critic S. Dobrotvorskyy (1959–1997): “For Bazin, who considered the depth of field to be a fundamental property of the ontology of the film image, the spatial construction of the frame means a certain worldview position – the director will allow the viewer to participate in the flow of reality, not focusing on individual imposed details, but choosing the meaning of what happens in accordance with his own ideas. Bazin compares "ontological" cinema to Quattrocento portraits, where the landscape in the background is painted as clearly as the facial features; such cinema does not let the viewer evade the necessity of choice; involuntary reflexes are destroyed, and attention must give an answer in the face of consciousness and conscience. Bazin's concept has not lost its relevance to this day, because it directly linked the spatial construction of the frame with the activity and freedom of perception, with the inner work of consciousness in reading this or that cine-text. The correctness of Bazin's "ontology" as applied to the laws of reception is directly confirmed by the fact that the screen image, designed to manipulate the viewer's attention and its underlying attitudes, seeks to bring its significant elements into the frontal plane of the frame, to arrange them along the axes of two-dimensional movement. For example, in analyzing Soviet films of the 1930s it is easy to see that the work with the second plan, the construction of the mise-en-scene, the lighting and the focusing of the lens are done in such a way that a two-dimensional sign grid is as if superimposed on the three-dimensional space. Plunged into the state of this semantic norm, the viewer's

attention is guided by archetypal subconscious representations, where it is not the deep transformations of space that seem meaningful, but the archaic hierarchies and opposition of top and bottom, larger and smaller, right and left sides. It is natural that concrete faces and figures "inserted" into such a signifier are accepted by the audience beyond logical control or – at any rate – with a considerable weakening of it, but in a subconsciously-valuable quality” (Dobrotvorsky 1994: 80).

The work of another Western cultural theorist – R. Barthes (1915–1980) – was analyzed in the journal by the philosopher M. Ryklin, who notes that “the first rule of Barthes' political semiology: no meaningful limits can be set to myth; there is no speech in society that cannot be mythified by its content. Everything can become a myth: not only any manifestation of language, but any image, photo, cinema, advertising. In other words, myth is a form that can be arbitrarily superimposed on any content. Mythic images, which Barthes equated in their semiotic form to writing, even have an important advantage over language: they are naive, immediate, and mastered with minimal cost” (Ryklin, 1995: 11).

Two years later, M. Ryklin turned to an analysis of the theoretical heritage of the philosopher and film critic G. Deleuze (1925–1995), rightly pointing out that Deleuze had a broad interpretation of montage: “What happens in the editing room for him is only one aspect of montage. Montage, moreover, exists in the very act of shooting, it is necessary for the viewer in the process of watching the film and for the critic in the process of discussing it. The situation of "remounting" becomes permanent, in some ways even banal. It turns out that no one has ever seen the same film. Any feature film can be stripped of its plot in favor of other, less visible but more essential aspects (lighting, camera movement, plasticity, editing rhythm, etc.). Many of these aspects are not envisioned by anyone, including the official creator of the picture. Every kind of montage works for both the fable and the incidental. If, as structuralist criticism shows, there is no unified mode of reading literary texts, then even a hint of such a mode is absent in the case of cinema, which is multiple in nature” (Ryklin, 1997: 135-136).

The discussion of the problems of Russian film criticism in the 1990s, published in the pages of the *Cinema Art* journal, involved representatives of different generations, including film scholars whose (ideological) influence had been quite significant in the 1960s and 1970s, but was then lost due to perestroika and post-Soviet trends.

For example, G. Kapralov (1921–2000) lamented that criticism is not in demand in a society whose blood vessels have not been completely cleaned of the sludge that has accumulated over decades. “And what use is criticism to it, to society, when viewers do not see films around which they clamor? Post-Soviet criticism, having previously starved itself of party-ideological food, greedily satiated itself with semiotics, psychoanalysis, theory of intertextuality, etc., nibbling now on one, now on the other, now it seems to have been satisfied and is returning to a rational diet of all the healthy vitamins of the classical diet, with the seasonings of the postmodern menu. The dish is curious, but not always edible”. And then he stressed that he felt “liberated, having thrown off the weight that crushed and etched with the censor's pencil everything personal, demanded obligatory references to socialist realism, quotations from decisive speeches and resolutions, but without them there was no way to protect another film and its artist from the 'shelf' fate” (Kapralov, 1995: 50-51).

In contrast to the super-influential and supported in every way by the authorities in Soviet times G. Kapralov, film critic N. Zorkaya (1924–2006) was punished by the authorities in the 1970s for her views, which did not necessarily coincide with those of the ruling ideology (she was expelled from the Communist Party in the late 1960s). But in the mid-1990s, she, like G. Kapralov, was not too optimistic about the role of film criticism in post-Soviet society: “Like the ex-Soviet film industry, its criticism leads a miserable existence. In the former totalitarian period, cinema and criticism as a subordinate part of it (I'm sure of it) performed two diametrically opposed functions, but both, so to speak, relative to the regime. True honest criticism was, like all great Soviet art, a form of resistance, a kind of comprehensive, rich and persuasive Aesopian language. The further we go, the clearer it becomes, how much there is still unappreciated-although that is up to posterity. Let's not mention the lackey criticism of the troubadours, the right-wingers, and those who sold out for lentil stew. Let us instead remember the activism of cinema critics during the final years of the stagnation and the prologue of perestroika, when, for a brief period of the struggle for democratization, they took almost the lead, and their voice resounded so loudly at the Fifth Congress of Revolt. ... When the struggle with the regime became pointless, because the regime

itself turned out to be blurred (although internally it is quite clear) and indifferent (for now!) to such a trifle as cinema, let alone any critical chirp, – then reigned in our cause disintegration, a general craving for division and fragmentation, and, most importantly, emptiness. Today's critics, especially young critics, are characterized by a monstrous disconnection from film studies, from even a minimal knowledge of the history of cinema. A certain sociology of cinema as "mass culture", as "commodity", as "market" has come to the fore. And although I myself made some efforts to do something of this kind and consider this direction necessary, I am sorry that it eventually superseded "pure" film criticism, inconceivable without a coordinate of historical depth, without a solid film studies base, without the traditions of Bazin, Shklovsky, Truffaut-criticism" (Zorkaya, 1995: 46-47).

In principle, film scholar L. Anninsky (1934–2019) agreed with this kind of assessment of the role of film criticism and film studies, reminding us that “while literature replaced "everything" for us, literary criticism was involved in "everything". As long as the cinema meant 'social life' for us, and the unity (or disunity) of people in the cinema hall was more real than in the boardroom, film criticism could safely consider itself a phenomenon of reality. Now the balls were rolling in the holes. Literary and film criticism are invited to do their precise and narrow business: analyze and evaluate texts and films. Whoever continues to do so actually works for a narrow circle of professionals. It's like "in the whole civilized world. It is not that it is boring (absolutely everything is interesting with a proper approach), it is suffocatingly oxygenless. One has the feeling that no one reads us critics, and that if they do read us, they are looking for something other than what we are capable of giving” (Anninsky, 1995: 40).

And then L. Anninsky presented his understanding of the term "methodology", that is, the field where the technical methods of analysis, which are often intuitively perceived, become like a rational system and lend themselves to reflection (Anninsky 1995: 41).

Another representative of the older generation in film studies, V. Fomin, wrote as a characteristic trend of the 1990s about the trend of film critics turning into TV presenters, producers and festival programmers. In addition, a “multitude of new people flooded into film criticism. Almost all of them came from the outside, not only without a professional (i.e. university) education, but even without a general education in the arts. Not just to analyze the mysterious course of the film process, but even to write a competent review, select persons, stories, or even the most interesting fragments for a TV program, was clearly an impossible task for most of the "new converts” (Fomin, 1995: 60-61).

S. Rassadin (1935–2012), a literary and film critic, notes that “it is an unpleasant feature of contemporary criticism... An impersonal, generalized style (or banter) is emerging, a general fear of falling behind the train, of being caught out of fashion – I note this with surprise even from my colleagues, who could afford the luxury of being independent of fashion at least in their age” (Rassadin 1995: 55-57).

Film critic N. Zarkhi (1946–2017) also wrote about this: “Criticism today is perceived as an indecent occupation, and therefore an incompetent critic bustles about trying to prove his usefulness with every word. In a situation where there is no cinema (Russian) and no viewer (and thus no consumer of criticism), the easiest and most natural thing to do is to take up circular self-defense. Occupy. We assert our self-sufficiency. That, apart from everything else, leads to the writings of many of us a kind of provincial fussiness mixed up with a boorish (defend yourself by attacking) swagger, understood as the freedom of self-expression” (Zarkhi, 1995: 92).

Film critic L. Donets (1935–2016) was convinced that “criticism is an aesthetic conversation about the aesthetic, an effort to define correctly the value of art, the place of a work in time, in the row of culture. ... Criticism is precisely a science, a note that knows how to discover the beauty of art, that is, it is equal to art in the nature of its emotional impact. At the same time, criticism is not self-contained. Changes in criticism are always connected with changes in society. We are moving from socially significant, catholic values to the values of private, individual life. Obviously, there are pluses and minuses here and there, but that's not what I mean. ... Art now, in the atmosphere of our total instability, takes second place to the vital material things: a roof over our heads, silence in the city, a six-month salary. Naturally, criticism in this situation has little to do. If art becomes a widespread drug, a way to entertain” (Donets, 1995: 89).

Film critic M. Chernenko (1931–2004), on the other hand, notes ironically that “there never was a more favorable, fruitful, and independent time for film criticism. Independent from practically everything – from the authorities, from the public, from filmmakers, and, finally, from

specific films. To put it simply, a critical article, a reportage, even a short piece of information in the press today, in the overwhelming majority of cases, is the only real form of film's existence in public consciousness. Moreover, the only form of the film's existence on the pages of some future history of cinema. This is not an exaggeration, but a direct consequence of society's (and the people's!) total disinterest in its own culture and art. ... An indisputable phenomenon of our days is the practical disappearance of traditional, purely educational, review criticism. Today it leads a miserable existence outside the framework of spectator and reader interest, in the extremely small-circulation (even taken together) *Cinema Art*, *Screen*, *Kinoglaz*, *Seance*, and *Screen and Stage*. Film journalism reigns today in the media, which practically did not exist a decade ago" (Chernenko, 1995: 62).

Film critic I. Rubanova, like M. Chernenko, who specialized in Polish cinema in Soviet times, reminded us that the film critic "serves the work. The vulgar serves, indulging in eulogy or joining in the pogroms. The ideal critic, without lowering himself to evaluative conclusions, prescribes the thing or its author in culture. For me, the royal genre of criticism was and still is the review, only it is followed by the literarily more winning portrait and analytical review. ... Mass society does not need criticism par excellence. The repertory of cinema and television requires informed guides. That's all. Any individual, authorial beginning of the guide is not in demand. We would be well advised to realize that full-fledged criticism today can only take place on the pages of special editions" (Rubanova, 1995: 58-59).

Film critic V. Dmitriev (1940–2013) was convinced that film criticism in the 1990s was "roughly the same thing it has been for many years. For some people it was a source of self-expression, for others it was a source of at least minimal material well-being, for others it was an opportunity to extend their messianic complexes to the world around them. ... The situation of the past, when, in keeping with the task of the moment, criticism readily serves the general line, and the situation of a possible future in which it will gladly smear a work of art that it does not like and condemn it to the role of a pariah" (Dmitriev, 1995: 45-46) are equally repugnant.

Film scholar A. Toroshin (1942–2008) concluded that film criticism is "a form of film self-consciousness. A mirror into which cinema looks. Of course, the mirror may be cloudy and crooked or, on the contrary, uncomfortably objective. Although cloudy and crooked is also "objective" in its own way. In general, the interdependencies between cinema and criticism are not arithmetical, but algebraic. Today, neither film production needs criticism, nor film distribution, nor the audience. Advertising is a different matter: it is needed and paid for. And criticism, in fact, is kept at court (if it is kept!) as a kind of advertising. Besides, cinema criticism itself is guilty of its current lack of demand. It cries out incessantly to all the above-mentioned addresses: "Love me!", "I am the fourth power!", instead of doing its quiet, but infinitely important work for film culture with dignity and responsibility" (Troshin, 1995: 59-60).

Film critic Y. Bogomolov pointed out that if, in Soviet times, film criticism was, "on the one hand, an ideological toolkit of the party and state, and on the other, a semi-legal form of artistic creation and political struggle, then it should inevitably become an element of the market mechanism. And this is normal. ... Why should film criticism shape public opinion? Let it shape or organize the audience's attitude to film production" (Bogomolov, 1995: 42).

K. Razlogov (1946–2021), a cultural scholar and film critic, was convinced that, in the 1990s, criticism continued to exist primarily as public relations work: "It (just like the printed word as a whole) was no longer perceived as a mouthpiece for ideology, but became an expression of a private or (less frequently) group position. Rarely, because cinema ... rarely becomes an object of political strife. In methodological terms, post-Soviet critique is both variegated and traditional. Thrown off the "donkey's skin" of Marxism-Leninism..., criticism has returned to descriptiveness, publicism (in the context of political pluralism), aestheticism... Critical exhibitionism has become a new word, making some works more readable and amusing, but further distancing them from any kind of cinematic process. Criticism continues to be unclaimed, now by the authorities as well. It has no influence whatsoever on public opinion, on repertoire and cinema attendance, or even on the priorities of the film community, be it the distribution of state funding or the *Nika Awards*, etc. Film criticism remains a thing in itself, existing primarily for self-satisfaction (criticism), so that everyone's sense of self depends on how well one or the other has settled in" (Razlogov, 1995: 55).

Film critic A. Plakhov was also far from optimistic about the role of Russian film criticism in the post-Soviet period: "Criticism (including film criticism) today practically does not exist. In any case, if we understand it by what was understood yesterday. There is also no social function.

At least there are still professionals left in the cinema. From our non-prestigious profession, the most capable people go into business, promotion, distribution, behind-the-scenes criticism, into the service of the film community. The field of main actions is left to the poorly educated and brought up” (Plakhov, 1995: 53-54).

Z. Abdullaeva was rather pessimistic about Russian film criticism in the 1990s: “The social function of film criticism has changed, not in a professional sense, but in the extent of the echo, the scale of the resonance with which it used to voice this space. ... The main thing is that those critics who review foreign cinema are engaged in more or less real professional work. Those who, for whatever reason, remain in the post-Soviet ghetto risk being deprofessionalized. In the best case (which is, in my opinion, the worst), such a critic is forced to mobilize all the 'gun power' of his arsenal in order to camouflage the imaginary (painful, tragicomic – depends on the attitude) of the subject itself” (Abdullaeva, 1995: 39).

N. Tsyrukun, a film critic, believes, in contrast, that the situation in domestic film criticism in the 1990s looked, “If not particularly fruitful, then at least very favorable. The possibility finally materialized which any kind of intellectual activity in this country aspires to – to exist in a completely apragmatic way. This aspiration, which has always had to be camouflaged by forcing criticism to take the guise of teacher of life, guide, denouncer, or provocateur, can now be calmly realized by letting criticism develop in a sui generis genre that has its ideal in literature as the purest embodiment of disinterested activity” (Tsyrukun, 1995: 88).

D. Dondurey (1947–2017), a film sociologist and editor-in-chief of the *Cinema Art* journal, rightly noted that in the 1990s “the Russian tradition – the once great mission of thick magazines – began to disappear. In the society of electronic communications no one vibrates anymore about an article, for example, in *New World* that the do-gooders gave us to read at night. Something most essential has changed in the meanings, priorities, and the very mechanism of culture in the broadest sense. And this has been followed by a transformation in the relationship between critics and creators, and between critics and the public within the cultural movement itself. On one hand, domestic filmmakers are convinced that critics earn their daily bread by making a name for themselves based on a known hatred of their work. ... On the other hand, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore critics in the current sociocultural situation, since they now control an important sphere of the film business. Today it is critics, not artists or even officials, who curate and patronize festival life, practically the only form of public existence for Russian cinema. But it's not just a matter of selecting pictures, appointing juries, and awarding prizes. Ultimately, they act as the leading image-makers – the creators of statuses, the verifiers of destiny. The biographies made by their hands and on their computers, the scandals, the plume of fame-the whole package design in which the work is presented affects the end result just as much as the thing's own quality. Future projects, royalties, the very possibility of existence in the profession are behind it. This is the way it is all over the world. And – gradually – in our country. But for now, in a very clannish way, based largely on friendly relations. Thus, the critic, with the exception of a few independents, becomes a political figure in cinema” (Dondurey, 1995: 87).

The film critics and film critics whose opinions are cited above debuted in the profession quite a long time ago: some in the 1950s-1960s, some in the 1970s.

But of course, the discussion also included relatively young film critics whose publications focused on the Perestroika period and the early post-Soviet years. Nonetheless, the evaluation of the film critical situation by "youth" largely coincided with that of "old" critics.

L. Arkus, editor-in-chief of *Seance* journal, believes that “the phrase "social function" in relation to film criticism should now be put in quotation marks because it is no more than a quote from our former usage. "The public function," as we used to understand it, implies a direct and close relationship with society, or rather, with society's accepted ideology. In those days, when there was both society and ideology, the relationship to them, with all its subtleties and nuances, was defined by the well-known dilemma: liberal criticism, which was, in one way or another, the spiritual opposition to the regime, or officious criticism, which was in the service of the regime. Criticism does not form public opinion to the extent that there is no public opinion about cinema. And to the extent that it does not exist as a fact of social life. Does criticism claim this role? It seems to me that individual and not the smartest members of our profession do. The smart ones prefer to save their strength for the preservation of common sense, intuition, taste and independence of judgment. And also for writing good, high-quality texts: it is quite a hard work in an absurd, devoid of any logic and completely uninspiring professional situation” (Arkus, 1995: 40).

Film critic S. Lavrentiev described in detail the extremely low level of knowledge of Russian journalists who write about film in the mainstream press (Lavrentiev, 1996: 36-39).

In the same context, film critic A. Kagarlitskaya draws the attention of readers of *Cinema Art* journal to the fact that, “having escaped control from above, the Russian press—in our case, cinema journalism—has come under control from below, becoming almost the main tool of the hangout. The notion of a film gathering should be differentiated, distinguishing its multi-level nature. There are hardware hangouts, festival hangouts, newspaper hangouts, magazine hangouts, television hangouts, restaurant hangouts, office hangouts, telephone hangouts, and other hangouts” (Kagarlitskaya, 1995: 80).

At the same time, literary scholar and film critic A. Shemyakin believed that film criticism in the 1990s “remained what it was – a professional judgment of works, located in a very fluid space between art proper and the science of it. The social function has changed as the risk zone regarding censorship has shifted: formerly one was looking for allusions, now one is looking for the purpose of one's own activity, the metaphysical basis of which is tabooed. Before, art was neglected in the name of “life,” now it has avenged itself. But: the process of differentiation of the original functions of criticism, which were held by the substitution of the humanitarian culture with its ideological correlate, begins. ... The degree to which criticism is needed is minimal. Film critics were no longer a science; journalists became a force in their own right. Film journalism plays the same repertoire – it's boring” (Shemyakin, 1995: 63).

Film critic E. Margolit emphasized that “criticism is always ‘today’. It is already history the day after tomorrow. That is why I see no fundamental difference between a critic and a historian. They have a common subject, and they differ only in the time of its existence. Unfortunately, our criticism, especially at its zenith, in the 1960s, had as its subject the real state of society, which meant sociology, political science, culturology, and economics, since in their official variant, these sciences were designed to do the opposite – to obscure the meaning of what was happening. Since in this capacity, the criticism of the “sixties” was a phenomenon of the utmost vividness, the following generations had only one additional possibility: to express themselves at its expense. In fact, it was not until the early 1990s that our criticism got a chance to engage directly with cinema, just like all other industries” (Margolit, 1995: 51-52).

D. Gorelov, a film critic, was, as always, lexically flamboyant: “Unfortunately, I don't know much about methodologies... as for the glaring difference between the creative styles of ‘youth’ and ‘seniors’, it came about as a result of the sharp distortion of perestroika by angry young men who were quick-tongued at youth and spat on authority. Twenty years later, my generation will be just as lethargic and demagnetized a fish flounder as the previous ones, for they have seen enough film classics to be no longer surprised by anything, have gotten to know enough filmmakers to try not to offend anyone, and have had enough black coffee in the White Hall buffet to think about the interests of the clan and not of the reader. That is the end of film criticism, because the conditional youth is already approaching forty, and there is no younger generation in sight: if any of the younger generation has any brains, they take them away to more profitable branches of the human spirit. ... In connection with the end of the era of fervent repentance in the newspaper and magazine business, a general course has been set for erasing creative individuality in favor of a competent presentation of the facts in the manner of the given edition: in *Moscow Komsomoletz* – boorish, in *Today* – sarcastic, in *Kommersant* – metal-constructionist. Criticism in this situation is doomed to a slow death, because its facts do not touch anyone” (Gorelov, 1995: 44-45).

However, Gorelov's “free creativity” was rather sharply criticized by the film critic A. Kagarlitskaya (Kagarlitskaya, 1995: 78-82). She noted that D. Gorelov, the “enfant terrible” of the Russian film press, “rose in the pages of *Moscow Komsomoletz*, but his work reached its highest point when he was working with *Today* newspaper. That periodical ... welcomed Gorelov's extremist style, which was based on remarkable adolescent readiness, mastery of verbal juggling, and unquenched childhood complexes. These features, as applied to cinema, prove utterly inadequate. The equation of text and subject, which is quite appropriate for a discussion about a summer vacation in the Crimea or about the rats in the Moscow streets, looks like the graphomania of a “loosened-up” teenager unaware of the simplest textual information about the subject in Gorelov's works about cinema. ... Obviously, in both cases no aesthetic, cultural or any other way of analyzing films is implied; Denis Gorelov's texts are usually a stream of words composed of puns, quotations, apocrypha and slightly cultivated folklore, and all this has very little to do with the

subject. But it is extremely correlated with the sadomasochistic passion to radiate and consume negative energy, which is characteristic of many writers and readers today” (Kagarlitskaya, 1995: 79).

The film critic V. Matizen, as a consistent supporter of generalizations and systematization, ventured to create a kind of typology of film criticism: “The critic-politician is naturally partisan. Being partisan, he cannot be an expert, because his evaluations are always distorted by non-artistic factors and demagogic. Of course, all critics are distorted to one degree or another (the thing is that while the inferred judgments are logical and therefore objective, the admissible ones are intuitive and thus subjective), but these distortions are subjective-personal, and not partisan and planned. Here we can make another distinction: the film critic appeals to reason (which is an extra-personal substance), the literary critic to feelings, the political critic to interests” (Matizen, 1995: 69).

In addition, according to V. Matizen, there is "hangout" or "secular" criticism. It needs neither influence nor writing, but participation in secular cinematic life, preferably in the international hangout. “Once they have achieved this position, which they will do legally and illegally (there are many ways to do so, for example by organizing their own magazine or television program, let us remain silent about the illegitimate ones), these "secular critics" no longer write, but "unsubscribe". Or "talk back. But although they pursue purely personal goals, their activities can be socially significant. ... Film critics. They, in principle, only need to watch movies. Writing, oral discourse, only insofar as, though this "insofar" can be quite significant. ... Oratorian critics, or talkers. Oral speech is their natural element; writing is less organic to them. ... generational criticism ... represents the interests of a pseudo-party of young subversives. The approach here is as simple as a mooch: "Olds must be killed!" To make room for the young. ... The operations that the critics of this group carry out on films and their creators require no film education, but they do require cleverness, venomousness, and sharpness... of style. One might consider that this is no longer criticism but film journalism. ... Aesthetic criticism, which regards cinema exclusively as an aesthetic phenomenon. ... Ethical criticism. Among young people there are not noticeable representatives, but among the elder ones there are quite a lot of them. ... Expert criticism. ... They try to be correct in their evaluations and are in this sense close to cinema experts... Critics-writers who are fascinated by writing as a process of weaving words and expressing thoughts. They simply cannot not write” (Matizen, 1995: 69-70).

V. Matizen quite provably argued that Russian film criticism in the 1990s “prefers not to be bound by any methodology... Methodology is a strong word, but it is possible to distinguish several methodologies: a) cultural-historical (correlating with the diachronic context); b) synchronic-associative (correlating with the inner circle); c) social (correlating with reality); d) moral (relating the morality of the author to some reference group for the critic); e) conjunctural (beating everyone who is not from our hangout); f) generational... g) symbolic (taking film's realities to mean other realities, performing substitution and extracting metaphysical meaning); h) psychoanalytic (finding traces of authorial complexes in the picture and exposing them for all to see); i) formal, which is called postmodern without a proper reason. It perceives film as a text, art as a technique, so it seems cynical; j) humorous (looking for only a clue for banter in the film)” (Matizen, 1995: 52).

Reflecting on "complex film studies", V. Matizen ironically described a number of techniques by which any film can be enclosed in a system of additional assumptions (frame) that allow one to understand (interpret) the text in almost any direction: “An example of a paradigmatic frame is given by Freud: by applying the postulates of psychoanalysis to pictures, we can derive from them completely arbitrary (but admissible) judgments about the author's complexes. Spectacular results are obtained by framing the cine-text with French things. Cocktails of Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Deleuze, Foucault, Lacan, Derrida, Bataille and Baudrillard (add to taste and stir), capable of spewing (or expelling) wondrous texts from the film critic. ... The postmodernist paradigm that allows us to see any film as a collection of parallel places is still in vogue. This approach allows the critic to demonstrate a film educational background and can be seen as a kind of qualifying competition for entry into the big leagues. Knowing the basic frames, reading film as a system of connections, and mastering discourse, criticism becomes an algorithmic activity whose mechanistic character is tempered only by uncontrollable outbursts of emotion. But these, if interpreted through the Freudian paradigm, become an invaluable source of information about the unconscious complexes of the critic himself. Therefore, the cultural creative process at present is neither criticism nor film studies, but the invention of new frames or paradigms” (Matizen, 1995: 70).

The modern state of film studies, but already on a global scale and without any irony, was also written by E. Davydova and S. Shpiker, stressing that “the three components of aesthetic

knowledge – theory, criticism and art history – are in different relationships at different times, rarely harmonious and balanced, as each level of description seeks to capture the dominant position. Now in America we can state the unconditional victory of theory. Criticism and art history have surrendered to the mercy of the triumphant victory: the former to the point of almost losing its face, the latter to the point of almost disappearing altogether. Impassioned theory could not be better suited to a leftist university system. Moreover, the universality of many fashionable theories imported into American art history from the heights of French poststructuralism makes specialized knowledge of art unnecessary. Following Barthes, current art criticism prefers to deal with texts rather than works. The devilish difference is almost as great as the difference between the structuralist claim to scientific objectivity and the poststructuralist conscious rejection of it” (Davydova, Shpiker, 1995: 120).

Television studies

Reflecting on Russian TV in the 1990s, the film scholar V. Mikhalkovich (1937–2006) was convinced that television's main achievement on its road is probably that it no longer perceived its viewer as a target for bombardment with messages and saw in him an ethereal body, that is, a higher and freer being (Mikhalkovich, 1996: 57).

However, film critic V. Kisunko (1940–2010) believes that the main problem of Russian TV in this period was that it did not recognize itself as part of culture, while the problem of culture itself is the same: “it has not recognized television as its organic part, it keeps sticking to TV... As a result, for example, the identification of "culture" with "artistic culture" becomes perniciously enduring. Science, technology, and engineering are left out of the equation. "Culture on TV" has become a parade-alley of subcultures or their fight for a place in the sun” (Kisunko, 1998: 98).

In this context, media scholar S. Muratov (1931–2015) was right that “the transition from the dictatorship of ideology to the dictatorship of ratings only at first might have seemed to the domestic public almost like a leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom. The reality was much sadder. As soon as ratings turned into a decisive factor in the formation of broadcasting schedules, fierce battles for airtime broke out between broadcasters. Programs that did not pay for themselves through advertising were immediately relegated to the ranks of pariahs. High-quality enlightenment programs, productions by outstanding directors, and documentaries that had maintained television's artistic reputation were pushed into unviewable hours or disappeared from the screen altogether. The chase for ratings and, therefore, the focus on undeveloped taste led to the "washout" of works of national culture from the airwaves” (Muratov, 1996: 128).

Problems of documentary and popular science film

The *Cinema Art* journal wrote considerably less about documentary and popular science films in the 1990s than in previous decades.

One of the few theoretical articles devoted to non-fiction cinema belonged to the screenwriter and film scholar L. Roshal (1936-2010) wrote that drawing on the methods of neo-realism, we can note a pattern which is peculiar to it and which also applies to non-fiction cinema, especially if we consider the proximity of many approaches: art, reflecting the real world, does not impose poetry on reality, but reveals the poetry which is hidden in reality (Roshal, 1993: 126).

Film and Media Sociology

With the appointment of D. Dondurey (1947–2017) as editor-in-chief of the *Cinema Art*, the volume of articles on the sociology of cinema and media increased dramatically.

In particular, film historian N. Zorkaya (1924–2006) tried to return to the analysis of "cinema and spectator" in the Soviet era from a new perspective: “There was no sphere in Soviet cinematography more closed, frozen, entangled with lies, fake, illusions, blindness, stupidity, sphere more watchfully guarded and censored than the distribution, than the relationship of cinema and the Soviet audience in cinemas. ... It was only decent to write feuilletons about "spectator", "box-office", "commercial" films. And wrote them – sharp, dashing, talented, not hesitating in expressions. ... It is time to bid farewell to the myth of the golden age of the twenties and the enthusiasm of the proletariat, which supposedly applauded the *The Land* or the *End of St. Petersburg*. Alas! The deception and the long game had already begun: there were about 300 American films alone, purchased cheaply, and a great many European films in cinemas. It was these and, most importantly, especially the beloved domestic action films like *The Bear's Wedding* or *Women's Victory* that attracted audiences” (Zorkaya, 1995: 119).

On the basis of many years of research N. Zorkaya convincingly argued that “mass, box office, and commercial success are synonyms, everything else is just casuistry, professional critical and

sociological illiteracy that confuses the matter. But – and this is the most important thing – we are talking only about mass success and nothing else. ... Any qualified sociologist of film polling will explain to you that the success of leaders, of action films, is ensured by secondary and more viewings. At this point we put an end to it. The box office figures are not dependent on artistic quality (and if they are, they are rather inversely dependent)” (Zorkaya, 1995: 121).

N. Zorkaya further drew the readers' attention to the closeness of mass tastes and tastes of teenage audiences: “an eventful storyline, the completeness of the plot, the polarization of characters into 'good' and 'bad', material for laughter, elevation over reality – these are the first requirements of mass teenage taste for the spectacle of the screen. These tastes and aesthetics are constants, and one can clearly see the tradition of folklore tastes, the aesthetic system peculiar to folk art. Or, even more precisely, the cheap popular read at the turn of the last two centuries, those kopeck mass "issues" and "series"... Indeed, mass taste does not accept genre uncertainty, it tends towards firm structures, reliable stereotypes” (Zorkaya, 1995: 123).

And “incontrovertible evidence that decades of propaganda-dealing have failed to dislodge what has been branded 'bourgeois relics' and 'hostile influences,' could be the integral mass success (from bum to president) of little Veronica Castro in the 1990s in television narratives on the level of the cheap popular series of the 1900s and the aesthetic before the Lumière brothers' cinema. It is true that the audience of millions of people on television was fickle in its enthusiasm, and the rich, in tears martyr Marianna was replaced by *Just Maria*, the active, passionate, irresistible and indefatigable businesswoman” (Zorkaya, 1994: 135).

In 1993, D. Dondurey wrote that in Russian cinematography many years of existence between two chairs, socialism and the market, as it were, have led to the situation where no one in particular, from the producer to the bank clerk, from the director to the lighting designer, bears any real (i.e. economic) responsibility for the results of their work. There are never any specific culprits for losses or bad work. Any losses are written off. Credits are still given under buddy connections, illusory entrepreneurial actions, status satisfaction from communicating with "stars", under tax evasion, hard currency game. But almost never for actual spectator success! (Dondurey, 1993: 4).

One was not at all surprised, therefore, that this system of film business had a significant impact “on the content of the artistic processes themselves. The ideals of the creative intelligentsia were practically embodied: all the limitless criticism of the government and social and moral foundations were mastered; many fundamental mythological structures and sexual and thematic taboos were destroyed. One might say, any whim or fancy was put into production, as long as someone financed it. Artists in what is perhaps the most risky activity in the world have lost a sense of any social danger. They gained the right to make mistakes, to waste, to fiction. And without any responsibility. ... Film production and distribution quickly became accustomed to the safety of patronage infusions of "dirty money" ... Both professionals and the public acquired a remarkable skill: to believe that the ways in which the costs of supplying, purchasing and distributing a film are recovered have nothing to do with the audience, with the film's real success. ... And the producers, convinced that they were making a box-office movie, were in fact indifferent to the fact that the favorite characters of the Russian directors – Chekists, racketeers, Afghans, prostitutes, lesbians – had long been of no concern to mass audiences. A figment of the usual sociological ignorance! All of these characters have long been boring. Time dictates different demands. Therefore, the potential audience stays at home, switches from soap opera to soap opera, immersed from birth in the world of American production” (Dondurey, 1993: 4, 6-7).

A year later, D. Dondurey continued to sound the “cinematic sociological alarm. There is not a single national film among the box office champions over the past four years... But it is our films that join the ranks of outsiders. They are the ones who are taken off the screen because there are a few people in the audience. As proof of the population's unsatisfied craving for Russian cinema, they often cite the high ratings of Russian films shown on TV... But among TV favorites are exclusively old pre-Gorbachev and pre-Eltsin films. Of course, a lot depends, as always, on the criteria. After all, you can assume that no tragedy of the national culture is taking place. We are simply documenting the consequences of the ongoing "here and now" process of radical modernization of Russia's cinematic system, which simply cannot proceed painlessly. A fundamental redistribution is taking place: the principles of investment and production, distribution mechanisms, and distribution channels; the priorities of film-makers; and the attitudes of viewers toward these priorities. The state of the cinema, as a multidimensional, holistic system, is a product of real-world conditions that have changed fundamentally since 1988:

all forms of censorship have disappeared; state-independent film-makers, unrelated to film factories have appeared; centralized distribution has differentiated by region, and has split into private distribution and local state distribution; the film market is semi-criminal, theatrical, television, and absolutely criminalized video productions; the supply of film products has grown enormously; and a fire has disappeared.

At the same time, in the 1990s, Russian filmmakers learned to ignore these and a thousand other innovations that literally plowed through the entire space of cinema reality. ... It defended itself with the armor of a cheap phrase: 'The market will destroy art' and took up the entire front. Not having sacrificed its main "freedom" – the freedom from the audience – the creators of Russian cinema feel no need to interact with the public. And it's not just the grimaces of distribution. The film will be made solely at the will of its creators. This situation is not an evidence of economic traumatism, but a norm that meets the principles, to put it politely, of our national authenticity. ... Every tenth family in Russia has a VCR. Add to this almost ninety local on-air television stations, two hundred and sixty local independent TV stations, and hundreds if not thousands of cable channels. And the whole thing is showing stolen movies! Hundreds of billions of rubles are circulating in this business. The time has come, finally, to distinguish between the signs and effects of modernization of the film industry and not to confuse them with the froth whipped up by the phony market which we rightly curse. It is this market which, strange as it may seem, has committed a real crime against our film industry, depriving it of the slightest responsibility for the results of its activities. In essence, no one today is accountable to investors, employers, the state, or such an important – and stunted – institution as criticism" (Dondurey 1994: 15).

Alas, in 1996 the situation in Russian cinematography did not improve at all, and the same D. Dondurey stressed that "the indicators of national film production in five years decreased tenfold! Cinema attendance during the same time has fallen by fifteen times! ... In Russia as a whole – less than one ticket per statistical citizen per year. The most popular of the arts is on par with the elite theater by the number of tickets sold. At the cinema we go less often than in all other European countries... Disastrous for the domestic film industry anti-market, in fact, not only misinterpreted the nature of economic processes taking place in our country and prevented the formation of viable organizational mechanisms, but also generated representations of deception. As a result, a dodgy quasi-market emerged. Or a movie market in Russian, with all of its semi-criminal and super-costly properties. Neither in the government, nor in scientific research, nor in production, nor even in journalistic publications, is there ever a single problem discussed-just tabooed-only one: methods of cost recovery" (Dondurey, 1996: 28, 30).

D. Dondurey, a sharp-eyed sociologist, also noted one more important Russian cinematic trend of the mid-1990s: "There is freedom, the absence of any censorship, and even some films shot for little money. But there are no new aesthetic ideas that could be proud of on a European scale. It is strange. Russia has been on the front pages of the newspapers for years. History is made here, there are cataclysms of planetary scale. And what is in the movies? Almost nothing. Emptiness of secondary character, amorphousness" (Dondurey, 1996: 31).

But time has shown that the way out of this situation that D. Dondurey proposed has not come true in practice at all: "You know what to do. Cardinaly change the priorities. To realize the inevitability of market relations in our film industry. To stop resisting this verdict inwardly, but on the contrary – to try to see creative perspectives in the new social conditions. This means shifting the main focus of film policy from the first link of film economics – the decision to finance the idea – to the last: the cost recovery scheme. The analysis of any initial development or proposal should begin, as it were, with the end result and the specifics of how the work will be consumed: to whom will it be sold or shown, and for how much money? Filmmaking, like any other commodity or service, should be considered in terms of potential consumption" (Dondurey, 1996: 32-33).

Film critic M. Turovskaya (1924–2019) agrees with D. Dondurey's opinion: "All we can say today is that in Russia, 'consumer' trends tend to prevail over 'production' trends: money spinning over production, publishing over writing, current journalism over literature, festivals over film. It does not mean the refusal of the viewer from the cinema. The forms of consumption are changing. TV as well as video market, unlike the cinema process, has all the available fund of films" (Turovskaya, 1996: 27).

Reflecting on the relationship between the cinema and the audience, in 1996 film critic S. Dobrotvorsky (1959–1997) pointed out to readers of *Cinema Art* journal that in Russia in the 1990s "the role of terrestrial television has noticeably increased. Essentially it became the only

alternative to the ruined film distribution. I think that there is no point in discussing some kind of specificity, structure or prospects. The "blue screen" has taken over the functions of its decrepit counterparts by right of strength. To put it simply, a film had to be seen somewhere, and it began to be seen on TV. At first the interest was also and still is largely repertory – for a while TV combined the features of a free video salon and an elite cinema club. Sin to complain, his advantages television is not too much abuse and even tries to build some generally meaningful models. For example, in the year of the film centenary we watched almost half of the world's film classics" (Dobrotvorsky, 1996: 55-56).

However, as early as 1997, media scholar K. Razlogov (1946–2021) wrote that on Russian TV, "as one would expect, the abundance of outstanding western films soon ceased. Films were bought in "packages" in which two or three masterpieces were packed with tons of junk that had to be screened for a reason – the money was there. It was here that the costs of cinema's uncultivated nature manifested themselves: an illiterate broadcaster, guided by the preferences of an illiterate audience and narrow-minded economic expediency, began to repeat the mistakes of the film distributors, and certain masterpieces, brought to the fore in the centenary year, began to sink again into a flood of mediocrity and total junk" (Razlogov, 1997: 46).

In addition, as K. Razlogov reasonably stated, although cinema was talked about on Russian television, it appeared in television programs "almost exclusively as an element of advertising, scandalous chronicles, or show business. It was part of the "extra-cultural" context. ... It is no accident that the programs that were supposed to "re-cultivate" film programs like *Cinema Museum*, *Cinema Age*, *Cinema Marathon* were gradually ousted from the programming schedules... This way the type of art, whose works can be completely and minimally distorted by television, moreover, forming a significant part of the programming, is purposefully stripped of its status of artistic value. ... The current crisis of cinema on television is also a peculiar payback for taking cinema out of the scope of culture" (Razlogov, 1997: 47).

In this context, media scholar S. Muratov (1931–2015) reminded us that "when our viewers were paid for by the state itself, they were deprived of information on behalf of which propaganda influenced society. Now, when broadcasting costs are paid by advertisers, we have been deprived of a culture in whose name mass culture broadcasts. And the more openly television commercials pursue material interests, the weaker are the moral judgments in their texts. However, a society deprived of real information or culture loses itself as a society. It becomes either an object of manipulation by politicians or a crowd of crime and soap opera fans, when every viewer, will have eyes the size of a melon and no brains. In essence, centralized propaganda and pop are of the same order. Both are a sure means of standardization. In one case the output is notorious people-screws, in the other – uniform Barbie dolls. Television creates citizens who are easy to control. Nomenklatura television consciously pursued this goal. But as we became convinced, commercial broadcasting which has no goals at all could achieve the same result. No objectives other than ratings. Except attracting the public with catastrophes and sensations, heart-breaking melodramas and astrological predictions. That as much as possible spectators appeared in front of a screen, absorbing the daily dose of fear in criminal plots. And, convinced of the incorrigibility of the world around us, escaping reality into the illusory passions of the heroes of Latin American soap operas. And for the appetizer we would get another abruptly twisted thriller or erotic program" (Muratov, 2000: 110).

Critic A. Anastasiev also wrote about this: "Entertainment programs cannot afford to get ahead of average demands, to focus only on a hypothetical audience with good taste, because that would mean a loss of their existing audience for them. In this sense, they are like advertising boards, giving out only dry information about the state of popular culture. The vulgarity of showmen is the vulgarity of society... And they only register it. And they do it all over the world. Hence, there is, in essence, no uncertainty: what is demanded is what our information and analytical programs, our artists, our beloved and hated showmen give out" (Anastasiev, 2000: 105).

In 1998 K. Razlogov, using the results of sociological surveys, wrote that "the pendulum of the air has swung from movies to TV movies. ... I think that over the next two to three years, the rise in the production of domestic television films and television series is inevitable. The reorientation from the diktat of film screenings to the predominant role of TV films and serials (Russian and foreign) will inevitably happen in us, but again with a delay compared to other countries. The "golden age" of the cinema man on television is behind us" (Razlogov, 1998: 95).

And here, as the next two decades showed, K. Razlogov was absolutely right in his prediction: it is soap operas, and Russian ones at that, that form the basis of film screenings on the leading TV channels today.

Sociologist I. Poluekhtova's article was devoted to a more detailed analysis of the film audience of the 1990s, this time of its teenage segment: "In contrast to previous film-goers, today's moviegoers hardly ever go to theaters. Twenty percent of high school students surveyed had last been to the movie theater a year ago, and 50 percent had been in even more than a year. ... However, this does not mean that the new generation likes movies less than previous generations. Simply today there are many more alternative ways of watching movies on video, on television, in recent years the number of television channels ... is rapidly increasing. But cinema also remains "the most important of the arts" for the current generation, holding the primacy even in competition with popular music: 71 percent of teenagers declared an interest to it, and 84 percent to cinema" (Poluekhtova, 1997: 110).

At the same time it turned out that "about 70 percent of the followers of American movies among high school students consider the most important in life "to work and earn a lot of money," and every fourth would like "to have a lot of money, lead a 'beautiful' easy life, but not to work. Interestingly, among that portion of the younger generation of viewers who do not like American movies, there are significantly fewer of both those oriented toward jobs that bring good earnings (48 percent) and supporters of the "easy life" (13 percent). On the other hand, among the opponents of American cinema almost every second (48 percent) considers it important to have a creative, though low-paying, job, and among its fans only every fifth (21 percent)" (Poluekhtova, 1997: 111).

As a result, I. Poluekhtova comes to the following important conclusion: "The principal socio-cultural consequence of the loss of competitiveness of Russian cinema is that the Americanized image of the film hero is establishing itself as a personal model in the minds of young viewers. Under such conditions, to break through to this generation of viewers, to find and strengthen their competitiveness, the Russian cinema needs to find its own, unique cinema hero. It is clear that this complex task cannot be successfully resolved by simply "copying" the American model. ... the formation of a new typological image of a cinema character capable of captivating the young generation of the Russian film audience, a character close and understandable, reflecting the goals and values of the modern youth, on the one hand, would increase the sociocultural role of the Russian cinema, and on the other hand, would help to attract viewer attention to the Russian cinema and thereby enhance its economic competitiveness in the Russian market" (Poluekhtova, 1997: 114-115).

The problem of "cinema and the audience" was so acute in the first post-Soviet decade that the editorial board of *Cinema Art* journal devoted a special discussion to it in 1999 (Secrets..., 1999: 5-21).

D. Dondurey noted in this discussion that "when they say 'mass culture', everyone understands that the problem is more than a terminological one, that there is a different understanding of reality, functions of art, correlation between high and low culture, and many other consequences behind the familiar notion. There is this myth that our population adores Russian cinema. We support this myth because of a number of very important tasks that face the people who serve the cinema process. We have to prove to our bosses and potential sponsors that people are hungry for our domestic cinema. The funny thing is that the audience is also convinced of this, while objective indicators suggest that they still choose American films. ... The second point has to do with the changes in the very principles of cinema creation. Our cinema has always developed according to the pan-European, directorial model: the director is the king, the master, the demiurge of this activity. Today we have attempts to institutionalize the concept of production cinema. It's clear to everybody that this is the only possible chance to rebuild the entire film industry, to reconfigure it to produce commercial pictures that people will pay for. ... Audience expectations are the exact opposite of what our film industry produces. ... As you know, before 1986 we had at least twenty or thirty "million-dollar" a year. Now only those who really entered the video market have a chance to make a profit and return the money to the producer. ... A study of the video market has revealed very interesting processes. According to experts, the function of Russian mass cinema should go to cheap serials on television. Only through serials is the institution of stars resuscitated in Russia. All the movies that we traditionally perceive as auteur cinema are becoming

marginal, going either to the video market in small prints or to elitist film centers” (Dondurey, 1999: 6-7).

Film critic L. Karakhan reminds us that in Soviet times, “an unbiased, non-judgmental attitude toward mass culture was a real feat of art history. Today everyone is concerned about mass culture, and simple indifference to it can be considered a feat. Legitimate consumer goods had to behave decently. Today there is no longer such a need, the filters have been destroyed. Low culture literally fraternizes with its consumer. And, perhaps, for the first time in the history of domestic culture on such a scale, we got the grassroots forms that we really deserve” (Karakhan, 1999: 9).

Film critic E. Stishova stressed that “the creators are not to blame for the fact that our mass cinema cannot be called “cinema of quality,” they only fulfill the mass order. It is the audience that is to be blamed, the masses that place this order. The root cause is the lack of an attitude toward film quality in the audience's expectations. The rest is consequences, distant results of a historically long process which began much earlier than the advent of Soviet power, on which it is customary to blame everything. ... It is not a social order but an installation of the unconscious, an archetypal structure. It is not film critics but social psychologists, philosophers and culturologists who are needed to get a slight insight into how to change these attitudes and whether they need to be changed. There is a concept of “other” taste – not to be confused with bad taste! – according to which we are in a labyrinth with our mass cinema and there is practically zero chance of getting out of it. The archetypal layer of the available public is much more powerful than its cultural layer” (Stishova 1999: 20-21).

Then E. Stishova asks a reasonable question: “What should be the strategy of film producers, based on this? How should producers who want to make box-office movies act today? Feed and reproduce the voracious unconscious, making knowingly bad but box-office cinema, thereby deepening the gap between the mass and the elite, turning the Russian mass screen into a preserve of monstrous provincialism?” (Stishova, 1999: 21). And quite logically she answered it: “This strategy, which exists, as we can see, even today, will continue to recruit to film directing people whose business acumen and cynicism prevail over professionalism. People who will easily concoct a “people's movie” if only they had an order. And they will defend the ‘special way’ of Russia as the ideological basis of bad cinema” (Stishova, 1999: 21).

And further on we suggest an idealistic (and, in our view, unrealistic) way out of this impasse: “The time has come to work together again. Russian producers, working together with a ‘support group’ – film critics, sociologists, culture experts, public relations specialists – should undertake a long-term act of will and hit the mass audience with a series of ‘quality films’ in which the highly professional directing and other components of good cinema would be combined with the social expectations of the mass audience. And these expectations can and should be predicted, not by coffee grounds, but quite rationally, scientifically, with the help of appropriate services, sociological and others” (Stishova, 1999: 21).

Theoretical articles on foreign cinema

The *Cinema Art* journal wrote a great deal about foreign cinema in 1990s, but as a rule these were reviews, interviews, and endless articles about Western film festivals. There were very few theoretical articles on foreign cinema.

For instance, the film critic M. Chernenko (1931-2004) reminded us that “cinema as an instrument of contemporary, and also “Atlantic” Judeo-Christian civilization is at the forefront of culture and art as long as the country, the nation, and the people are not integrated into universal civilization. There are many examples of this, I will cite only two of the most striking – the great cinema of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the new cinema of Brazil. Having served their purpose, the cinemas of these countries have actually retreated to the far periphery of social and cultural life, although as an industry, as individual names and films, of course, continue to exist” (Chernenko, 1996: 58).

Film critic M. Trofimenkov noted that in the West “an amazing metamorphosis is taking place with postmodernist cinematography. Without abandoning the whole gentlemanly set of ironic games, it refutes all... stereotypes. The frank quotation brings tears to the eyes, the cold minimalist or redundant baroque texture not only admiration for formal brilliance, but also sympathy for the characters. A frank feeling grows through the elaborate formal fabric, reaching almost to the point of obscene sentimentality. Contrary to what has been said by both the opponents and the snobbish defenders of postmodernism, the directors are able to love their characters and are capable of conveying the finest shades of feeling” (Trofimenkov 1993: 58).

He further rightly emphasized “another aspect of postmodernism that is usually overlooked. The phenomenon of ‘modernism’ was not limited to the storm and onslaught of avant-garde movements. It included the whole way of life oriented towards scientific and social progress (and not only novelty in art), the split of the world into hostile camps (and not only the split of art into tradition and innovation), and the experience of wars and dictatorships (which influenced the social and psychological orientation of artists). Thus, postmodernism is not limited to the cultural “game of beads,” but includes on an equal footing all forms of modern civilization. “Postmodern conditions” are the mixing of all tribes and peoples in former colonial metropolises, sexual indifference and ambivalence, the reality of cities transformed by the third wave of the Science Technical Revolution into graveyards of old factories, the rituals of street gangs, new ways of war, the fear of AIDS, new drugs, and the wanderings of young people who forgot the word “frontier.” And that is why cinema that reflects the new reality, whether or not it is diluted with cultural myths, by definition belongs to the field of postmodernism” (Trofimenkov, 1993: 59).

Being in the same thematic field, the music critic D. Ukhov wrote that “speaking of film music of the postmodern era, it is necessary to specify that it is in it that the notorious ambiguity of postmodern admiration of the past as opposed to avant-garde aspiration for the future is particularly clearly manifested. For postmodernist discourse there is no difference between deservedly forgotten artistic values and historical kitsch” (Ukhov, 2000: 99).

Musicologist and culture expert T. Cherednichenko (1955–2003), once again proving the dominance of television over traditional cinema, believes that, for example, “the cyclism embodied in the multiseriess of *Santa Barbara* is a formula for a new world time. The world has come to the absence of a fundamentally new with the ideology of possibility and the need for renewal. ... The thousand and one nights of history have come. We need not be sad about Americanization. It began long before the end of the “struggle between the two systems. ... For there is neither Americanization nor Sovietization, but the eternal middle age of the philistine. The philistine could not but win in the system of modern understanding of progress, since the market exists thanks to him, the philistine, the mass consumer. Universal medievalism could not but win, because the philistine is a man of the middle, also in the stadial-historical sense. The dreamers, as always, got screwed. And the philistines, as always, got their way” (Cherednichenko, 1997: 49).

As before, thematic and “image” approaches to foreign cinema were in favor in the *Cinema Art* journal of the first post-Soviet decade.

In this respect the article by sociologist M. Kosolapov “Bond: A Mythogenetic Analysis” (Kosolapov, 2000: 53-58) is quite typical, which convincingly argues that “every element of Agent 007’s image is constructed in the cinema in accordance with this or that myth or heroic tradition. ... It is impossible to associate James Bond with any particular mythological hero or type of hero; he is an absolutely syncretic character-primal, cultural hero, trickster, epic hero, blessed and many more in one person. It is precisely the blurred secularized mass idea of the “hero in general” that is concentrated in the image of Bond. The cinema has endowed Bond with so many explicit and implicit mythological properties and attributes that his image, like a powerful collecting lens, focuses a whole layer of archetypal representations for all occasions, which are automatically perceived by the viewer to the extent of his awareness (or ignorance)” (Kosolapov, 2000: 54-55).

M. Kosolapov quite reasonably, in our opinion, believes that “cinematic Bond is a carrier of the humanitarian ideals of the romantic era of European culture – the Renaissance. He is the ideal ‘Renaissance man’. He is non-religious in the sense that he believes in Man and in the attainability of a finite world, about the preservation of whose just democratic values he tirelessly cares, not disdaining to “barbaric” methods for this purpose. Well, “natural law” gives him license to kill any Leviathan. Bond recognizes the right of ordinary people to life and is always able to calculate the value of their lives (it is directly proportional to the number of people interested in saving them). Bond does not consider the value of his own life, rightly believing himself to be a “fluctuation of positive probability”... Every move he makes is conditioned and automatically brings doom to his enemies and salvation to humanity. ... It almost doesn't matter who will direct the next Bond film, what matters is the new film's consistency with the canon and the level of professionalism (read: mastery of film technology) that will allow the director to best formalize this consistency. Cinematic Bondiana is on a par with... the Iliad, the Odyssey, and other epics and epics” (Kosolapov, 2000: 58).

James Bond is a vivid example of “macho” in cinema. In this regard, an interesting article by film critic A. Plakhov, “Machismo as a Mirror of the Sexual Revolution” (Plakhov, 1997: 39-46). It draws attention to the transformation of machismo in Western cinema: “Cinema, having ceased

to be the avant-garde of mass culture, has retained a greater variety of male types. New angels have filled the Hollywood movie sets: they are young, charming, romantic, and do not flaunt their masculinity. They don't put themselves on a mythological pedestal like their predecessors, as if to say, *I'm a pretty face, but not a myth*. They are models, but not symbols, and they want to be themselves without concealing their weaknesses and frustrations. This is the stark difference between today's situation and that of the pre-TV and pre-computer era. Back then, every prominent character in popular culture was obliged to play the role assigned to him throughout his life, a role that was largely social. The masculinity of the Screen Hero was always associated and combined with notions of Law, Struggle, Justice, Integrity, Challenge and Rebellion. As a result, the male hero was overwhelmed and overly engaged. And he was gradually pushed to the periphery, turning into an anti-hero, and then returning to his own circle, but in a playful, parodic version. Hypermasculinity in cinema appears today in its postmodern innocence, its schematic naivety, its buffoonish levity, its varied nuances of irony. Modern machismo is a mirror in which the contradictory results of two sexual revolutions are reflected and refracted. The first one – of the 1960s – brought the desired freedom of manners, but destroyed the balance between genders, generations, and classes of society. It also finally buried the system of stars and cinematic images. What is happening today can be called the painless virtual sex revolution of the AIDS era. The good old macho man fits into it as a romantic, nostalgic value, always sought after by the conservative part of society. And the fact that the ideal macho turns out to be a divine androgynous, should probably be put down to total self-irony, which permeates modern culture” (Plakhov, 1997: 43, 46).

Film critic N. Tsyrukun, on the other hand, ventures to explore the Western film image of a businesswoman, pointing out proof that by the 1990s, “here everything was turned upside down. The shy secretary, who only thinks about pleasing her boss and (the limit of her dreams!) making him fall in love with her, has been replaced by a young man, and the roles of his overbearing, enterprising bosses, whose love he seeks, are assumed by women” (Tsyrukun, 1997: 51).

The “teenage” theme in foreign cinema was the focus of an article by film critic S. Kuznetsov. He wrote that, “like a pedophile, the viewer in the 1990's wanted to get a film about teenagers sense of freshness and purity, appropriating it in voyeuristic act of film viewing. Teenagers always have hope. Seeing how much teenagers value sex and social success, adults can tell themselves that their lives have not been lived in vain. They have achieved what they wanted at sixteen. Or almost. The price they had to pay was hope. After all, adults are different from adolescents because they have long ago lost faith in the existence of the threshold beyond which Real Life begins” (Kuznetsov, 2000: 86).

Referring to his favorite horror film genre, the film critic D. Komm emphasized that “even a cursory glance at European films reveals the existence of another, opposing Hollywood tradition of horror. This tradition can be called poetic or elitist – as opposed to the American horror in the ordinary. European horror films are related to the “terrible” not as an anomaly, a random deviation from the divine norm, which is the ideology of the American horror film, but as a result of the discovery of the secret mechanisms of existence. They belong to high, ‘cosmic’ horror... The literary basis of these films may suffer from logical failures, special effects are usually absent altogether, but their hypnotic beauty and mystery do not weaken with time, remaining a sign of a truly poetic worldview” (Komm, 2000: 101).

On this quite postmodernist background an article by the film critic O. Surkova on the work of director I. Bergman (1918-2007) looked the most traditional. She asserts that the cinematic “world presented by Bergman is always disharmonious – only brief moments of the presence of the divine defuse the oppressive, viscid atmosphere of many of his films. ... Throughout Bergman's life and work, there is faith and unbelief, doubt and entreaty... and the clarification of the relationship with the Christian God which, like a confession, his cinema presents” (Surkova, 2000: 76, 78).

5. Conclusion

Despite the editorial board's best efforts to publish sensational materials that turned *Cinema Art* in 1992-1994 into a social, political, and literary journal (which published not only screenplays and memoirs, but also novels and philosophical treatises with no direct relation to cinema), its circulation steadily declined from 1992 to 2000. In 1992 it dropped from 50,000 to 34,600 copies. In 1993, it dropped from 25,000 to 15,000 copies. In 1994 – up to 10 thousand copies. No data on the journal's circulation was published since 1994, but according to the data

which appeared on the Internet, from 1995 to 2000 it was about two thousand copies, i.e. even lower than in the 1930–1940s.

However, at that time the circulation of all Russian publications was falling. The "perestroika" surge of interest in the press was replaced by a desire on the part of the general public to somehow adapt to the new conditions of economic shocks and instability.

After a sharp increase in film production in the early 1990s, a prolonged decline set in by the mid-1990s; however, *Cinema Art* journal continued to publish dozens of film reviews (though mostly foreign) and plenty of reviews of Russian and foreign film festivals. At the same time, the writer and publicist D. Bykov irritatedly wrote about the postmodernist editorial approach to "mass culture as a potential object of serious and thoughtful analysis", claiming that "this approach does not elevate trash to the classics, but profanates the very notion of criticism" (Bykov 2001: 42).

Throughout the 1990s, the content of *Cinema Art* depended in a fairly significant way on political and economic developments in the world and in Russia (see Appendix); theoretical articles about cinematography very often occupied a very modest place on the journal's pages. The journal also witnessed a generational change among film scholars and critics with the older generation appearing quite rarely, and some of them, once the epitome of the "state viewpoint", disappearing altogether; while the "middle generation" (which began their careers, mostly in the 1980s) was well represented and varied.

The frequency of theoretical articles in the *Cinema Art* journal in the post-Soviet 1990s ranged from six to thirty-five per year. However, due to its sharp politicization and focus on non-film texts, the minimum of film theory in the journal's texts occurred in the first three post-Soviet years.

Thus, 143 theoretical articles were published in the first decade of the journal's existence (1931–1941), 194 in the second (1945–1955), 220 in 1956–1968, 264 in 1969–1985, 66 in 1986–1991, and 132 in 1992–2000.

Our analysis of film studies concepts (in the context of the sociocultural and political situation, etc.) of the existence of the *Cinema Art* journal in the first post-Soviet decade (1992–2000) showed that theoretical works on cinematic subjects during this period can be divided into the following types:

- articles, discussions devoted mainly to theoretical analysis of the heritage of the classics of Soviet cinema, directing, the problem of "Cinema and the Spectator", film criticism and film studies, etc. (L. Anninsky, O. Aronson, Y. Bogomolov, S. Dobrotvorskyy, E. Dobrenko, D. Dondurey, V. Matisen, K. Razlogov, M. Turovskaya, M. Zak, M. Zorkaya and others);

- articles on theoretical aspects of foreign cinematography (D. Komm, M. Trofimenkov, N. Tsyркun, and others).

On the whole, in the 1990s, as well as during the Perestroika period, *Cinema Art* journal radically re-evaluated the history of Soviet and world cinematography and tried to objectively analyze the development of the current cinema process.

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Appendix

Key dates and events relevant to the historical, political, economic, ideological, sociocultural, and cinematic context in which *Cinema Art* journal was published in 1992–2000.

1992

January 2: the beginning of economic reform in Russia. Abolition of state regulation of prices in Russia, which caused hyperinflation of the ruble and a sharp increase in the flow of emigration of Russians to the West.

January 29: Russian President B. Yeltsin issued the decree "On Freedom of Trade".

January 31 – February 1: the meeting in the Presidents J. Bush and B. Yeltsin.

February 7: The Maastricht Treaty is signed, on the basis of which the European Union is formed on the basis of the European Community.

February 14: Declaration of the CIS Heads of State on the principles of cooperation.

April 6–22: The VI Congress of People's Deputies.

Festival "Kinotavr"-1992. Grand Prix: *Sleepless Sun* (Georgia), directed by T. Babliani, *Smile*, directed by S. Popov.

June 17: the visit to the U.S. of Russian President B. Yeltsin, the signing of the agreement "On mutual understanding" between Russia and the United States.

August: the U.S. adopts the "Freedom Support Act: Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets", creating a framework for economic aid to Russia's crisis-weakened economy.

November 3: B. Clinton wins the U.S. presidential election.

December 1–14: Seventh Congress of People's Deputies.

1993

January 20: B. Clinton becomes president of the United States.

April 3–4: The meeting of B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in Canada.

Festival "Kinotavr"-1993. Grand Prix: *Anchor, Another Anchor!* directed by P. Todorovsky, *Island of the Dead*, directed by O. Kovalov.

July 1–12: Moscow International Film Festival. Golden George: *Moi Ivan, toi Abraham* (France–Belarus, directed by Y. Zoberman).

September 21: Boris Yeltsin's television address, outlining a decree on "phased constitutional reform" (on the dissolution of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet of Russia and the appointment of elections to the State Duma, empowering the Federation Council to function as the upper house of the Federal Assembly). A TV appearance by R. Khasbulatov, the Chairman of the RF Supreme Soviet, assessing the president's actions as a coup d'etat. Extraordinary sessions of the Presidium and the chambers of the RF Supreme Soviet. Resolution of the Presidium of the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet on the termination of Yeltsin's powers. Assignment of the duties of the president to Vice President A. Rutskoi.

September 23: Beginning of the blockade of the building of the RF Supreme Soviet. Opening of the Congress of People's Deputies of Russia.

September 27: The building of the Congress of People's Deputies and the RF Supreme Soviet surrounded by troops on Yeltsin's order.

October 3–4: B. Yeltsin disperses the Russian Parliament (Supreme Soviet). American television station CNN broadcasts live coverage of the armed assault on the rebellious White House (Supreme Soviet building) in Moscow by Russian special forces units and tanks. Supporters of the rebel parliament attempt to seize the Ostankino television building.

December 12: The new Constitution of the Russian Federation is adopted by a majority vote. Elections to the Federation Council and the State Duma of the first convocation – the new legislative body of the Russian Federation – take place.

1994

January 11: The State Duma of the Russian Federation begins its work.

January 12–15: The visit of U.S. President B. Clinton to Russia.

January 14: Presidents of Russia, the United States and Ukraine signed in Moscow a trilateral statement on the procedure for transferring nuclear warheads from Ukrainian territory to Russia, on compensation and security guarantees for Ukraine. Presidents Yeltsin and Clinton signed the Moscow Declaration on Mutual Non-Targeting of Strategic Nuclear Missiles, effective May 30, 1994.

February 1: The Schengen Agreement, signed by EU countries, entered into force and provides for the introduction of full freedom of movement of citizens between the member states of the European Union.

May 27: writer A. Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) returned to Russia from the United States.

Festival "Kinotavr"–1994. Grand Prix: *Angel, Make Joy* (Russia-Turkmenistan), directed by U. Saparov.

June 22: Russia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

September 1: withdrawal of Russian troops from Germany.

September 27–29: Russian President B. Yeltsin in the United States.

December 11–31: start of the first war in Chechnya.

1995

March 1: assassination of Russian TV anchor and journalist V. Listiev (1956–1995).

May 10: meeting of U.S. and Russian political leaders in Moscow, at which a number of statements were made, including the irreversibility of the nuclear arms reduction process.

June 16: a meeting between B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in Canada.

June 14–19: Chechen terrorists take hostages in Budennovsk hospital.

Film Festival "Kinotavr"-1995. Grand Prix: *Peculiarities of National Hunting*, directed by A. Rogozhkin; *Passenger's Play*, directed by V. Abdrashitov.

July 17–28: Moscow International Film Festival. Gold George was not awarded. Silver George for directing: *The French Woman/Une femme francaise* (France – Great Britain – Germany), *Thanks for Every New Morning* (Czech Republic).

October 23: Meeting of B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in the United States.

1996

April 21: meeting between B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in Moscow.

Festival "Kinotavr"–1996. Grand Prix: *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, directed by S. Bodrov and *Summer People*, directed by S. Ursulyak.

June 16 – July 3: Presidential elections in Russia, at which B. Yeltsin defeated Communist leader G. Zyuganov in two rounds with great difficulty.

August 31: end of the first war in Chechnya, signing of a peace agreement, beginning of withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya.

December 31: Completion of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya.

1997

May 27: Russian President B. Yeltsin, the Secretary General of NATO and the heads of NATO nations and governments signed in Paris a "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation".

Festival "Kinotavr"–1997. The Grand prix: *Brother*, director A. Balabanov.

July 19–29: Moscow International Film Festival. Golden George: *Marvin's Room* (USA, directed by J. Zaks).

November 9–11: B. Yeltsin's visit to China, signing a number of cooperation agreements.

1998

May 17: a meeting between B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in Birmingham.

Festival "Kinotavr"–1998. Grand Prix: *Time of the Dancer*, directed by V. Abdrashitov.

May 17: The meeting of B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in Birmingham.

August 17: a sharp drop in the ruble exchange rate against world currencies, the default.

September 1–3: U.S. President B. Clinton's visit to Russia.

December 16–19: the United States launched air strikes against Iraq.

1999

March 24–June 10: U.S. and NATO military invasion of Yugoslavia.

Festival "Kinotavr"–1999. Grand Prix: *Blockpost*, directed by A. Rogozhkin, *Moloch*, directed by A. Sokurov.

July 19–29: Moscow International Film Festival. Golden George: *Lust for Life* (Japan), directed by K. Shindo.

September 30: the beginning of the second war in Chechnya.

November 18: meeting between B. Yeltsin and B. Clinton in Istanbul.

December 31: B. Yeltsin resigns as President of Russia.

2000

March 26: V. Putin is elected President of Russia.

June 3–5: President B. Clinton's visit to Russia.

Festival "Kinotavr"—2000. Main prize: *Moonlight Daddy*, director. B. Khudoynazarov. Grand Prix: *His Wife's Diary*, directed by A. Uchitel.

July 19-29: Moscow International Film Festival. Golden George: *Life is a deadly sexually transmitted disease* (Poland–France), directed by K. Zanussi.

September 6: The meeting of Presidents V. Putin and B. Clinton in the United States. Joint Statement “Strategic Stability Partnership Initiative”.

A gradual increase in world energy prices led to the beginning of Russia's economic growth, which lasted until August 2008.