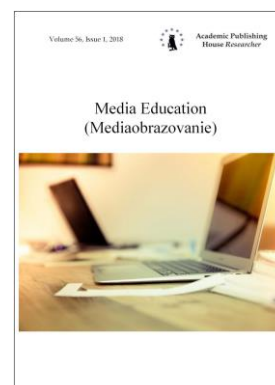




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## Vices and Virtues of Capital's Glamor: Typical Character of the Consumer Society in the Modern Russian Television Series

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### Abstract

The article analyzes the iconic and linguistic signs through which the authors of the Russian television series represent the media images of the consumer society of the modern Russian city.

The modern consumer society, according to its screen representation, is characterized by the destruction of basic ideas about humanistic values: family relations, the institution of marriage, social relations, for example, charity, public service, etc. The screen demonstrates the absence of any moral atmosphere in modern Russian society. All characters, without exception, talk about love. However the boundaries and essence of this concept are so blurred that it is difficult for the viewer to focus on any of its facets. Typical mass media characters, such as a provincial woman who comes to the big city, a schoolgirl in love with a teacher, a policeman, an official, etc., are presented in the format of a modern mass consumer society, in which everyone parasitizes on each other. Dependents of both genders are trying to balance their social status. The success in the world of glamor, shown in the series, is conditional, beauty is artificial, feelings are simulated. Presumably the intention of the authors of the series was to make it clear that genuine values must be sought in a different social environment. On the one hand, the screen representations of the mass consumption society of modern Moscow cultivate the conventional values of the world of glamor, on the other hand, they reveal the vices of a perverse, cynical, hypocritical society in which artificiality prevails over naturalness.

**Keywords:** cinematography, film, glamor, consumer society, sign, representation, character.

### 1. Introduction

“There are epochs ... when art does not oppose life, but, as if becomes a part of it,” wrote Yury Lotman about the epoch of the 18th – early 19th centuries – “an era permeated with youth”. A person identifies oneself through the prism of art, including cinema, and at the same time sees in it “a complete, as if in focus, expression of reality itself” (Lotman, 2017: 279). This dictum has not lost its relevance in relation to the beginning of the 21st century, since the thoughts and desires of a modern person, for the most part, are all also focused on earthly life and are directed towards its pleasures. In this regard, it seems important to characterize the models of social behavior of modern men and women in the current socio-economic formation. Meanwhile, the film is studied, on the one hand, as a social product and a text that reflects social realities, on the other hand, as a social technology that shapes relations in society.

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## 2. Materials and methods

The material for this study is the Russian television series of the celebrated theater director Konstantin Bogomolov, who made his debut as a filmmaker with the series *Soderzhanki* (in Russian the word means women (mistresses) who are financed by their lovers) in 2019-2020, released on the Start Internet platform. Start sold the rights to show the series to the British TV Channel 4, which will show it on its video platform under the title *Russian Affairs*). The series demonstrates the life and daily routine of the capital city, which is well known to the director. In his interview to Sputnik radio, Bogomolov says that he knows quite a lot about it, and, accordingly, is competent to portray it. Also, he emphasizes the advantage of Internet platforms that make it possible to create freely, compared to TV channels, which impose a number of restrictions “unacceptable for a serious director” (Interview, 2019). The mores of rich and influential people, according to the director, differ little from ordinary people (Cit. by: Bavina, 2019). According to the editor-in-chief of the online portal Vokrug TV, Alina Bavina, “the series *Soderzhanki* are not about a particular kind of people ... but about our reality” (Bavina, 2019). In this regard, it seems possible to consider the life and customs of the characters of the series as typical of modern society. The subject of this research is on-screen representations of the world of glamor and conditional success, its distinguishing characters.

In the course of the research, the main provisions of the semiotic theory of cinema by Y. Lotman, U. Eco, and R. Barthes were considered. Semiotic analysis was used as the main method, which involves the study of cultural phenomena as a sign system that allows us to cognize the socio-historical world we live in. Semiotics defines established ways of thinking. In the world of signs ... semiotics reveals ... the world of ideologies reflected in the established ways of using language (Eco, 1985). Semiotic analysis makes it possible to detect the structures of meanings, actualized at the level of a combination of words, actions, structuring into images, which, in turn, are embedded into a movie. Film narration is viewed as an integral structure – a set of linguistic and iconic messages.

## 3. Discussion

Certainly cinema is one of the dominant phenomena that influence sociocultural processes (Fedorov, 2016). On the one hand, cinema, as a sociotechnology, simulates social relations, on the other, as a social product and a text, it reflects social realities and broadcasts a certain cultural code. “... By its nature, culture, like language, is a social phenomenon” (Lotman, 2017: 5). Culture has a dual nature: communication and symbolic. The first is manifested in the fact that culture unites people living at the same time and connected by a certain social organization, which means that it is a form of communication between them (Lotman, 2017: 6). Communication is impossible outside the general sign system, while signs can be both linguistic, for example, words, and iconic, for example, things, interior items, etc. So, a picture can be painted by an artist and exhibited in a museum as an object of art, meanwhile, if it is in a private collection and is displayed only to a limited circle of connoisseurs, it becomes a symbol of the owner's status. The space of culture is made up of symbols and signs formed by everyday objects, general ideas of people about life, about morality, their actions, apparel, speech, customs of organizing leisure, rituals, for example, funerals, marriage, etc. In the framework of this study, iconic and verbal signs that make up the media images of the consumer society of the modern Russian capital city are analyzed.

The 21st century is characterized by the development of a new type of society in which its main part holds the material consumption to be the meaning of life. Moreover, consumerism not only satisfies the basic needs of a person, but becomes the main regulator of human activity (Mironova, 2015: 303). The pragmatic orientation of modern society, aimed at the maximum satisfaction of people's material needs, is expressed in their desire for a “beautiful life,” namely, a pleasant pastime filled with pleasure and “beauty,” primarily luxury. The beauty of everyday life is promoted mainly in an urban environment, where a person is placed in an artificial setting, which not only determines the way of thinking, but also has a great influence on the value attitudes of a person as a subject of culture. Modern mass cinema plays a significant role in this process, demonstrating the world of pop culture and the world of glamor.

Glamor, as a modern phenomenon of a society of mass consumption, has fully integrated into modern mass culture and has become the subject of research in various scientific directions. From a sociological point of view, this is a special kind of consumer culture, a lifestyle of a modern consumer society, which has long gone beyond fashion and penetrated into all spheres of culture

and human existence. From the standpoint of cultural studies, it is beauty devoid of ethical content. Glamor creates a myth, an illusion, the accession to which is possible through the acquisition of an expensive, fashionable thing or the contemplation of beauty. At the same time, experts emphasize that glamor can only be expressed visually (Saratova, 2010: 225). Demonstrative consumption, “consumption for show”, is focused on idleness as a type of socially significant activity (Rudneva, 2010: 36).

From a philosophical point of view, glamor is a mythological and tempting notion of a “beautiful life” that creates an ideal for imitation, an aesthetic simulacrum of modern mass culture, where beauty is replaced by its “appearance”, and it is based on the desire to embellish and idealize reality. Glamor is primarily associated with the world of consumption of goods and services, with fashion, the culture of “show”, a certain lifestyle and finds ideological support in the media, supplying “patterns” for the subject of mass culture. This is a specific worldview of a society of mass consumption, in which the aesthetic emphasis is transferred from humanistic values to luxury and “external” brilliance, a specific figurative form of expression of being, based on the principles of consumer hedonism – pleasure (Tochilov, 2011: 2, 4, 13-14).

The cultural life of the capital city has always attracted the attention of film directors and aroused the interest of the audience. In this case, the real world became the object of representation. As Yu. Lotman notes, the material of cinematography is the life around us. The whole chain “things (people, landscapes) – optics – photography” is as if imbued with objectivity. This material differs from the material of other types of art in that it has an original image endowed with a self-sufficient, objectively real nature. But the world of cinema is as real as it is illusory. After all, the events on the screen are not life, but its artistic image (Lotman, 1994: 10-11). Concurrently the culturologist emphasizes the high level of moral responsibility of filmmakers, since cinema “creating the illusion of a “second reality”, significantly more actively influences not only the intellectual, but also the emotional and volitional sides of the human personality” (Lotman, 1994: 213). Experts note that in mass cinema, as a text of culture, the basis for the ideology of consumption is not only represented, but also constructed (Novak, 2016: 118). Cinematography is a technology for modeling social relations, it is capable of instilling, correcting, and also imposing certain patterns and models of behavior, norms and values.

At present, social success and financial well-being are highly valued, which are not just good or one of the basic needs of a person, but endowed with sacred meaning as evidence of the correctness of one's life path, strategy, and relationship with the world. In Russia, consumption has become a mechanism for sublimating all the social benefits a person has not received, a way to create an illusory reality of stability and well-being (Kostina, 2016: 52). J. Baudrillard also points to the simulative nature of the consumer society, arguing that even abundance is a consequence of a carefully masked and protected deficit, which has the meaning of the structural law of survival of the modern world (Baudrillard, 2006). But while the French sociologist means the shortage of material resources, this paper will focus on the associated shortage of moral ethical principles of humanism as a characteristic feature of a consumer society.

#### 4. Results

The title of the series is an important sign by itself. According to the dictionary, a *mistress*, a *kept woman* is a woman who lives on the maintenance of her lover. While, *maintenance* is the means that are given to someone to ensure their existence (Ozhegov, 2008: 743). In the analyzed film text, gender differences are erased, all characters, regardless of gender, are dependents: the oligarch keeps a lawyer; the oligarch is kept by the mafia; the head of the investigation department is kept by officials and oligarchs; a public officer is kept by an influential father-in-law; a teacher-writer is first dependent on his wife, then – his lover-publisher; a gigolo actor is financed by wealthy women, who in their turn are dependent on their wealthy husbands. Dependents of both genders are a natural product of the environment, of that very consumer society, for show.

The world of glamor tends to transform, modify the image of a person. As the researchers note, “this image becomes an illusion that replaces the real qualities of the object, and the illusion has a visual effect, causing ... pleasure from the visual image” (Saratova, 2010: 224). The heroes of the series surprisingly easily and naturally shed one mask and put on another one: no long painful thoughts, remorse or doubts. The main character, investigator Shirokova, radically changes her life with the same ease as changing into the shiny silver jacket of Marina Levkoeva, a crime's victim

killed the day before. The metamorphoses that occur with individual characters in the course of film narration are presented in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1.** Transformation of images

<i>Character</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Transformation</i>	<i>Mask</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
Daria Smirnova	a museum employee from a small town	long pleated skirt, floral blouse, glasses, hair tied in a bun		metropolitan gallery manager, artist Asfari	low-cut dress, high heels, hair down the shoulders
Elena Shirokova	a police detective, a teacher's wife, a mother of a teenage son	jeans, sneakers, a T-shirt instead of pajamas; truth-teller, harsh in communication with both the authorities and with the husband, calls things by their proper names	⇒ ⇒	socialite, an oligarch's fiancée, producer	clothes from the upper class brands, high-heeled shoes, loves to walk around the house, swim in the pool and sleep naked; carefully chooses words, emphatically polite in communication with her fiancé and his entourage
Aleksei Shirokov	school literature teacher, a father of a teenage son	under his wife's thumb, has no respect from his son, lacks professionalism which results in discreditable situation with a student	⇒	a new novelist, has an affair with the publisher	"an outstanding Russian writer with a personal page on Wikipedia" (by his publisher's statement )
Kirill Somov	a gigolo	young and well built with ambitions to become an actor but little talent	⇒	a lover of Lyudmila Dolgacheva, rich and influential woman	a rising TV/film star
Lyudmila Dolgacheva	a mother of two, wife of a high-ranking official; daughter of a retired intelligence officer, a former KGB officer	the lady of a large house where her influential father is the boss	⇒	tired of her husband's adultery and bored, starts relationship with a young lover	a socialite who is not afraid to openly appear with a lover
Karina Shtern	a girl from an escort agency	studied in a music academy but chose to make a career with the help of lovers	⇒	an influential man's lover	an actress, a singer, a star, a head of a charity foundation



### Characters

The series' director builds a dualism of the external and internal world of Gleb Olkhovsky character. According to Lyudmila Dolgacheva, "always such a decent person, intelligent" he receives guests in his sterile clean, ultra modern designer house. The house has a lot of glass and light. In the businessman's office, as well, there is nothing superfluous, all items are functional. With Elena Shirokova, Gleb is gentle, caring, calm; he is sure she's happy with him. In contrast, he speaks very sharply about his ex-wife and members of the opposite sex in general: "She is a woman and, therefore, a cunning creature". Olkhovsky believes that a man should have "the energy of money, otherwise he is nobody." According to Ulyana, his lawyer's wife, he is a devil who tempts her spouse with an expensive apartment in the center of Moscow and threatens: "I don't want something to happen to you (the lawyer). Therefore, I ask you very much, take care of what you have, and do not make any more mistakes". The lawyer disobeys: he starts an affair with Olkhovsky's ex-wife, and the worst thing, he shows unprofessionalism – he shares confidential business information. Vengeance is not long in coming: soon the lawyer and his young wife die in a car accident. A private detective Krutova characterizes him as a person who "will stop at nothing, if there are good reasons."

In society, Olkhovsky is an esthete, he loves contemporary art and supports it. According to the gallery owner Smirnova, Gleb Vitalievich is "a patron of the arts in a truly Russian tradition." "The God of business, he achieved everything with incredible talent and hard work," says Karina Stern of Olkhovsky. The character shows his perverse aesthetic taste in organizing a performance on the occasion of his wife's funeral. The funeral home attendant calls this a "hellish funeral": the ritual hall is decorated with red roses, which the dead spouse hated; the ashes were instructed to be scattered over Dzerzhinsk, the hometown of the deceased; and only her ex-lovers are on the list of those invited to the burial.

In one of the lyrical scenes, Olkhovsky recollects: "As a child, I loved to dive into a pond. There was all kinds of garbage at the bottom of it. I always hoped to find something valuable under this ... Until I realized that there could be nothing of value under the trash. We must look elsewhere, where it is clean". Perfectly aware of the environment in which he lives, Gleb opens up to Elena Shirokova, a woman from another social stratum, who, in his understanding, is "clean", while his ex-wife Alice and others are "garbage".

The versatility and ambiguity of this character does not allow us to designate him as a typical one. The evolution of the typical hero in modern cinema reflects the historically and culturally determined recoding of humanistic values. Meanwhile, each type of coding of historical and cultural information turns out to be associated with the fundamental forms of social consciousness, the organization of the collective and the self-organization of the individual (Lotman, 2002: 57).

Traditionally in film history, young women from small towns come to Moscow in search of a better life: to get education (Tashkov's *Come Tomorrow* (1963), to find a good husband (Menshov's *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1980), later – to become a model (Konchalovsky's *Gloss* (2007). One way or another, girls from the provinces strove to Moscow in order to get married, start a family, live happily and in prosperity.

The modern provincial in the Bogomolov's series, Dasha from Saratov, is a careerist of a new generation: as soon as she comes to Moscow, she pays a visit to her ex classmate and exposes her to her lover by sending him a compromising video. Right after this woman's murder, as if nothing has happened, she takes advantage of the situation and occupies the late classmate's place – the place of a mistress of a wealthy man. However, the heroine is confident that she is not one of the "kept women". "I came to Moscow not to hit on sugar daddies," but to pursue a career", she says. The girl "terribly" wants her gallery and is ready for anything for this. In this character, an angelic face and a devilish essence are amazingly combined. Her ex-husband is an obstacle on the career path, and obstacles should be get rid off: being falsely accused of a murder, he gets no compassion from Dasha. Other film characters describe her as intelligent, purposeful, difficult and persistent. Gleb Olkhovsky, emphasizes her "hellish cynicism", which Dasha, quoting François Aragon, justifies by the need to desperately defend herself from the imperfection of the world. Her jealous lover Igor Dolgachev recognizes the rapid changes in the heroine's life: "She quickly shifted your ground. Just came to Moscow, dreaming of promoting some Budkin, now – there comes contemporary art. Also with her men – first she threw out her husband, then she worked on me, now Olkhovsky. A cunning slut". "She's not about family, and she's bored with her lover. There is something about

her... A special type ... – innocent and at the same time vicious, ” a private detective Olga Krutova reports about Dasha to her boss, Dolgachev's father-in-law.

The supporting character with a self-explanatory last name Krutova (Eng. Ms.Cool) is a private detective working simultaneously for several powerful people, knows everything about everyone: “such a hobby”. She also used to work in escort services, now she is a photographer. Olga found her calling, which, in her words, is “cooler than getting married”. By her account, it is “interesting and a little useful to be friends with her”. Creating an ambiguous image of Krutova, the director uses a visual oxymoron, combining incongruous elements: her red noticeable car and the hidden, inconspicuous activity of a private detective. According to R. Barthes, the nature of images is a linguistic one (Barthes, 2015: 29).

The representation of the “schoolgirl in love” in the analyzed series is also formatted according to the principles of modern consumer society. High school student Katya Matveeva is not head over heels in love with her teacher, as it may first seem, but a cynical, calculating girl who makes money on “hype”. An attempt to seduce a teacher is nothing more than a provocation, a marketing ploy, a strategy to become a wanted character for TV talk shows. Having played the scene of seduction with the teacher on camera, the girl posts the video on the Internet, thereby provoking a huge scandal. Despite her young age, Katya has already chosen a way to make money, realizing that the scandal is selling well in modern society. “I’m not a fool, to work hard in some ... fast food for three kopecks,” says the schoolgirl. She also plays in a spin-off of the story – making a scene at her teacher's book presentation being paid for it by his publisher. As experts note, “hype helps not only to popularize an object or person, but also to make real profits from this action. You can sell anything on hype: news, information, goods. As a result, it is most typical for a consumer society, the taste preferences of which are formed precisely due to the excessive flow of information” (Samarin, 2019: 84).

Unlike the leading characters, the supporting characters are unambiguously portrayed by the director and can be designated as typical. Among them is also the “corrupt policeman”, the head of the investigative department, Boris Markovich, works according to the principle: “initiate a case, bring it to court, close the case”. Significantly, this procedure has nothing to do with the search and punishment of the culprit or finding truth. In the absence of suspects, he is ready to appoint the first available to be the killer, for example, Dasha's ex-husband from Saratov. He maintains “business” relations with officials and businessmen: he accepts gratitude both in the office and outside his home.

Employees of the investigation department match the chief. Investigator Maksim Glushkov reacts to his order “to release the witness, to remove the interrogation protocol from the case” as a matter of course. Absolutely confident of Boris Smirnov's innocence, he still works out a scenario which is convenient for his boss, and makes the detainee admit his guilt. As a result, Smirnov commits suicide. Unscrupulousness, lack of decency distinguishes not only the professional, but also the personal life of Glushkov, who is not only a colleague, but also Elena Shirokova's lover. The latter characterizes him as follows: “an envious puppy, for whom an affair with an older, married woman, and even higher in position, is cool, and a topic to talk about”.

In the world of glamor, everyone has to adapt. In such an environment, there will definitely be a place for a gigolo. In *Soderhzanki* this role is assigned to Kirill Somov, an arrogant, despicable, mediocre type who dreams of an acting career. Most of his screen time we see the character either naked or with a towel on his hips. So the director makes it clear to the viewer that sex for the gigolo is “work”. And Kirill is very “hardworking”: he easily moves from one bed to another. In the intervals between his major employment, he is ready to work for pleasure, that is, for free. “Professional in his business, in seducing women, especially the rich and not especially young,” says the film director, the role in which was bought for Somov by another wealthy lady, Lyudmila Dolgacheva. Being aware that Kirill is not artistically gifted, she is sure that “for that kind of money a chair should get an Oscar”. Dolgacheva has no illusions about the human qualities of a young man, affectionately calling him a “scoundrel.”

#### *Daily routine*

One cannot but agree with Yu. Lotman, who notes that “... everyday life, in its symbolic vein, is a part of culture” (Lotman, 2017: 13). On the one hand, things reflect the peculiarities of a particular cultural period, “on the other hand, things imperiously dictate gestures, a style of behavior and, ultimately, a psychological attitude to their owners ... Things impose on us a demeanor, since they create a certain cultural context around them.” (Lotman, 2017: 13-14).

The change of the cultural context, and with it the demeanor of the characters in the series, can be clearly seen on the example of the character performed by Daria Moroz. Within the walls of her small apartment in an ordinary multi-storey building in a residential area of Moscow, investigator Yelena Shirokova in a crumpled male T-shirt gives the impression of a chronically tired person, a self-sufficient woman who has no one to make herself pretty for. At work in the investigative department, she is sharp, decisive, businesslike; from a passionate embrace with a colleague-lover in the back seat of a car, she instantly switches to a crime scene. However having moved to the huge house of the oligarch Elena changes: she speaks quietly, slowly, chooses words, her gestures are smooth, while always keeping her back straight and folding her arms in front of her, as if closing herself from everything. In the modern house of Olkhovsky there is a lot of glass and light, geometrically correct lines prevail, in such an interior it is difficult to imagine either a curled cat or a woman cozily curled up on a sofa.

#### *Public life*

The preferred form of social activity for glamor is a party, communication within one's own people, exclusively. The feeling of a closed environment is enhanced by the fact that the same characters move from one social event to another: from the "evening of longing" organized by a charitable foundation, to the "rotten corporate party" of civil servants, the opening ceremony of the hotel complex, etc.

Relations in the consumer society are based on the principle "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours". Sex as a "service" often become a bargaining chip, for example, in exchange for information (Alisa Olkhovskaya and her husband's lawyer), for safety (Karina Shtern and her patron), for a dream to come true (Dolgachev and Smirnova), etc.

The specificity of glamor lies in the fact that it creates an illusion, appearance, and not being. Under the glamorous veil of charity, drug trafficking proceeds are legalized. The characters demonstrate the highest degree of cynicism at an evening in memory of Alisa Olkhovskaya, the head of a charitable foundation, as well as a metropolitan matchmaker who found girls for wealthy men. Gleb Olkhovsky, who organized her "hellish funeral", makes a pathetic speech: "Today we have gathered to remember the woman who gave all of himself to charity. Alice has been gone for a year, but her business lives on. Alice opened this fund because she simply did not know how to live differently. She was a person who could not pass by someone else's misfortune. The death of my wife was a huge tragedy for everyone involved with the foundation's activities". Actually, after his wife's death, Olkhovsky lost the fund and was forced, under pressure from his criminal patron, to transfer the management of the fund to his mistress Karina Shtern. According to Olkhovsky, "this fund provides opportunities for friendly people to legalize income that they cannot legalize in any other way". Thus, charity in the world of glamor is "hundreds of acts of assistance" but at the same time hundreds of illegal transactions.

The media image of a modern civil servant represented by the head of a Federal Department Igor Dolgachev fits into the format of a modern consumer society, in which personal financial solvency has turned into a "total monetization" of consciousness (Khaliy, 2015: 7). According to his father-in-law, Dolgachev "is constantly bargaining ... he does everything for the money". The official declares that "you cannot do everything just for yourself, it is also necessary for society, for people". He is ready to provide pictures from his own collection for the gallery, and clearly realizes that he does this not for society, but for himself, to please his mistress. Dolgachev is distinguished by legal nihilism, which manifests itself in ignoring the requirements of laws and arbitrary interpretation of laws and by-laws (Kolmykova, 2017: 76). The head of the Federal Department has his own secret business, where his mistress "like, works" and who "like gets paid monthly in rubles and foreign currency". The position of a civil servant is unstable, since he owes his well-being entirely to his influential father-in-law. His wife regularly reminds him of "who put him in his place and will put him on another, chillier one, if he is ungrateful".

#### *Family values*

J. Baudrillard believes that a consumer society is a society of self-deception, where neither genuine feelings nor culture is possible (Baudrillard, 2006). As a result, the institutions of family and marriage are perverted. For example, the Dolgachevs do not consider it necessary to remain faithful in marriage, are indifferent to each other's betrayals. "That is why we have such a strong family," Igor Dolgachev reflects sarcastically. He accepts the message of his mistress that his wife is cheating on him, as follows: "Well, if I can, why can't she? In general, I am for equality in the family". The official believes that "men cheat because of boredom, and women because of

promiscuity". At the same time, the Dolgachevs observe formal "rules of decency": they call each other if decide to spent the night outside home. As an excuse for another adultery, the husband presents an expensive piece of jewelry, which the wife accepts favorably as payment for the inconvenience. Infidelity, as a norm in marriage, is also stated by Dolgachev's father-in-law: "You can cheat, but only one-night stands, no permanent women". If the affair threatens to develop into something serious, he immediately takes drastic measures. So, Dolgachev's pregnant mistress Marina Levkoeva, is found murdered. It is striking that Lyudmila Dolgacheva asks her father to "remove" her husband's mistress not out of jealousy, but in order to avoid the danger of blackmail. The father fulfills his daughter's request, once again confirming his idea that everything is possible in this world, the main thing is "not to dishonor your family and your once glorious father-in-law".

Relationships outside of marriage are typical not only for married couples who have lived together for many years, but also for newlyweds. So, Olkhovsky's lawyer Nikita, "a timid man, but vicious," according to detective Krutova, on the eve of his wedding starts an affair with the boss's wife. Spends the night before the wedding in her bed and cheats on his new wife during the wedding party. The behavior of the bride, who learns about her husband's betrayal also causes bewilderment: Ulyana remains calm, pretends that nothing has happened, does not see a tragedy in this, but only a "working moment". She does not forgive her husband for adultery, but continues to "fight for love". At the same time, this love seems just as conditional and unnatural as everything in the world of glamor.

Obviously, the topic of adultery is the most common dramatic move for any TV series, in this sense, *Soderzhanki* is no exception. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that Russian television is focused on female audience, which is easiest to get hooked on this story, but on the other hand, betrayal is generally the most common TV trope worldwide too (Sukhoguzov, 2018). It is difficult to recall at least one TV series in which no one is cheating. In *Soderzhanki* everyone is cheating.

The film shows the world of adults in which there is no place for children. According to the official Dolgachev, the father of two children, "children come to this world with an agreement that they have a father and mother. And then mom and dad violate this agreement. And this is wrong, because this agreement must be fulfilled clearly and on time". The one of the two teenage supporting characters is Shirokova's son, who is going through difficult parents' divorce. In the series, he is perhaps one of the few heroes who demonstrate emotions and feelings.

There are no "good guys" on screen featuring today's consumer society. All the characters in the series are "bad guys", there is no one to sympathize or empathize with. "Bogomolov equates the rich and the poor, the powerful and the servants - absolutely everyone in this story is vicious" (Zarkhina, 2020). In the foreground is the base nature of a person, one's low-level needs: food, sex ... Even in explicit scenes there is no place for sensuality. According to the film director, sex scenes are just an "element of everyday life" reflecting the natural course of people's lives [Interview, 2019]. In the film there is no place for kindness and decency, there is only cynicism and cold calculation. But the aftertaste brings the awareness of hopelessness, since among the many skillfully intertwined storylines there is not a single one that would indicate the way to change the situation. Obviously, the authors wanted to show the vices of the city's glamor without embellishment. In his interview, K. Bogomolov says that "art not only entertains and consoles, art must deliver a certain amount of pain" (Interview, 2019). When it hurts, one hopes for relief after receiving the cure. The series do not provide hope for the remedy.

## 5. Conclusion

The modern consumer society, according to its screen representation, is characterized by the destruction of basic ideas about humanistic values: family relations, the institution of marriage, social relations, for example, charity, public service, etc. The screen demonstrates the absence of any moral atmosphere in modern Russian society. All characters, without exception, talk about love. However the boundaries and essence of this concept are so blurred that it is difficult for the viewer to focus on any of its facets.

Typical mass media characters, such as a provincial woman who comes to the big city, a schoolgirl in love with a teacher, a policeman, an official, etc., are presented in the format of a modern mass consumer society, in which everyone parasitizes on each other. Dependents of both genders are trying to balance their social status. The success in the world of glamor, shown in the series, is conditional, beauty is artificial, feelings are simulated. Presumably the intention of the authors of the series was to make it clear that genuine values must be sought in a different social



environment. On the one hand, the screen representations of the mass consumption society of modern Moscow cultivate the conventional values of the world of glamor, on the other hand, they reveal the vices of a perverse, cynical, hypocritical society in which artificiality prevails over naturalness.

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