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Media Sociology Theoretical Concepts in the *Cinema Art Journal*: XXI Century

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Abstract

The authors of sociological articles in *Cinema Art* journal have managed to identify the main trends characteristic of the 21st century through a thorough analysis of the film process:

- the system of state support for film production in Russia began to have a negative impact on the situation with film distribution: the Ministry of Culture's financing of only the end result – film production – was reduced to a control and regulatory process, to the implementation of an economic function in the interests of a narrow circle of film producers, who make money from (almost) gratuitous state financial support in the film production process; producers do not care at all about the artistic quality or the distribution fate of the films;

- the Russian media's reliance on sensationalism, scandals, crime, vulgarity, etc. (in the pursuit of audience ratings) is palpable;

- a content analysis of stories from highly-rated media formats allows us to identify the following system of content attitudes for the perception of media texts: the danger and aggressiveness of the surrounding world; the need to live for today; the sphere of a person's private life becomes a material that can arouse enormous interest in the mass audience, etc;

- at the same time, the demand of a significant part of the mass audience for the producers of media texts is different: show us society in such a way that we would like to live in it;

- Russia (almost) does not have an artistically trained audience, so entertainment media texts predominate;

- the media not only inform, educate, and entertain; the media are a powerful tool for shaping millions of people's tastes, social samples, patterns, feelings, attitudes, ideology, and so on, and ultimately, national consciousness;

- the majority of Russian television viewers today make up approximately two-thirds of the urban population and unite older, less educated groups (this is the most numerous and permanent audience, dependent on television in terms of information, values, ideology) and relatively younger contingents, peripheral in the volume and nature of resources, in the type of orientations. They are characterized by a relatively low level of education, a small amount of their own financial resources, because of the dependence on more accessible and cheaper television;

- against this background there is an increase in the volume and projects of television series production, including Russian online platforms; this production is largely subject to the following stereotypes: characters' feelings are presented in close-up, without half-tones; key scenes contain suspense; the intrigue is tense and based on fairy-folklore stories; socio-cultural and historical, patriotic significance of the theme;

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- Russian viewers' trust in these kinds of media texts is caused by their desire to return: from the disunity of recent years to unity, to the values of kindness and mutual assistance; from individual success to that "common" that continues the work of fathers and grandfathers; from the feeling of Russia's "second-rate" to its paramountcy, to the multiplication of its wealth;

- against this background, the Internet has significantly transformed the media: a substantial segment of the youth audience has formed, which (almost) has no contact with television, but is in the field of social networks and other products of modern information technology; the most active representatives of this audience become the authors of media texts, many of which, being very successful, attract advertisers.

Keywords: journal *Cinema Art*, film studies, sociology, theoretical concepts, cinema, film, movie, cinematography, Russia, film art.

1. Introduction

In this article, we will focus on the analysis of the media sociology theoretical concepts in the *Cinema Art* Journal in XXI century, when its chief editors were Daniil Dondurey (1947-2017) and Anton Dolin. This article continues series on the theoretical concepts of the *Cinema Art* journal (Fedorov, 2022; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022; Levitskaya, 2022).

Sociologist D. Dondurey (1947–2017) became the editor-in-chief of the *Cinema Art* journal in the second half of 1993, and with his arrival the number of articles on the topic of film/telesociology increased significantly. However, the peak of media sociological materials in the journal came in the first two decades of the 21st century.

At the same time, D. Dondurey himself was the author of many media sociological articles.

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; Bazin, 1971; Bibler, 1990; Casetti, 1999; Eco, 1975; 1976; Gledhill, Williams, 2000; Hess, 1997; Hill, Gibson, 1998; Khrenov, 2006; 2011; Kuleshov, 1987; Lotman, 1973; 1992; 1994; Mast, Cohen, 1985; Metz, 1974; Razlogov, 1984; 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

Problems of film production and distribution

In 2001, D. Dondurey noted that the economic crisis of August 1998 had a positive impact on the development of Russian film distribution. Over the past two years, about eighty modern refurbished halls have been opened, which give seven to eight times more money than the remaining fifteen hundred... The most acute problem lies elsewhere. In Russia, for several years now, films have been made exclusively for television, and not for cinemas. They are absolutely uncompetitive in comparison with high-quality and now affordable foreign products. Our films are depressing. Nostalgic. Regretting the irrevocably gone times. Filmed in the style of the 1970s and 1980s, they are designed for older generations, the declassed intelligentsia, those who have not managed to fit into the new context of Russian life. But all these people do not want to go to modern cinemas and do not have the financial means to do so (Dondurey, 2001: 20-21).

However, D. Dondurey continued, “at the same time, new viewers – those who buy up expensive tickets to Dolby cinemas – are not offered domestic films that they could label as their own, with whose characters they could be identified, that is, films, corresponding to the image of the country, which every ten minutes is broadcast from the TV screen with the help of advertising.

It so happened that filmmakers who make clips talk about one Russia, and filmmakers who make feature films talk about a fundamentally different one... The old production ideas, according to which the main funds in the cinema are returned from the former Soviet people – the "new poor", will have to be left in the past. Young wealthy people do not remember the former stars, they do not recognize famous folk artists. At the same time, for the first time in ten years, young people are ready to actively go to cinemas and, unlike the "new poor", pay for new Russian cinema. The drama lies precisely in the fact that we do not produce films for this social category" (Dondurey, 2001: 22).

Ten years later, D. Dondurey listed the positive changes that have taken place in Russian film distribution and in cinema in general: there was a significant increase in the total box office of cinemas; every year, six or seven commercial films began to appear, which gave three-quarters of the fees from theatrical showing of Russian films; Every year six or seven notable author's (non-commercial) films are released, which are included in the programs of international film festivals.

However, with all that, Russian producers (with the help of state financial support) have learned to earn money in the process of production and, in general, do without theatrical distribution, which allows them to shoot a large number of "films without spectators" (Dondurey, 2011). Thus, D. Dondurey reasonably believed that Russian movies is completely cut off, practically unrelated to consumption (Dondurey, 2011: 7).

Regularly monitoring the situation in film distribution and beyond, D. Dondurey wrote in 2013 that since 2004 the number of screens in Russia has increased by 3.6 times and amounted to more than three thousand in 2012, and in terms of commercial fees, the country came fourth in Europe. At the same time, occupying three hours and forty minutes out of five evening hours of prime time, Russian serials have long ousted from it not only modern domestic cinema and adored (not only by the authorities) Soviet, not only European and Latin American serials, they swung at the "holy of holies" and Hollywood films are about to be pushed out of the significant air! (Dondurey, 2013: 6-9).

At the same time, O. Berezin, an expert in the field of film distribution, noted that, despite the increase in the number of cinemas, in 2014-2015 there was a stagnation in film attendance at 96 % of already digital commercial cinemas (Berezin, 2015: 110-111).

In 2016, O. Berezin, based on the analysis of statistical data, argued that the system of state support for film production in Russia has become toxic for the industry in recent years: financing only the final result – film production – practically paralyzed her improvement as a whole. There is no real development of either science, or education, or specialized media, or systemic institutions of the industry – high-quality, non-advertising film criticism, multidisciplinary analytics, sociological research, etc. The current model of film production support does not stimulate the development of national infrastructure (Berezin, 2016: 24).

O. Berezin continued to criticize the shortcomings of the functioning of Russian film production and film distribution in 2018, drawing the attention of the readers of the journal that the activity of the Ministry of Culture is reduced in the film industry only to a control, supervisory and regulatory process, to the implementation of an economic function in the interests of a narrow circle of film producers, which ensures the conversion of gratuitous state financial support for film production into the income of state producers and leads to the sterilization of the theatrical distribution market against the backdrop of the development of other methods consumption of films (Berezin, 2018: 41).

At the same time, O. Berezin also noted the explosive growth in the volumes and projects of domestic film production of domestic online platforms, which will not only increase the competition of traditional or, as we sometimes say, offline cinemas, for the viewer, but will also draw on a significant part of the industry's creative potential, thereby depriving cinemas and such a small number of high-quality, meaningful films made specifically for cinemas (Berezin, 2019: 31).

In 2020, O. Berezin wrote that the situation with combining the economic and social crisis with the impact of the pandemic and quarantines, has had a detrimental effect on the functioning of cinemas, especially since Russian films, as a rule, cannot attract the attention of a mass audience (Berezin, 2020: 232-242).

As subsequent events showed, O. Berezin was not mistaken in his pessimistic forecasts: after the key Hollywood companies in the spring of 2022 "sanctions" left the Russian film distribution, film screening fees actually collapsed, completely refuting the false assurances of Russian producers and directors that that the massive success of their films in cinema halls is hindered only by the competition of American blockbusters.

TV problems

In 2014, political scientist and journalist V. Tretyakov attempted to give an up-to-date definition of "television" on the pages of *Cinema Art* journal: television is an original and unique sociopolitical and cultural phenomenon (phenomenon, institution), (1) which has the properties of mass information (media, media), (2) but even more so the properties of mass culture, (3) which performs functions of social management and, in this sense, competes with other traditional management mechanisms, as well as (4) the function of the new postmodern construction of human civilization, at least as a culture based on (5) maximum visualization and virtualization of both (6) real events and facts, and (7) speculatively created or involuntarily arising TV images – phantoms, simulacres, chimeras and myths, (8) which has all properties of neopagan cult... Thus, the content received by the audience – the sum of meanings, images and connections between those and others, as well as the forms of their representation – differs from real life exactly as much as the television virtual outside of natural human errors, illusions and fantasies is filled (with displacement of the corresponding reality or even in the neighborhood with it) with television mythology – the sum of television images (Tretyakov, 2014: 126-128).

It is curious that many theoretical articles on the sociology of television published in the *Cinema Art* journal in the 21st century largely confirm the correctness of this definition.

Political scientist A. Khrumchikhin wrote that if everything was good on Soviet television, then everything became bad on Russian TV in the 1990s: the slogan "good news is not news" became the motto of Russian information and analytical broadcasting. History knows no analogues of such a total information war waged by television against the processes of renewal of the life of its people. The creation by the Russian media of an atmosphere of national catastrophe and a feeling of complete hopelessness caused colossal moral and material damage to society. The export of capital, brain drain, falling birth rates, drug addiction and alcoholism are generated not only by the real difficulties of the transition period and various objective factors, but also by the doomsday situation created by television and newspapers. Russian power from top to bottom was hopelessly discredited in the eyes of the population, and to the greatest extent – precisely those of its representatives who have done the most for the country. Our media managed to form not only the image of an illegal and inferior government (the first in national history elected by the people), but also of Russia itself. Through the efforts of journalists and political technologists, a stereotype (largely false) was imposed on society that any candidate can be elected in any election, and nothing depends on the voter. Both "democrats" and "patriots" explained to the population that all the current rich are thieves, and all honest people are beggars, that 80-90 % of our population lives in complete poverty, and 10 % "baths in luxury" (Khrumchikhin, 2003: 18).

A. Khrumchikhin also noted another Russian media trend of the 1990s: custom-made materials of a political and economic nature have become so widespread and common place that a significant part of readers and viewers are still confident that objective information and analytical materials in the Russian media absolutely not. Almost all articles and broadcasts have been commissioned by someone. In addition to self-discredit, this has become one of the factors in the loss of newly acquired freedom by journalists. One part of the media became dependent on the authorities, not only on the federal, but also on regional and local ones, the other – on various financial and industrial groups, on individual large entrepreneurs. They, in turn, began to use controlled publications and channels for their own political purposes. The information wars of the second half of the 1990s inflicted colossal moral and economic damage on the country. Thus, the free media themselves did their best to reduce the degree of freedom (Khrumchikhin, 2003: 19).

In his 2006 article, D. Yuriev reminded the journal's readers that the "disarmament" of Russian media oligarchs at the turn of the 21st century was not a way to fight democracy, but a matter of society's self-preservation, a matter of overcoming a crisis that threatens unpredictable and unlimited in its consequences media shocks, fraught with social – political collapse. The disastrous nature of mediocracy was then felt not only in the elites, but also in society – that is why neither "Gusinsky's NTV" nor "Berezovsky's TV-6" aroused real sympathy and support outside the so-called "liberal shiz" (Yuriev, 2006: 81).

As a result, as D. Yuriev emphasized, the part of information planning, which is associated with the political component of broadcasting, turned out to be directly and harshly opposed to the information work of the media community, which is turning into an increasingly consolidated anti-government propaganda before our eyes. At the same time, the politicized part of the audience was divided into a liberal minority, which actually ignores the position and assessments of the "state"

TV channels, and a politicized "loyalist" minority, which seriously, meaningfully perceives TV campaigns about spy rocks. There is every reason to believe that, according to the most daring and inflated estimates, all of them together – both Fronders and loyalists – are no more than 10 percent of the audience... The current ideologists of the "televideocracy" naturally defend their economic freedom, and, instead of creating a system with normal feedback, they simply broke it, this connection. And "economic freedom" is perceived as a sanction for the same moral irresponsibility. Only now we are talking not about the information and political sphere, but about the cultural, entertainment, emotional, psychological, and ultimately moral. According to the principle of economy of thinking and creative efforts, the maximum increase in the rating comes from the most rude, primitive baits (Yuriev, 2006: 81-83).

However, for all that, D. Yuryev argued, both state censorship and unscrupulous information wars of the oligarchs are not as terrible and dangerous as the transition of the process of formatting reality through television to chaos, to the arbitrariness of the most vile and miserable in the collective consciousness of the masses. Chaos is devoid of goal-setting, and in this sense it seems less dangerous than the malevolent oligarchs, but it is able to deprive everyone else of the goal-setting ability – from from the first to the one hundred and forty millionth. And then all the achievements of the fighters against mediocracy will be meaningless, and the bottomless funnel will drag the country into the void, into the futurelessness, into the irreparable "never" (Yuriev, 2006: 85).

Sociologist A. Oslon reminded readers that the psychology of the masses has been well known for more than a hundred years, and the media, driven by the idea of rating, have significantly improved it. Sensation, scandal, mystery, exposure, anecdote, trick, fight, war, crime, vulgarity, obscenity: these are a small fraction of what has long been used as a means of entertaining the crowd. They have existed and will always exist, because every person at some point in his life feels the need to rest, get distracted, relax, compensate for something. There is nothing shameful in this (Oslon, 2003: 10). Many of the components listed above form the basis of daily TV news broadcasts, the basic characteristics of which are not "objectivity and impartiality", but relevance, "urgency", sensationalism, "exclusivity", "revealing", anxiety, the illusion of uniqueness and objectivity (Oslon, 2003: 27-29).

Thus, according to A. Oslon, news construct factoids – facts that first appeared not in reality, but in the news. Factoids are present in the news as if they were part of reality... News serves modernity and imposes modernity through a kaleidoscope of images that turn the recipient into a pilgrim traveling through the relative world. In such a world, there are no stable semantic systems, but only temporary conventions of what to consider today as white – black, good – bad, good – evil. Yesterday could be different, tomorrow could be different. News elevates the temporality, variability, conventionality and ephemeral nature of the world into an absolute... News and advertising are varieties of the same genre of arbitrary display of the world. The difference is that advertising aims to drown out the recipient's anxiety, while the news, in fact, tries to increase the anxiety (Oslon, 2003: 30-31).

Continuing the conversation about the news phenomenon, producer and film critic A. Prokhorov (1948–2020) wrote that under the guise of news, TV broadcasts another product – a news show that is not necessary or useful to a person, but interesting to him as a viewer... This is how modern television creates the phenomenon of news totalitarianism – the total imposition on the viewer of a news view of the world as a news stream (Prokhorov, 2004: 14).

Sociologist G. Lyubarsky believed that the media is primarily interested in strengthening the transmitted impact, and not its content, consequences, role. They become a kind of catalyst that accelerates the most diverse processes in society to a critical limit... As a result, instead of trust, which is so necessary in the modern world as the basis of social interactions, the mass media create a specific intellectual product that allows people to live in this thinned social fabric without noticing the opening holes. The media, with considerable skill, draw an illusion against the background of an illusion, so that anyone can see the illusory nature of the news picture, and it becomes extremely difficult to discern the illusory nature of the background (Lyubarsky, 2003: 22, 26).

Film expert V. Fomin in his theoretical articles analyzed the folklore components of television programs, recalling that folklore aesthetics avoids direct everyday plausibility, straightforward copying of reality. Any situation in life, a completely ordinary collision, a human figure, as soon as they fell into the orbit of the folklore muse, unrecognizably color, escalate and transform into something sometimes almost unrecognizable. The main trump card of folk aesthetics is the

unconditional victory of good, the indispensable triumph of the bright beginning, the restoration of the broken harmony of life. Folk artistic culture did not avoid the sad, sometimes terrible realities of reality. But the elements of the sad, terrible, tragic had to be tamed and overcome by all means (Fomin, 2001: 95).

In particular, V. Fomin believed that in Russia the folklorization of television affects not only the television programs that make up the grid of the main channels, but also Russian television series. If you scratch at least a little bit the “cops” and “national security agents” that still continue to breed on all TV channels, then it will not be difficult at all to find painfully familiar folklore fools from folk tales... Folklorization of television affects its purely linguistic sphere. Television texts are simply overwhelmed by the element of language “colloquialism”, jargon of all stripes, including thieves Fenya. Folklorization of television is carried out not out of love, but more than selfish calculation. The limit of all dreams is to please his majesty rating. For the sake of increasing it, you can definitely go to any lengths. Up to the point of descending to folklore culture, which always knew how to respond to mass taste. But it is precisely to descend, to descend – because the folklore culture is most likely presented to the current television “populists” as the realm of the primitive, something so absolutely consummate, impenetrably oakly simplified. Apparently, the ideas about the mass audience's taste are just as “democratic” – the simpler, more vulgar, and vulgar the recipe for telepoil is, the faster and louder the success. And the horror is that folklore is chosen as a guide to this goal, perceived as the highest expression of simplification and artistic debility (Fomin, 2001: 98-99).

Sociologist V. Zvereva insisted that the news on Russian television of the 21st century is built on the principles and structure of the series: they should be expressed in a special language. They need to be interesting, dynamic, limited in duration, simple in form. They need to be addressed to different viewers and offer everyone something different. And so that at the same time they could be perceived in the background, they gave a person the opportunity not to strain at the TV screen... In a news series, there is a constant circle of heroes (government officials, media stars) and a set of interchangeable characters for one episode. It contains frequently reproduced types of events (“official summit meeting”, “clashes between the belligerents”, “report of the minister to the president”, “catastrophe”, “cultural event”, etc.), which require viewers to reproduce the same feelings. The information series is designed for the viewer's knowledge of the rules of the game, the possible development of a certain type of plot. A person, turning on an information program, as a rule, acquires a guarantee of the permanence of the world, the continuity of yesterday and today. Compared to a regular series, the viewer receives the same confirmation of the orderliness, regularity and therapeutic triviality of life, but produced here at a higher level, since the creators do not proceed from fiction, but from “reality”. Each issue-series tells stories related to such genres as detective, action, crime drama, melodrama or comedy, with their clichés, types, images, ways of organizing the narrative and typical assessments (Zvereva, 2008: 148-149).

V. Zvereva rightly noted that as in a work of mass culture, the text of the programs clearly defines the roles of heroes and villains, “good” and “bad” guys; stories are often accompanied by morality, confirming the truth of the “triumph of good” or “restoration of justice.” But at the same time, actual ideologies are reproduced in stable formulas: ideological messages are presented as something natural due to being placed in a form that is taken for granted for the consumer of mass culture (Zvereva, 2008: 150).

Referring to one of the “hottest” topics on Russian television – crime – S. Grushevsky said that by 2016, the dominance of Russian crime series, which occupy 14 percent of all television time, has become particularly clear. Newscasts (11 percent of TV airtime), talk shows about personal relationships (8 percent), domestic comedy series and morning programs (7 percent each) were left behind (Grushevsky, 2016: 18). Thus, it turns out that going beyond the usual norms of behavior, which we treat with fear and try to avoid in life (how many agreed to be understood or juried before a murderer?), turns out to be appealing in the form of a fictional story. There is, however, another explanation. The viewer is assured: in the last five minutes before the credits of the series, good and justice will almost certainly prevail, and evil will be punished. What cannot be said about the events on this side of the screen (Grushevsky, 2016: 20).

Within the framework of the context described above, D. Dondurey emphasized that media owners and media bosses are cunning when they unanimously claim that they do not influence the economy, do not win elections, do not rule the country. They are only intermediaries between life... and life. And this despite the fact that in the last decade the great virtual revolution is coming to an end, as a result of which both realities – the empirical one, in which we move, breathe, act, live, and

the television one, edited, invented and shown to us from the screen – finally "collapsed", in psychological terms, they practically combined and television is now perceived, experienced, predetermines our reactions as “real”, “real” (Dondurey, 2004: 18).

In his articles, D. Dondurey did not get tired of proving that it is TV that controls the consciousness of almost the entire population of the country through the most important tool – the formation of an “agenda”: the choice of what is important, what is not, what we talk about, what we are silent about, how we evaluate (Dondurey, 2004: 20).

In the course of many years of research into the theory and practice of post-Soviet television, D. Dondurey managed to identify the main stereotypes that largely organize the television – and hence the life – space: 1) the media and the intelligentsia as a whole must resist the authorities; 2) despite the cult of sovereignty and patriotism that has been spreading in recent years, the vast majority of TV people doubt the chances of this enterprise for success, a kind of value trap is offered: to be proud of your country and not to believe at the same time; 3) there is no meaningful and clearly defined model of the future in Russia (Dondurey, 2004: 20-21).

D. Dondurey also drew the attention of the journal's readers to the fact that most media studies when studying not only the audience of TV channels, but also various aspects of production, as well as the product itself (including its quality characteristics), limit their approach to practically one media meter – rating indicators. Researchers are based on the belief that by the very fact of fixing the TV turned on, a person is always actively involved in what is happening on the screen... And such a “trifle” as an assessment of what he saw is never taken into account. So the rating, officially recognized as just a means of measuring the media audience, in fact, has become the main evaluation procedure, and as a result, the main and practically the only benchmark for the production of domestic television content (Dondurey, 2007: 126).

D. Dondurey reasonably believed that the most dangerous – and most important – consequence of the total power of this philosophy is that over the past years in our country a methodology has been formed for using the mechanism of the so-called “down selection” in the programming process. Its essence is as follows. It is much easier to attract viewers by working on the most ancient constructions of our orientation in reality discovered long ago by psychologists – sexual desires, the experience of possible violence, the expectation of death, feelings of the unknown, danger, inevitability, depression (Dondurey, 2007: 126-127). This is why Russian television shows with humanistic values are much less than those that focus on showing various types of violence, scandalous stories and sensational details of the private life of celebrities.

According to D. Dondurey, the content analysis of the plots of high-rated TV formats makes it possible to isolate the following system of meaningful attitudes broadcast by federal TV channels on the perception of a TV product:

1. The world around you is very dangerous, aggressive, unpredictable. Man is totally surrounded by hostile space.
2. You are potentially subject to always unexpected blows of fate, which, of course, you do not deserve at all.
3. In fact, throughout your life – from childhood to death, with any care of parents, friends and the state – you in this world are not insured or protected from anything harmful, bad or offensive.
4. Always unfair, in most cases unconditional, insidious or unforeseen circumstances can take everything from you: health, livelihood, relatives, personal dignity, hope.
5. You, the viewer, often forget that there are a lot of different kinds of villains around you, unpleasant events, inexplicable manifestations of human ignobleness – betrayals, terrible thoughts and deeds, baseness, cynicism. We will cure you of your vulnerable romantic beauty.
6. All people, including the most famous and brilliant, those with power and success – rulers, stars, geniuses, heroes – are subject to absolutely the same misfortunes as you, an ordinary person. They are tormented, suffering and unhappy just like you, only until we show them on the screen – this is not known.
7. Life is full of information carefully and hypocritically hidden from the public about various pathologies, perversions, cruel circumstances, hidden vices of very famous and ordinary people. But when we vividly, with all the power of dramatizations, present this – carefully concealed – on the television screen, we will help you calm down, realize that you are not alone in your misfortunes. And thus we will honestly prepare for possible misfortunes, for future blows of fate.

8. You, the viewer, have always known that the world is rather wrong, it was before you and will be after – so seize the moment, live for today, think about yourself. And socially or politically, you will be better taken care of by others.

9. Do not be shy to look at the immoral actions of other people, especially celebrities, and related situations presented on the air. We must not deny ourselves, we confess, the masochistic pleasure of being interested in (and even admiring) other people's misdeeds.

10. Any sphere of private life, the most ordinary episode can become a material capable of arousing the enormous interest of the mass audience. You just need to be able to fish out, pull out of them the grain of potential attractiveness (Dondurey, 2007: 128-129).

D. Dondurey was convinced that the model of lowering meanings for the sake of simplifying their understanding, and, consequently, increasing the audience, operates in our country so completely, for a long time and without fail, that gradually a person begins to get used to its content. Doesn't respond to extreme scenes. Unconsciously, he dissolves into this deftly cut – in accordance with his own archetypes – truncated and traumatized world. Television here strengthens and consolidates everything that he himself is so afraid of. Thus, it fills a person's life with its non-humanistic understanding. But it helps him to free himself from his deepest fears, and with success and composure preserves them. It forms a dangerous meaningful context, if only by setting completely uninspiring versions of what is happening (Dondurey, 2007: 130).

Based on sociological research, D. Dondurey noted that on Russian TV, six out of every ten characters of the series act in one way or another on the territory of crimes, and a third of the plots of all news releases talk about them. But for a variety of reasons... neither the authorities nor public opinion object to this. They do not associate the rampant criminalization of the ether, say, with the scale of the export of capital abroad or with the ease of raider takeovers of companies. The enormous work of the media to preserve the socialist worldview among millions is usually not associated with their negative attitude towards employers, envy of the rich, widespread expectation of state support, especially with a low level of labor productivity. It is believed (by almost everyone) that life is something real, material, and therefore separate from the ephemeral, however demonized, television (Dondurei, 2013: 6).

Turning to the topic of the media and the mass audience, D. Dondurey believed that in Russia, unfortunately, an artistically trained audience is not reproduced to the necessary extent. There is a lack of advanced viewers capable of perceiving the best, that is, complex works of world art. Entertainment literature and theater triumph... There is not enough intellectual atmosphere, almost no films and series are made where artists or scientists become heroes. The focus is mainly on TV and show business stars. It must be admitted that the fantastic possibilities and advantages of the great Russian culture in ensuring the modernization of our country, were not used in all their might. And they could become the most important help in building a new reality (Dondurey, 2007: 52).

And then D. Dondurey suggested, at first glance, quite logical, but, alas, as it turned out, utopian conditions for improving the situation in specific Russian realities:

1) to change the very setting of policy in the field of culture. From the concept of charity, the grace of the state – to move to the idea of investing in culture as an ideological and creative resource for development;

2) evaluate and project the state of culture in the same way as it is done in other areas;

3) to recode the semantic space itself from actions based on the principle “I don't like it, but I look with pleasure” to the atmosphere (and even fashion) to the intellect, when smart people become heroes, creativity, activity, nobility, solidarity are promoted;

4) the aesthetic, artistic education of young people should be taken with no less responsibility than the creation of a favorable investment climate in Russia;

5) focus on the educational mission of culture (Dondurey, 2007: 52-53).

On the whole, sociologist K. Bogoslovskaya also agreed with D. Dondurey's opinion, emphasizing that the highest rating is not for those formats that are attractive to viewers, but for those that simply provoke attention to themselves... It would be a mistake to think that TV only informs, enlightens, entertains, acquaints us with works of cinematographic and television art. Television creates a world beyond the limits of the personal experience of each viewer, demonstrates the laws of this world, normalizes the proper and the forbidden. On a national scale, this is the most powerful tool for shaping millions of people's taste, social patterns, patterns, feelings, moods, ideology, and much more. Ultimately, television is a means of forming national identity (Bogoslovskaya, 2003: 17, 20-21).

A similar opinion was shared by the culturologist V. Zvereva (Zvereva, 2009: 135-143). Based on sociological surveys, she argued that the audience gradually learns to consider what is shown to them as good, although, of course, they still have a longing for quality programs... In Russian culture, there is a constant, but not at all reflexive process of accustoming viewers to a lowering standard. The same attitude is characteristic of the creators of information programs, who are trying to use ever stronger stimuli in them (Zvereva, 2009: 126).

At the same time, numerous Russian television programs on a criminal theme have a strong ideological connotation. Through the constant transmission of images of crime, the viewer is informed that it is better for him not to leave the limits of his habitable space: literally outside the door of his apartment a dangerous world begins, where the strong eat the weak. See, they tell the viewer what happens to everyone all the time! Scared to go out of kink, flats, engage in interaction with other people. They are unpredictable, they can deceive, commit violence: people cannot be trusted. Survive as best you can and be glad that nothing has happened to you yet (Zvereva, 2009: 130).

However, in the course of a study of the results of sociological studies related to television, it was found that in the reviews of TV viewers there is always the thought that it is painful for them to turn on the TV in the evening after work and plunge into a hopeless world where large and small crimes are presented as a common human practice, which there is no alternative. The audience's request to television program producers is different: show us a society that makes us want to live in it, not idealized, but subject to the "correct" norms adopted in other countries, and maybe then society will catch up to a higher standard. This demand comes from the audience, but it is very difficult to hear it in a situation where their voice is not of interest to the producers (Zvereva, 2009: 130).

Comprehending new media trends, when Russia was transitioning to differentiated digital media (including the Internet), and people began to build non-monological relationships with certain media and communication, V. Zvereva reasonably believed that the audience had more opportunities for critical comparative reflection (Zvereva, 2009: 131-132).

V. Zvereva also tried to analyze the phenomenon of the so-called glamor, relatively new to the Russian media. She recalled that this concept is associated with three contexts: 1) with the world of consumption of goods and services, 2) with fashion, shows, lifestyles, that is, the area of certain cultural practices, 3) with media, glossy journals, books, television, delivering images for a large audience. So this term has a wide range of understanding. Such blurring is convenient, as it allows it, as a capacious empty form, to remain relevant, adapting to changing content. Glamor – magic, charm, attractiveness, charm. In current use, it is an image that has beauty, brilliance, charm. Most often they talk about glamor as a style and as an ideology (Zvereva, 2006: 18).

Further, V. Zvereva wrote that glamor on Russian TV (both in TV shows and in advertising blocks) is 1) the style of a chic successful life (media and show business, bohemia, rich entrepreneurs and the top office workers; 2) accustoming to this style representatives of other social groups, standing in many cases closer to the base of the "pyramid of material well-being" (stimulating the purchase of goods with all its resources, glamor seduces everyone, setting an unattainable, but alluring ideal to follow); 3) a set of ideological attitudes (Zvereva, 2006: 18-19).

At the same time, glamor as a style is characterized by a fashion for character (unpredictability, changeability, audacity, pampered rebellion). In contrast to naturalness, glamor cultivates its rather cruel laws. Behavior within their framework is often opposed to actions according to the usual rules (rationality, obedience to conventions, loyalty to others, democracy). The continuous creation and display of glossy "beauty" subject to the logic of the advertising image is one of the leading trends on the modern domestic television screen (Zvereva, 2006: 18-19).

At the same time, the language of glamorous news implies a mixture of the important and the insignificant, the high rate of speech of the presenter and the change of picture, the drama of contrasts in the plots, and the distance from what is happening. To present a topic, news programs use the clip technique: image and text are cut in such a way as to break the continuity of the narrative, regardless of what the reports are about. Fragmentation draws the viewer's eye to the screen, but it also sets up a barrier that does not let in meanings that exceed the level of a statement of fact. The style of a glossy television journal suggests respectability, but can shift towards boulevard; this movement can be traced not only in the choice of topic, but also in the intonation of empty secular conversation, applicable to the coverage of any problem (Zvereva, 2006: 26).

And this is at a time when on the Russian television screen there is not enough intelligible, intelligent conversation with the viewer, without banter, mannerisms and intonation "for their own", there is a lack of reasoned speech of professionals, images of normal human everyday life ...

In life, there are not only nymphs and demigods or criminals and law enforcement officers. The demand for such an alternative, as well as for other scenarios of success and a fulfilling life in the modern world, is expressing itself more and more clearly (Zvereva, 2006: 27).

At the same time, A. Kostyuk drew the attention of the readers of the journal that if we compare the supply and demand for entertainment programs, it turns out that the viewers themselves are ready to watch even more such projects than they are currently offered by television. Over the past four years, the total share of movies, TV series and entertainment programs proper in the total volume of broadcasting of Russian national TV channels has been steadily at about half of it, while demand, we recall, is kept at the level of 70 percent. This suggests that the TV industry will continue to increase the share of entertainment content in the near future, thereby supporting the trend of viewer interest shifting from diversity towards entertainment only. An additional confirmation of the popularity of such projects is the active development of entertainment channels in the niche segment (cable, satellite, Internet, cell phones, etc.), observed in recent years (Kostyuk, 2009: 119).

Sociologist I. Poluekhtova explained the commitment to television by an adult audience (especially of retirement age) by the ease and often free access to television programs, the absence of the need to take any special actions for television viewing, incur additional costs, and the simplicity of television language: according to the results of focus groups, the desire to relax, switch attention, distract from problems, relax after work is the main attitude of modern viewers (Poluekhtova, 2003: 112).

I. Poluekhtova believed that the taste expectations, evaluation criteria and preferences of the mass audience are provided by television itself, since the offer of recent years has formed among regular TV viewers (first of all, their quantitative and socially passive majority, most dependent on television as a source of information and means of entertainment) habit and predominant interest in the reactionary spectacle, promising escapism and compensation, exploiting all sorts of human passions. The higher the proportion of such TV material, the higher the ratings, the more positive the ratings of the channels. The absolute majority of viewers today make up about two-thirds of the urban population, uniting older, less educated groups (this is the most numerous and permanent audience dependent on television for information, value, ideologically) and relatively younger contingents, peripheral in terms of the volume and nature of resources, in terms of the type of orientation. They are characterized by a relatively low level of education, a small amount of their own symbolic capital, and therefore dependence on more accessible and cheaper TV. But the most important thing is that now it is this “telemass” formed by the offer of recent years that dictates its own rules of the game and largely determines the reproduction of television content in its own image and likeness (Poluekhtova, 2003: 113).

Eleven years later, reflecting further on the competition between television and the Internet, I. Poluekhtova emphasized the continued influence of television even in these conditions: “The Internet and digital technologies have significantly transformed the entire media landscape, have become a catalyst for fundamental changes in approaches to the media business, legislation, television viewing, measurement, monetization. Despite the alarmism and apocalyptic scenarios of the 2000s, associated with the expectation of the imminent death of television, which will be replaced by the Internet, television is still quite alive. Moreover, it develops and expands its boundaries. Today, television content is freely distributed in different environments, on different technological platforms. It is available wherever there is Internet and any user device. Digital technology has not killed television, contrary to fears, but only made it stronger” (Poluekhtova, 2014: 119).

TV presenter and literary critic A. Arkhangelsky complained that a paradoxical situation has developed in the Russian media of the 21st century: there is a substantive and economic instrument of the state order, but the very subject of its application is not. There are no new values. There is no positive mythology. There is no concept of a new Russia (Arkhangelsky, 2013: 13-14). But A. Arkhangelsky was convinced that many Russian media texts promoted readiness to die in the name of the state as the highest goal of life. War as a permanent and natural state of man. The meaning-forming core of history is not the victory over death, as it was in Soviet cinema, but death itself. From clichéd reconstructions of the past authors move to the aestheticization of war and finally to the worship of war. Today's quasi-patriotic cinema, preoccupied with ideological order, rewrites not so much the plot as the spirit of war itself as a space for heroism (Arkhangelsky, 2015: 30).

One can probably argue with the fact that on the federal channels of the 21st century there is not a single fashionable, well-known series about today (with one exception: the security forces and intelligence officers are allowed to be modern heroes) (Arkhangelsky, 2015: 42), and in Russian TV remains only the suggestion of the thesis of eternity, irrevocability, irremovability of the principles of present life (Arkhangelsky, 2015: 43). However, in general, the concern of the *Cinema Art* journal with the stereotype of Russian television formats is quite understandable.

A theoretical article by media researcher E. Vartanova was devoted to the problems of digital television, which, in her opinion, contributed to a change in society and people's lifestyle. Here she came to the reasonable conclusion that one of the reasons underlying the development of digital television today is the fragmentation of society itself. This is not only the formation of numerous channels for the delivery of information, but also the transformation and development of the social structure of society. Probably, the development of digital television will force us to reconsider its understanding based on the model of mass broadcasting. It has developed in conditions of non-interactive/passive TV viewing, limited choice of TV programs, monopoly of both the technological platform (TV) and infrastructure (ethereal broadcast networks). Today's television model is increasingly based on a fragmented audience that prefers independent choice of TV programs viewed on different screens and technology platforms. The new spectator behavior is characterized by non-linearity, independent choice of programs, downloading them from the Internet – all that is not typical of traditional television at all (Vartanova, 2015: 118, 122).

A number of articles in the *Cinema Art* journal in the 21st century were devoted to the problems of television film screening.

So film critic and culturologist K. Razlogov (1946–2021) wrote that by the mid-1990s, Russian television (primarily ORT and NTV) showed a significant number of Western class “A” films, but by the beginning of the 2000s the situation began to change for the worse, and the display of “ordinary cinema” was replaced by a stream of television series, and in the future, the quality of domestically produced serials will steadily increase and draw on the best creative forces of filmmakers (Razlogov, 2001: 95, 97).

Sociologist and film critic N. Venzher, based on the processing of monitoring data from film screenings on fourteen TV channels for the period from January 1 to September 30, 2014, concluded that Russian cinema on TV feels much more confident than in the cinema network. It does not need any financial state support, or patronage quotas, forcibly weaning unreasonable viewers from stubborn foreign cinema. Domestic film productions at that time, through open, “impudent”, market competition, easily beat the hits of world film and television distribution on the TV platform (Venzher, 2014: 141-142).

TV series phenomenon

I. Poluekhtova, in our opinion, quite reasonably believed that the attractiveness of a television series is determined by at least three factors. First, its “length”; Secondly, the cost of one episode of an average television series is several times lower than the cost of an average feature film. And, finally, the third – fast and reliable payback and profitability. For almost ten years (from the end of the 1980s to the end of the 1990s) there was a slow maturation of the conditions for the production of television series (Poluekhtova, 2001: 7-8).

The sociological analysis conducted by I. Poluekhtova allowed her to formulate conclusions that are significant not only for the development of telecinema, but also for cinema as such: 1) by the beginning of the 21st century, the series on Russian TV occupied a very significant place in the structure of film programs of TV channels; 2) there was a glut of viewers with Western TV/film production; 3) financial difficulties and a shortage of new films forced Russian TV channels to switch to the Western model of film screening: 2-3 full-length films a week, the rest – serials; 4) it became profitable to shoot Russian serials (Poluekhtova, 2001: 16-17).

D. Dondurey, in fact, agreed with these conclusions: “For many years, Russian filmmakers have dreamed of introducing quotas for foreign film and television production. In the cinema, the implementation of this project did not work out, but on television – without any coercion, this dream came true... The seemingly unthinkable happened: our television series not only outstripped the famous Latin American “soap” and European, mainly French, products, but also such brilliant television series made in the USA... that took first place in all world ratings. Moreover, the serials that have been filmed in our country in the past two years have pushed even the holy of holies of domestic film production, Soviet cinema, into the net” (Dondurey, 2003: 166).

Sociologists K. Bogoslovskaya and S. Solntseva, based on the results of the focus groups, concluded: the viewer and the series, as it were, conclude an unspoken agreement on conventions, a convention that we will consider this "real" and that not. The "visible habitat" of the characters of the series, as a rule, is richer than is possible by Russian standards for people of their circle. The generally accepted conventionality of the situation is especially significant for the audience: the apartments of the heroes of the series should always be more expensive and cleaner than those "real" ones in which the characters described in the film could live. Attempts by some TV projects to deviate from this generally accepted convention in the direction of "life truth" causes irritation and rejection of the audience: "we have seen poverty." Despite the fact that all the viewers understand that "this does not happen", they do not want to get closer to reality. It is important to note the indispensable shift in the composition of characters in modern serials relative to the social structure of Russian society: "up" (oligarchs, bankers, models, successful businessmen and artists, crime bosses, etc.); "down" (homeless people and other declassed elements, prostitutes, drug addicts); "sideways" (people of exotic specialties and inclinations and those who are in "exotic" places: detectives, rural policemen, border guards, pilots). Series based on "cult" figures replicated by the Russian media (oligarchs, bankers, homeless people and prostitutes, as well as detectives and bandits) today have for viewers the characteristic of "real reality" (Bogoslovskaya, Solntseva, 2008: 147-148).

A very curious result of the study was that the "significance" of watching these stories gives viewers a sense of a symbolic touch on the modern social ideal: power – money – big cars, "exotic" minorities and "untouchables". The presence of such, now already stereotypical, figures gives the serial space the "unreality" sought by the viewer (one of the newest varieties of "fabulousness"). It is expressed, in particular, in a kind of projective identity: "Let bandits, prostitutes and oligarchs experience real troubles and violate laws and regulations, and we will look at this and draw our own conclusions." This situation endows the ordinary viewer with symbolic omnipotence, because the image of a "common man" on the TV screen is not popular either with viewers or with the creators of serials" (Bogoslovskaya, Solntseva, 2008: 148).

K. Bogoslovskaya and S. Solntseva summarized and highlighted the most characteristic "rules" for creating popular TV shows: 1) characters' feelings, both negative and positive, should be presented "in close-up"; 2) basic scenes should be made at the level of suspense; 3) the plot intrigue should be maximally tense, which fully corresponds to fairytale and folklore stories, which can be conventionally called "Cinderella", "Robin Hood" and "The Rich also Cry"; 4) the shift of characters and characters' images to simplicity is necessary (the audience is in demand of clear and most recognizable character types). And "the more real the problematic situation (housing problem, lack of money, illness) that is raised in the 'serial world', the more real a way out of it the serial should offer - otherwise the integrity and symbolic security of the 'serial world' will be violated" (Bogoslovskaya, Solntseva, 2008: 148).

Based on sociological surveys of television viewers about films and their characters, K. Bogoslovskaya concluded that on the one hand, mass audiences want to see stories about life, but about a life in which there are no insoluble problems. On the other hand, television is subject to the laws of the market and is forced to shoot what will get it reliable ratings, rather than examine the real issues and conflicts that exist in society. The television hero can be a Hero because he is a protagonist for solving a problem whose urgency is obvious for the audience, but there are no problems on television (Bogoslovskaya, 2012: 142).

At the same time, K. Bogoslovskaya singled out two types of successful television formats: 1) explosive, but at the same time a one-time success... achieved through the use of the "fist" of means to attract viewers' attention: famous actors, action, landscapes, technology, special effects, big budget; 2) success associated with the stable sympathy of the audience for the format, with the desire to "live in it". It is achieved due to the deeper properties of the series or program and ensures the duration of the screen life and the possibility of re-broadcasts (Bogoslovskaya, 2012: 142).

An analysis of the results of sociological surveys showed that the thirst for a calming ideal that allows you to relax and unwind is much easier to satisfy on the basis of the past, which allows you to create an ideal hero who performs major deeds for the good of the country. In addition, the past in the minds of the audience is safe and already saturated with images. The image of Ivan the Fool, archetypal for Russian culture, becomes relevant for the audience. Ivan the Fool, in addition to external "stupid" qualities, is characterized by humor, the ability to get out of the situation,

"including the fool", and, in the end, come out of it as a winner. Separate features of Ivan the Fool are characteristic of many characters of modern television ... The audience is also waiting for the heroes of professionals in their field... This is the hero's focus on business, and not on acquisitiveness, this desire to see that professionals work for goals and values, not just for money. And, ultimately, the desire to see a country focused on creativity and common sense. Such a professional hero can support the audience's patriotism, and the audience's need for this is very strong: The hero must be thinking, intellectual, for the Motherland... Regarding the psychological qualities of the hero, it is interesting that the sense of humor is almost in the first place among the mass audience. It seems to be surprising: the main sought-after quality of a modern hero is not honesty, courage, courage, but a sense of humor (Bogoslovskaya, 2012: 143-144)

As a result, K. Bogoslovskaya formulated the following components of the mass popularity of any kind of television formats in Russian conditions of the 21st century:

- 1) an exciting plot: a clear, bright, topical intrigue, the presence of a well-developed love line, emotional richness of events (suffering and overcoming, etc.), positive resolution of problems;
- 2) getting into the mythological pool of preferences of a wide audience associated with folklore, the implementation of the concepts of justice and a decent life;
- 3) socio-cultural and historical significance of the topic;
- 4) affirmation of the "originality of Russia", patriotism (Bogoslovskaya, 2013: 77).

In 2014, K. Bogoslovskaya again turned to the analysis of mass media preferences on the example of serials, highlighting 12 so-called meta-plots that attract the widest audience: 1) the emergence of a romantic "prince": the demand for this meta-plot is more typical for a female audience); 2) "Ostap Bender" (a very relevant metaplot for a country where fraud and corruption are woven into the very fabric of society); 3) "Romeo and Juliet" (dramatic story of true love); 4) "Anna Karenina" (dramatic love triangle); 5) "Fathers and sons" (the eternal conflict of generations); 6) "Trojan War" (hostile confrontation, enmity and hatred, nobility and self-denial: the demand for this metaplot is more typical for the male audience); 7) "The Count of Monte Cristo" or "Robin Hood" (the revenge of a positive character on enemies, the restoration of justice trampled on by them); 8) "Odyssey" (consolation in search of the Treasure); 9) "Robinson" (the popularity of this metaplot shows the long-lasting effect of the show "The Last Hero"); plus metaplots that are less relevant in Russian conditions: 10) "The catastrophe and its consequences"; 11) "Time Machine" (fantastic journeys into the past and future); 12) "Hamlet" (a metaplot connected with the hero's inner world) (Bogoslovskaya, 2014: 131-132).

At the same time, K. Bogoslovskaya is convinced that in the demand for all metaplots, the archetypal features of the Russian national consciousness described by many Russian philosophers are very clearly traced – the desire for a miracle, the need for suffering, the thirst not for the rule of law, but for some kind of universal justice (Bogoslovskaya, 2014: 132).

In 2019, K. Bogoslovskaya analyzed the results of a sociological survey of viewers, during which they were asked to suggest ideas, plots of television series that they would like to watch. At the same time, although the ideas of series proposed by respondents are much closer to everyday life than what modern TV offers them, however, in many cases, these ideas are strongly influenced by standard crime and melodramatic TV stories (Bogoslovskaya, 2019: 153-167).

As a result, it turned out that, compared with the general field of the content of modern series, the scenarios of the respondents are dominated by:

- serious stories about life, about the ways of the country's modern and historical development: the fate of an ordinary person, orientation to reality, "vitality" (this is more typical for a male audience);
- stories about the relationship between parents and children; stories about how to build relationships (this is more typical for a female audience);
- good, lyrical comedies;
- fantastic plots, but not cosmic or technocratic, but socio-historical, telling about possible options for the development of the country;
- stories focused on the life of young people, on their problems (suggestions from an audience under the age of thirty) (Bogoslovskaya, 2019: 154-155).

K. Bogoslovskaya believes that the obsession of Russian TV channels with standard crime and melodramatic stories is due to the requirements of unification, orientation to proven (including abroad) stereotypes and fear of risks, censorship and self-censorship. Reproduction of the old is cheaper, especially when it comes to crime series. Achieving a strong level of intrigue,

in which weapons are the means of developing energy, rather than scientific discovery or vivid character, is much easier and cheaper than creating a deep, meaningful dramatic plot. The mythological component of the series, the basic plot metaphors based on archetypal plots, are also not as diverse as they could be, according to the audience... It is clear that unification is based on the cheapest ways to achieve the highest possible rating in the absence of sufficient television diversification (Bogoslovskaya, 2019: 156).

Reflecting on the phenomenon of modern serials, media researcher and journalist A. Bystritsky reminded the readers of the *Cinema Art* journal that thirty years ago the cultural hierarchy was arranged in such a way that film masterpieces were at the top, and serials were located several floors below: this hierarchy assumed that dramatic depth, psychological sophistication, and the like were attributed to films made exclusively for cinema viewing. The serials were assigned the role of entertainment, a means to kill time, to relax after a hard day (Bystritsky, 2014: 136). However, in the 21st century, this situation began to change, and many TV series have now become full-fledged works of art, while expensive commercial cinema turned the cinema into a popcorn entertainment center: the audience in its mass goes there to experience those feelings with the help of special effects. the dexterity of people and the power of technology (Bystritsky, 2014: 137).

Film critic I. Kushnareva also wrote about the same trend: “Why are we looking forward to the premiere of a new series today, rather than another film premiere? Why is it fashionable to watch TV? The concept of “quality television” is one of the key concepts in the media theory of the last two decades. But this phenomenon is not a miracle of the birth of art from the void, it has socio-cultural, economic and technological preconditions” (Kushnareva, 2011: 5).

Of all the Russian television series of the 21st century, the *Cinema Art* journal probably paid the most attention to the outrageous *School* (2010) by V. Gai-Germanika.

D. Dondurey believed that the series *School* is a model of producer creativity in all its components. In working with the new “agenda”, with a meaningful context, with the moods of social strata, with television formats and their style, with the ambitiousness of the authors, with the casting, with the prejudices of the potential audience. However, it seems to me that the main thing in this project is an experiment with the accumulated, but not yet realized, sense of long-allowed freedom. With its borders, corridors, horizons. As well as the latest, although not explicit, technologies for promoting modern virtual products. *School* is probing the soil of impending or, more precisely, ripening content changes, not so much anticipating as mastering the possible ideological turns here. It’s not about the quality of “authenticity” or paradocumentary style, which seemed to be the most powerful and hooked on the live sound, a hand-held camera, unusual angles, cropped close-ups, details of everyday details that are unpleasant for many. Just an adequate and rather mild reflection of behavioral patterns and moral climate by progressive viewers was recorded as a plus. The disadvantages of this *School* are also obvious and have already been fixed: bias in the selection of material, no one teaches anything, the lack of minimal intellectual requests among the characters, flat dramaturgy. For all that, these explain little. Deprived of volume, real sharpness, but also, more importantly, textured falsehood, this series, almost for the first time in twenty years, explores the forms and boundaries of the truth allowed in the current serial practice (Dondurey, 2010: 5-6).

D. Dondurey was convinced that the *School* for the first time mastered, at least in the first approximation, many painful points in the everyday existence of future adults, and not children. That is why relationships with business partners, parents, sex, bosses, money, beliefs or lack thereof are so closely developed. Social inequality, distrust, betrayal, cooperation or deceit are all the same as in adults. Only much sharper, more painful, unbearable. And, finally, without the main color of domestic TV – crime (Dondurey, 2010: 7).

Y. Bogomolov, in his discussion of the *School*, went even further, arguing that in this series, the children of the children of today's children will judge not only the morals that prevailed in the Russian school at the beginning of the 21st century, but also about the mindset in Russian society, about its moral climate, about other things that are immaterial, intangible. And at the same time, they are extremely important for understanding where and where we are going. With the change in the social structure, with the collapse of the system, almost all the former institutions found their failure. Among them is the school with its command-administrative technology of education and upbringing. That balance between the generations of fathers and children, which was maintained in humane Soviet films, turned out to be sharply disturbed. The “school” of Germanicus is an

inverted command-administrative pyramid. She is extremely unstable, absolutely unreliable, torn apart by internal contradictions and destroyed by the influence of external factors – corruption, social unhappiness, interethnic conflicts, etc. Any wind of change can shake it and knock it down. It is even strange that it is still able to function somehow (Bogomolov, 2010: 27-28).

Six years later, the critic T. Kruglova noted that in relation to media texts, especially on the school theme, productive results are given by concepts and theories that make such phenomena as the postcolonial syndrome, gender transformations, trauma as an event and process, group and personal identity, representation of collective memory. Thus, “sociality” in the artistic fabric is not singled out as material, plot or typical circumstances, recognizable signs of the surrounding reality, as is typical for the classical art criticism approach, but is found at the level of optics of analysis that places the text in the coordinate system of a particular social theory (Kruglova, 2016: 138).

In this sense, media texts that critically talk about the modern Russian school can easily detect the collapse of the usual hierarchy and order that regulates relations between teachers and students. The authority of the teacher is extremely low and is not supported even at the level of formal adherence to the rules. The "process control" resource appears either exhausted or unreliable. In fact, teachers are not representatives of the authorities, translators of officially accepted cultural and social norms, and it is this function that united the classical school at all stages of its history – from the beginning of the New Age to the end of the industrial director society. Let us leave the question of the level of teaching, the quality of teacher training, their personal human status outside the brackets... Class – like a community – in a state of chaos, it begins to spontaneously establish its own understanding of order, almost always reproducing the signs of archaic societies gravitating towards shadow (mafia) or criminal structures. Relationships are built and regulated by the law of the strong. In relations between students, blackmail and bribery are widely used, a “scapegoat” is chosen, a rigid differentiation is established into dominant and subordinate, almost constantly in a state of liminality (humiliation and deprivation of rights, lack of personal significance). Most often, power is seized by an informal leader endowed with psychotypical signs of a charismatic, skillfully manipulating his adherents. It is such a leader who begins to resist the power of the teacher, and a duel unfolds between them, the outcome of which is always unpredictable. The teacher faces a difficult choice imposed on him by the current alignment of forces: either he is drawn into a state of confrontation, using an arsenal of military actions (threat, fear, punishment, deprivation of rights, etc.), or he tries to comply with the traditional educational mission based on the principles of persuasion, humanism, respect for the personality of the student. The authors of the films offer various ways out of the described situation, but the situation itself most often resembles a war, both in a “cold”, symbolic version, and quite “hot”, with a threat to health and life (Kruglova, 2016: 138-139).

It is curious that *Sparta* (2016) became a kind of peak of this kind of “school series” structure on Russian TV of the 21st century, where this kind of relationship reached almost the maximum, while in the cinema this trend was quite evident in *Teacher* (2015).

Reality show phenomenon

The article by the culturologist M. Lipovetsky “Reality show”, published in the *Cinema Art* journal in 2001, is a kind of vivid example, when the seemingly quite logical conclusions of the researcher are refuted in reality in just a few months.

Speaking about popular American reality shows, M. Lipovetsky at first reasonably noted that “the storm of interest in reality shows did not happen by chance at the beginning of the century. ... the point is rather that the postmodern concept of simulacrum and simulation became the property of mass culture by the end of the century. ... Reality shows are an attempt to go beyond simulation, an attempt to experience reality as such, albeit in experimentally built scenery, but “in truth”, and not pretend” (Lipovetsky, 2001: 47).

However, an unexpected (and soon completely refuted by the entire course of the development of Russian television) conclusion was made that reality shows like the American *Survivor*, the first season of which aired in 2000, “are completely inapplicable to Russia. It takes several generations to overeat with comfort and technology in order to want, at least for a short time, to a primitive cave, to paradise in a hut, or, even worse, to a barracks. All the difficulties of a desert island will be successfully replaced by a communal apartment and amenities in the yard. And if you add a drunken neighbor to them, then not a single survivor will definitely survive. The rejection of such a sacred thing of Western civilization as privacy, the rejection in which the main “zest” of *Temptation Island* is hidden, is also irrelevant for Russia: first one should

understand what this privacy is and why it is needed, and then try to implement it” (Lipovetsky 2001: 48).

However, the appearance of the Russian analogue of *Survivor*, which began broadcasting on the ORT channel on November 17, 2001, completely refuted the arrogant forecast of M. Lipovetsky, largely divorced from the dynamics of Russian TV development. The Russian *Survivor* called *The Last Hero* easily survived about a dozen seasons, attracting millions of viewers to television screens. And for this success, *The Last Hero* did not need at all to “overeat comfort and technology for several generations” and to deeply understand in all details what privacy is...

However, the first in a series of Russian sensational reality shows was the television project *Behind the Glass* (an analogue of the Western *Big Brother*). Its action took place in the Moscow hotel "Russia", in a specially equipped room with television cameras and mirrored glass. Three boys and three girls for 35 days (since October 27, 2001) were under television surveillance around the clock, without the right to talk on the phone and access the Internet. The daily broadcast of this reality show was on the TV-6 channel and on the Internet.

The success of the reality show *Behind the Glass* was huge, so it is logical that the *Cinema Art* journal dedicated a theoretical article to its phenomenon.

O. Aronson systematized the opinions of the mass audience about this TV show: 1) accusations of immorality, obscenity, playing on bad viewer instincts; 2) the belief that this something radically new, which goes beyond the scope of only a TV program, turns out to be something more, some kind of social experiment on society with the help of TV.

And here O. Aronson had a series of doubts: “What, didn’t television peep before? Didn't put your cameras everywhere you could? Didn't he get in where they didn't want to let him in? Yes, this has always been one of its main functions. And what is a live broadcast, in which “life itself” now and then declares itself in various little things that can no longer be edited, cut, edited? Moreover, the television camera is now hunting for these trifles, and they are becoming an integral part of not only live broadcasts, but also of many recorded programs... The desire for reality (the presence of “life itself” with the truth) is no less intense than the desire to be deceived, seduced by some pseudo-reality. Or more strictly: desire is something real that cannot be simulated, and it acts constantly as a substitute for visible (simulated) reality” (Aronson 2002: 117-118).

Further, O. Aronson very accurately noted that in the course of such a reality show, real people immediately turn out to be a product of iconic and cultural production, their behavior is extremely conditioned by quite specific patterns, and above all television patterns. Their behavior behind the glass depends so much on the goal (to please the majority of the audience and get the main prize), on the television cameras aimed at them, that the line between natural behavior and playing in public is practically erased. At the same time, the “game” itself is sometimes so clumsy, straightforward, uninventive, and the characters are so uninteresting that the director twitches all the time, trying to offer the inhabitants of the glassware one or another genre, plot, to force them to depict something, recite, engage in some kind of artistic amateur performance (Aronson, 2002: 118).

On the other hand, the characters of this kind of reality show, during their constant presence on the TV screen, inevitably undergo a transformation, they become stars, and they themselves feel it. A long presence on the TV screen makes a star out of a person almost automatically. The screen endows the characters with a degree of individuality that they themselves did not suspect, and the less the hero is a person, the more clichéd he is, the easier it is for him to become a star, since he is an ideal empty form of the audience's desires and expectations. Or, in other words, the more the hero is mechanized in obscenity, the more attractive he is, since he translates "obscene" into the category of a template. Art and television have a fundamentally different relationship with "obscene". Whereas for art it is expressed in sublimation, which alienates the subject from its own desire, for television the key one is desublimation, which returns the viewer to his own desire through stereotypical images, through the legalized obscene (Aronson, 2002: 121).

Moreover, O. Aronson was convinced that at the same time, both the critics of the show and its defenders are, oddly enough, at the same time. Only if the former react like hypocrites, seeing obscenity in the very act of peeping and not noticing that the modern screen industry has long been dealing with transformed forms of this type of obscenity, then the latter are clearly hypocritical, pretending that we have before us "life itself", becoming transparent, while it is obvious that "life itself" is narrowed to a well-defined framework. Within this framework, only what can be seen on the TV screen remains, but what is still not customary to look at in life. In this regard, it is not at all accidental that one of the most discussed topics is the demonstration of sexual intercourse... And in

this obscenity, that transgressive moment of any reality show, which makes them all so popular, manifests itself: a collision with repressed desires that we ourselves do not want to admit to ourselves. Sexuality is just the space where this is most evident. But you can also talk about different forms of violence, humiliation, betrayal and much more (Aronson, 2002: 118-119).

D. Golyenko-Wolfson (1969–2023) believed that the modern TV show no longer replaces (and does not crush) reality, abolishing its unpredictability. On the contrary, reality itself is assembled following the clichés and stereotypes of the TV show (Golyenko-Wolfson, 2002: 109). At the same time, the character of reality show, having appeared “sire, naked and transparent” in front of not conspiratorial and spy cameras, but frank cameras, gradually takes possession of the cunning levers of medial control and begins to command the collective attractions directed towards him... As a result external symbolic force – be it a syndrome of bourgeois taste or a publicized symptomatology of social well-being – receives again and again the prerogatives of manipulative interference in the molding of reality show, turning it into a glossy banner of liberal-humanistic ideology (Golyenko-Wolfson, 2002: 123-124).

A similar reality show *Behind the Glass*, but a much larger project *House/House-2*, aroused even greater interest among the mass audience.

The reality show *House* aired on the TNT channel from July 1 to November 1, 2003. It was replaced on May 11, 2004 by the *House-2* project, which is still on today.

Culturologist V. Zvereva believed that the multiplication of information sources in addition to the main goal – the best sales of products built around *House-2* – confirms the reality constructed in the show, makes its heroes the characters of a large multimedia story. This technique works well: the program is watched, argued about, which means it is attractive to advertisers. In the system of Russian television, the unspoiled audience is taught to love what is on offer... Statements about each hero contain certain generalizations that bring them under a certain recognizable type, so the game in a combination of pairs acquires the features of a more universal building of relations between the bearers of certain psychological, social, cultural characteristics. This function is usually performed by television films, and works of mass literature, novels for girls and boys. Here it is the same with real people with whom young viewers can relate, who are happy to indulge in "miscalculating the options" of relationships (Zvereva, 2007: 106-107).

Examining the long history of *House-2* broadcasts, V. Zvereva came to the conclusion that this reality show attracts viewers by the fact that it allows you to build a comfortable space commensurate with its real time... You get used to the heroes; they – like acquaintances and friends – come to the house for several years in a row at the same time. Viewers endow screen characters with their own meanings, see in them their own reflections or their opposites, potential friends, partners or rivals, invest dreams, fears, desires in them, complete the future scenarios of a happy or unhappy life. The format of a youth reality show contains great potential for presenting to the audience the views and patterns that society considers important for itself (Zvereva, 2007: 111).

Sociologist V. Kolotaev is convinced that *House-2* represents a private and, perhaps, the ultimate (if not to say transcendental) case of rebellion against the dictatorship of the mediating system of authorship, the figure of the creator, director, any censoring authority, endowed with the right to determine what the canonical the order of values and with what ideal the subject of culture should be identified. In *House-2* the viewer comes to the screen and demonstrates himself for himself, eliminating intermediaries in the form of teachers and authorities. The focus of the audience's attention is "simple" boys and girls with their inner world, ideas and, most often, meager cultural baggage (Kolotaev, 2009: 125).

V. Kolotaev emphasized that *House-2* is declared as a reality show, but the viewer is not presented with a completely pure reality. Scene sequences are edited, there are staged shots, the material is carefully edited, selected. Many situations are created artificially. The format forbids participants to talk about politics, books and movies, and discuss social problems. This narrows the already narrow range of topics for conversation. The participants play with life, reproducing, sometimes exaggeratedly, what they consider to be reality, and turn out to be closer to the “truth of life” than chronicles or documentaries. In *House-2* the so-called "simple person", always acting as a consumer of the spectacle, gets a chance to become the creator of the spectacle that reflects his world. The show really shows reality. In it, as in a mirror, an individual who can neither live nor play is reflected, in his usual state, which he considers the norm. The conversations of the youth of *House-2* are boring, rude and primitive. Phrases are full of utter clichés, nonsense and vulgarity. And it's scary. It is frightening, for example, that relationship builders do not realize at what

primitive level of life and interests they are. This is a level of rough archaism with a pronounced intra-group hierarchy, in which there are "old men" in the position of army "grandfathers" and newcomers in the role of "spirits". Relations between men and women are subject to strict patriarchal norms (Kolotaev, 2009: 125-126).

V. Kolotaev drew disappointing conclusions from all this: "The phenomenal success of the show, which has been comfortably existing in the media space for many years, is ensured mainly by the fact that the project developers successfully use the basic need of the indie house-2 type for their own purposes, the desire to be recognized. ... The fact of the existence and popularity of the project is a diagnosis of the disastrous state of society. This is a signal that something needs to be done not so much with the picture as with reality" (Kolotaev, 2009: 128-129).

The critic M. Davydova reminded the readers of the *Cinema Art* journal that at the beginning of the 21st century Russian spectators looked *Behind the glass* for the first time and were stunned. There, like fish in an aquarium, their compatriots swam: they ate, drank, joked, felt sad, indulged in the needs of a low life, made love... "Some of my sensitive compatriots complained in connection with this something like this: oh, how miserable and uncultured they ("glazers") are, and why should I, so gentle, look at them! Is that the point? Would it really be easier if corresponding members of the Academy of Sciences were suddenly behind the glass? Here everything is much worse. ... Now television exhibitionism and television voyeurism have become the norm. They were made the norm. And this is just one step toward replacing all other norms, because TV shows are, for the most part, designed to provoke the basest instincts of citizens. And on both sides of the screen. ... This ethical neutrality of TV corrupts minds and hearts worse than any pornography... After all, the monstrous vicious circle, when the supply of filth generates its demand, and the growing demand generates even greater, that is even more rating, filth, is worse than any censorship" (Davydova, 2005: 93-94).

Talk show phenomenon

Culturologist V. Zvereva wrote that the interest of the mass television audience in talk shows is not accidental: these programs have their own strengths and potentialities. The viewer, facing various difficulties, is given to understand that his situation is not unique, that he is not alone: there are still people who are concerned about close questions, and those who are ready to share their life experience with them. It is the talk show that allows you to simulate situations, experience them together, enlisting the support of a virtual team, and pronounce acceptable lines of behavior, which makes up for the current lack of authoritative judgments and instructions. Such programs are important for the construction of sociocultural ideas, since they discuss the norms and priorities of a particular community, distinguish between "good" and "bad" judgments and actions. At the same time, they offer a range of assessments, from which a person can choose those that are closer to his views. Talk shows reflect viewers' interest in someone else's life experiences. ... Talk shows are always focused not only on communication, but also on therapy. It is assumed that each program will offer some, albeit intermediate, solution to the problem. Potentially, such programs can serve as a liberation from common cultural fears and prejudices. Finally, like other television programs, talk shows should also entertain the audience by keeping them at the screens (Zvereva, 2005: 73).

On the other hand, as V. Zvereva correctly noted, the number of "strange people" in the talk show is impressive. These are heroes who do not follow accepted patterns or who are ready for a public demonstration of their unsightly sides, who commit immoral acts and admit it... Exceptions can problematize the norm, expand its boundaries. At the same time, they confirm a rule that is only temporarily called into question. Viewers are invited to alternately feel like members of either a liberal community, open to new lifestyles and ideas, or a narrow group of true value keepers. The opinion of the audience in the final usually tends to the golden mean (Zvereva, 2005: 79).

Musicologist and culturologist T. Cherednichenko (1955–2003), through content analysis, came to the conclusion that the filling of studios in household talk shows is divided into three categories: soloists-exhibitionists, discussing, advising and simply present extras, leading stars and stars or the experts... We do not remember the frank talk show characters. They seem to all have the same face. We remember the leaders who do not confess at all... Individuals turn out to be those who do not turn outward, but provoke the self-turning of others. Individuals who believe in their uniqueness drown in mass indistinguishability, but at their expense, psychological manipulators gain weight in separateness. In turn, market prominence will expose them as well,

so that human separateness simply has no one to define itself on. Individualism without the individual is the formula for current fame (Cherednichenko, 2002: 54, 58).

At the same time, according to T. Cherednichenko, in television talk shows renting personal existence to the spectacle does not just expand the scope of striptease. And even not so much expands as rethinks. Indeed, in a strip show, normally developed bodies are shown. On the contrary, talk shows talk mostly about behavioral excesses. Their norm is inferiority. Thus, the striptease, which began with the aestheticization of the bodily norm, continued with the savoring of spiritual deformity... If ugliness is not perceived as an exception, the impunity of a person and, accordingly, his ontological innocence is recognized by the totem. If the deviant behavior is no worse than usual, then the attitudes of shame are inactive. Thus, there is nothing to fear and no one to reproach. Everything is equally correct... A new generation of free people, presented by confessional television, – innocent (not innocent, namely innocent – not recognized as guilty) shameless. And besides, not original personalities, but manipulated puppets. So, a devalued society – individualism without individuality – innocent shameless... TV somehow does not give another model of society (Cherednichenko, 2002: 59).

Advertising phenomenon

In one of her articles in the *Cinema Art* journal, V. Zvereva emphasized that rhetorical rules are more important than substantive ones in building the world of advertising. At the same time, as a rule, it presents a picture of a liberal society, where there are ideal conditions for free choice and self-realization through consumption. This is an improved image of "myself", a space in which, according to the creators of advertising, I would like to live. The world of advertising is built as an invariably positive, stable world, in which differences and tolerance for the "other" are cultivated, where instant, conflict-free solutions to problems are possible, and life itself is open and disposed towards the individual... Freedom as a value is realized in advertising mainly in the sphere of everyday life, home improvement. Therefore, she appears in the choice of clothes, food, cosmetics, entertainment, and is endowed with a special status. Here, the values of the middle class are affirmed – the main custodian, producer and consumer of the modern lifestyle: a prosperous family, harmony in relationships with oneself, the opposite sex, children, parents, friends, work colleagues. All this can and should be realized through the acquisition of new products. The achievement model operates here: buy and overcome the next milestone, buy and improve yourself and your life (Zvereva, 2004: 8).

For all that, the advertising world, of course, is regulated: addressing the target groups, such messages often place people in the framework of conditional social roles. So, if a woman in advertising is seen as a "mother" or "wife", then this role instructs her to take care of children, her husband, comfort in the house, cleanliness of the kitchen, satiety of the cat. If she is a "modern woman", then her task is to "keep up" and "cope with situations", which helps her with a variety of goods – from chewing gum and deodorant to a credit card and mobile phone. If she is presented as "just a woman", then she is required to tirelessly improve her appearance and monitor her health. In the same way, a "man" works intensively, rests in a company, thinks about the well-being of the family, social prestige, his health, attractiveness. "Small child", as a rule, it acts as an object of care and a "witness" to the naturalness and naturalness of products. "Grandmothers and grandfathers" guarantee the continuity of tradition, the transfer of experience from generation to generation, connection with the non-urban world (Zvereva, 2004: 8).

Culturologist O. Timofeeva reasonably believed that modern advertising, which is more primitive in artistic (than feature films) terms, paradoxically managed to advance much further in the use of dream work. In particular, television advertising – an unprecedented case of total mass hallucination – offers the viewer a dream reality and uses the principles of cinematic storytelling for this. Thus, advertising characters are able to undergo a lot of transformations, placed in a completely different and arbitrarily changing space-time through montage (a tiny chewing lozenge rapidly rises into the sky and explodes in a colorful fountain in which one can distinguish individual, too bright, fruits). Elements of this narrative can be highly hypertrophied and appear with no apparent connection to the main storyline (usually abstract symbols, logos of this or that company, or a sprawling picture of a product, as well as distinctly spoken aloud proper names) (Timofeeva, 2004: 25).

Based on the results of sociological research, O. Timofeeva came to the conclusion that to the question about the attitude to advertising, many tend to answer that they do not pay any attention to it and in a situation of daily intervention, as it were, let it pass them by, they simply do not take it

seriously, they treat to it as an inevitable and almost imperceptible background. Or they pass through themselves, as if through a sieve, sifting out unnecessary information. However, it is precisely this ability of human perception to filter out unnecessary information that makes it defenseless against the influence of advertising as a stream of images. At first glance, this thesis seems paradoxical. But, looking more closely, we will find that such screening occurs against the background of some “clouding of consciousness”. The defense mechanism that it puts up against the shock of “truths” and images falling on a person, resembles a stupor. A clear consciousness, as it were, freezes, goes blind, dissipates, becomes absolutely permeable to external influences, maximally open... Therefore, the shocking details of commercials are often not remembered. The aggression of advertising, its inconsistency and inappropriateness in large quantities allow us to break down the resistance of healthy reflection and analysis. The commercial is a collective hallucination that we indulge in daily, many times a day. If advertising is a kind of dream, then everything should be understood in a completely opposite way. It is not advertising that exploits human feelings, but it is a person who exploits advertising in his own way, projecting his materialized sensuality onto it (Timofeeva, 2004: 27).

O. Timofeeva was convinced that advertising feels for us, instead of us and at the same time together with us. Or in other words: we feel advertising. This is a new sense organ that arose as a result of a natural mutation in the process of becoming a human viewer. Advertising objectifies the experience. Advertising is the same objective illusion, provided for everyone, but we enjoy it one by one. Our individual experience is molded into a single pattern, and it doesn't matter if it's a collective fantasy or not. The point is only that the individual itself as such is an illusion dreamed of by the collective unconscious, which is such a dream that – let's repeat this again – is watching us. The whole advertising world in its screaming absurdity is such a dream that our collective unconscious sees about us as individuals with consciousness (Timofeeva, 2004: 28).

Problems of Russian cinema: a sociological perspective

Analyzing the main trends in Russian cinema created in the 21st century, film critics and researchers A. Artyukh and D. Komm rightly noted that, thanks to state support, more than a hundred films of various genres began to be shot annually, aimed at both family and youth audiences. It would seem that such a rapid development of the industry should have been accompanied by a variety of author's ideological matrices. But exactly the opposite happens – the films of the so-called Russian mainstream are extremely similar to each other. It seems that someone has laid a general ideological scheme in the heads of their authors. For example, among films about a young hero you will not find films about angry youth, captured by the idea of freedom – neither existential, nor even sexual. There is a stream of fairy tales, infantile stories about the possibility of a miracle, which alone can shake up an inert, homeless life. It is as if the films try to suggest that it would be good to find a magic helper who can fulfill our deepest desires: to lead to a secure future, to more money, or to solve the problem with the figure that prevents career growth (Artyukh, 2008: 53).

At the same time, the difference between this kind of “management culture” and the usual bourgeois “gloss” is that it is aimed at young people. The ideal manager is always young and cheerful. Hence the predilection for fabulousness – after all, for a fairy tale, time and distance do not matter. But not all fairy tales are exploited, but only one: about Cinderella (Komm, 2008: 54). At the same time, management culture is the result of the formation of bourgeois values in Russia. This is not a subculture, not a marginalization of the mainstream culture. It conquers all spheres of life, plows up the minds of not only young, but also mature people. It is encouraged by the government, which is trying to bind society into a single system of action. It is presented as a successful life project. Cinema in this situation becomes not so much an instrument of ideology, as it was in Soviet times, when ideology was descended from above, as one of the effective technologies for planning (management) of life based on a flexible system of prohibitions and coercion, i.e. on biopolitical censorship (Artyukh, 2008: 55).

In this context, Krasnov wrote that although the space of domestic cinema is not necessarily subject to the rules of state ideology, it certainly depends on the current state of affairs and viewer demand. In this regard, commercial Russian cinema is hardly provocative or at all offensive; it is free of potential profanations and poignant social themes. And yet we have to admit that even these “soft” works are unexpectedly subject to contradictory, or rather, even paradoxical interpretations. The illusory pluralism in the interpretation of works of art is in fact dualistic, as is their function: works are either a product of consumption or an instrument of political propaganda. Perhaps we

can stop at the frame of this metanarrative, because in an ideological sense, commercial films in the Russian industry are also dualistic: they are all politicized or "consumerist" to some degree (Krasnov, 2018: 83-84).

Politics and media

In the 21st century, the general editorial vector of the *Cinema Art* journal swung quite sharply (especially after the Ukrainian events of 2014) towards the opposition to the authorities. One of the clearest evidence of this is the publication of an extremely politicized, pro-maidan article by D. Desyaterik (Desyaterik, 2014: 38-49) and similar texts.

Literary critic and TV presenter A. Arkhangelsky was convinced that the politicization of society, as well as the artistic environment, is inevitable in the new conditions. The artist will have to decide on the attitude to the basic concepts: freedom, state, power... Today, the artist has to decide for himself the question of freedom in conditions much less comfortable than five and ten years ago. But without resolving this issue, Russian culture will not move anywhere further (Arkhangelsky, 2014: 61).

Regarding the Ukrainian events of 2014 and their reflection in the Russian media, sociologist D. Dondurey wrote that the ways of formatting the semantic space on TV were: 1) control over the agenda (the topic of Ukraine has become absolutely dominant on any information platforms of the Russian Federation with a radical increase in the scale of the event being presented (the amount of time allotted for this, the size and detail of the plots, their genre diversity); 2) an almost identical circle of speakers of political television talk shows (the same 15-20 people moved from channel to channel, becoming national speakers on any detail of Ukrainian events, emphasizing their moral and ideological rejection due to the illegitimacy, nationalism and anti-Russian vector of the Kyiv authorities); 3) unambiguous interpretation of what is happening, relying on the emotional use of imperial archetypes and ignoring the economic and political-sanctions consequences of Russia's intervention in Ukraine (Dondurey, 2014: 29-31).

Of course, one can argue with the last statement of D. Dondurey, since in addition to a fairly stable group of experts defending a pro-Russian position in the conditions of the Ukrainian crisis, Ukrainian and Western journalists, experts regularly appeared on the leading channels of Russian television, expressing completely opposite political views.

Sociologist A. Borodina studied the ratings of the Ukrainian topic on Russian TV (Borodina, 2014: 107-111) and drew the attention of the journal's readers to the fact that in March 2014 news releases of state-owned TV channels for the first time in several years became the most popular programs both in Moscow and in the country as a whole (up to 25 % of the national TV audience). At the same time, such a hype around information formats was associated exclusively with the events in Ukraine and, above all (Borodina, 2014: 107).

In 2016, sociologist K. Bogoslovskaya published an article analyzing the results of group discussions with Russian TV viewers (the study was conducted in the spring of 2015, nine focus groups were held in three cities, three each in Moscow, Yaroslavl, Irkutsk, men and women aged 18-65 participated in the study) with the aim clarifying the mass perception of Russian-Ukrainian events (Bogoslovskaya, 2016: 59).

The conducted sociological analysis allowed K. Bogoslovskaya to come to the conclusion that the trust of Russian viewers in television messages is caused by their desire to return:

- from the disunity of recent years, when every man is for himself, to unity, to the values of kindness and mutual assistance;
- from individual success, which, with some effort, makes it possible to earn money for a car-apartment-cottage, but gives little to the soul, to that "general" that continues the work of fathers and grandfathers;
- from the feeling of "second-class" Russia to its primacy, to the increase of its wealth; it is based on a deep sense of Russian geographical scale and immensity (Bogoslovskaya, 2016: 66).

At the same time, K. Bogoslovskaya emphasized that her research over the past ten to fifteen years has shown a huge demand from the population for national ideals, an integral ideology and patriotism (Bogoslovskaya, 2016: 68).

As for the assessment of the mass Russian audience of Ukrainian events, focus group surveys showed that there was a great similarity with the political position expressed on Russian federal channels (Bogoslovskaya, 2016: 66-67).

K. Bogoslovskaya was sure that in Russia the success of television influence on the majority of the population is explained by the fact that viewers experience a feeling of insecurity and they

have a feeling that they have been “attacked” by an alien ideology. Hence follows the desire to hide in a “powerful state” (Bogoslovskaya, 2016: 68).

Assessing the same political events in the socio-cultural context, A. Arkhangelsky wrote that after the events on the Maidan, “the Russian system of propaganda through the media in a short time created a kind of third reality. To get into it, you don’t even need to turn on your imagination: just turn on the TV, ”although “the advent of the Internet and, as a result, social networks... seemed to forever solve the problem of scarcity and accessibility of information” (Arkhangelsky, 2016: 113).

Unfortunately, further in his article, A. Arkhangelsky presented this media “third reality” in an extremely simplified, if not primitive way, as a “hermetic, self-sufficient, stable quasi-system of ideas” (Arkhangelsky, 2016: 114).

A. Arkhangelsky believed that the media "third reality" turned out to be so attractive to the majority of the population, as it returns the mass audience "to a comfortable (infantile) state", when in order to have a "whole" and, most importantly, a simplified picture of the world, a person ready to sacrifice reality. Official propaganda offers a world in which there is no need to bear individual responsibility, to establish difficult contact with the world, but, on the contrary, to put up barriers to explain everything. A person entrusts personal freedom to the state – in return, receiving the illusion of his absolute rightness (Arkhangelsky, 2016: 115-116).

In our opinion, in this case, A. Arkhangelsky used the manipulative technique of the “default figure” tested for centuries, pulling Russia out of the global political context and attributing the phenomenon of the “third reality” exclusively to Russian media, while modern mass media have no boundaries, and the necessary power A "third reality" is easily created in any country on our planet, including such "strongholds of democracy" so beloved by liberals as the United States and the European Union. The subsequent confrontational political events that unfolded in 2022 once again clearly proved this (although there was a huge amount of evidence for this both in the 20th century and in the first two decades of the 21st century).

Phenomenon of the Internet and Cyberspace

In connection with the massive arrival of the Internet in Russia in the 21st century, the *Cinema Art* journal began to regularly publish theoretical articles on this phenomenon.

Back in 2002, D. Golyenko-Wolfson (1969–2023) was concerned that the authoritarian dominance of telecommunications undermines and invisibly abolishes the garbage factor, the factor of an insurmountable superficial barrier that hinders and hinders communicative exchange... The communicative space, cluttered with compressed information garbage, its strata and deposits, turns into dump of garbage informational enzymes... The ultra-fast movement of information stocks along communicative trajectories disables, loosens the mechanisms of filtering, selecting and screening out garbage. As a result, unrejected masses of information rush about and collide in the communicative field, leveling each other, losing the indicators of a coherent, full-fledged system of knowledge. Settling, condensation of waste recyclables, residual "trinkets" and "rattles" of information, useless "antiques" transform the modern communicative space into a blurred zone of absolute indistinguishability, whose vague outlines and constantly vibrating contours can be designated with a pun "trash-civilization" tag. Modern trash civilization involves both the glorification of garbage as an unaccountable environment for bioenergetic freedom, and its denigration, its presentation in the form of a vitally dangerous, negative matter (Golyenko-Wolfson, 2002: 87-88).

Ten years later, D. Golyenko-Wolfson turned to another acute Internet topic: demotivation and memes, proving that demotivators are combined into thematic groups depending on their ideological and content orientation: social, environmental, political, lyrical and directly humorous... Demotivators and other Internet memes, due to their linguistic nature, are extremely tied to the local socio-political context in which they are produced... Internet memes are no longer amusing cartoons or caricatured responses to reality. They claim to acquire a new role strategy, namely, to become a means not only of documenting, but also of eradicating social problems and shortcomings... Today, Internet memes and political demotivators express new ethical attitudes and aesthetic trends that shape the “art of protest” and its socio-political trajectories. Internet memes allow the masses of users (united by common protest impulses) to stand up for the assertion of their own political truth on the basis of grassroots democracy and network interaction, as well as indulge in grassroots (and sometimes avant-garde) artistic practices for the sake of comprehensive social reform (Golyenko-Wolfson, 2012: 92 -93, 97).

At the same time, despite all the “garbage” and “demotivational” problems, the Internet in the 21st century has already covered about five billion people on the planet and continues to increase its audience every year.

Meanwhile, V. Bokser reasonably noted that in the 21st century, the intensive development of the Internet, including social networks, gave rise to an unfounded conviction that in the omnipotence and invincibility of Facebook and Twitter, and network technologies themselves were presented as an irreversible and universal antidote against the control of social processes and socially significant information by authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. There was a conviction that in the fight for minds such an outdated brainwashing tool as television is hopelessly inferior to the Internet and social networks. Let fake pictures “for grandmothers” be shown on the box, but genuine witnesses with smartphones will most likely be at the scene of any events. The true picture will immediately spread across Facebook, and the entire Internet audience will know how it really was. And having learned, he will draw appropriate, progressive conclusions. All that remains is to be patient (not long at all!) when the TV audience remains in the clear minority (Bokser, 2015: 74).

One of such premature and idealized approaches to the role of media (including the Internet) in society can be found in the article by A. Kachkaeva, who in 2013 argued that when tablet computers fall into the hands of billions of children on Earth, working with them will gradually completely change approach to understanding the world. Thus, digital technologies not only contribute to the development of self-learning, but also help to form the skill of multitasking, stimulate self-expression, and transform the very principles of human behavior in the modern world... .. It is already obvious to everyone that networks have a new power. They are able to connect two worlds, two traditional and new forms of communication, although this connection relies on the already established practice of interaction and complementarity of the two models of communication. But the main thing that is worth keeping in mind is that it is social media – new communication channels – that are gradually becoming the main drivers of change (Kachkaeva, 2013: 94-95).

However, V. Bokser made very convincing arguments that the above “optimistic” theses are nothing more than a collection of myths:

Myth one: the Internet and social networks contribute to the promotion of pro-modernization values and accelerate the processes of globalization. In fact, the entire history of mankind teaches that any achievement of progress is used for anti-modernization purposes as successfully as it is for modernization.

Myth two: The Internet as such, and especially social networks, are effective tools for consolidating public opinion. They contribute to the integration of views through the unimpeded and instant dissemination of truthful, uncensored information. [Although in fact] the purpose of networks is not so much to promote the integration/consolidation of the views of a significant part of the society, but to be able to differentiate on similar grounds with the subsequent “gluing” of relatively homogeneous virtual communities.

Myth three: The Internet and social networks provide unlimited freedom to choose sources of information, which means that citizens will be inclined to take advantage of this advantage and their choice will be more rational and unbiased. In fact, this corny contradicts the laws of marketing, psychophysiological patterns of perception and information theory (Bokser, 2015: 74-75).

Thus, television in the 21st century (especially in Russian conditions) as a whole retains its influence on the mass audience (and on the synchronization of public opinion), including through the broadcast of its programs on the Internet.

A theoretical article by film critic E. Maisel was devoted to one of the notable phenomena of the Internet of the 21st century – LiveJournal (LJ).

E. Maisel began his analysis of this phenomenon with the paradoxical thesis that LiveJournal in the era of its rise almost resembled communist space. Indeed, based on the definition of communism as a socio-economic formation based on public ownership of the means of production, without division into social classes, without money and implementing the principle “from each according to his ability to each according to his needs”, it is hard not to notice that LiveJournal was just such a place. A place that its inhabitants jointly and voluntarily built, without receiving any other dividends for this, except for the pleasure of the results of their work and the opportunity to use them in the future. With one, we repeat, a tiny exception – all this wealth (texts, images,

archives, communication links, etc.) remained, nevertheless, in private ownership. This was noted in the User Agreement that each user signed when registering (Maisel, 2009: 137).

As in other social networks, in LiveJournal a completely new, unique type of Russian person was born and grew up – a “blogger”... Is a unit of the information (and “post-information”) society, the recipient and transmitter (distributor) of “actual information”, he the very receiver who is at the same time a transmitter... The mobilization component is also respected – since a popular blogger is in no way inferior to a public leader in terms of his ability to mobilize his audience (thereby brilliantly illustrating the deep crisis of the institution of representative democracy in the society of the spectacle) (Maisel, 2009: 141). But further, the more the ideal signs of an ideal media are realized in LiveJournal (bloggers are decentralized, uncontrolled, mobile, etc.), the more obvious is the dominance of affect over meaning in it, and with it the rightness of Baudrillard, long before any Internet, insisted that the media were destroying rather than developing communication (Maisel, 2009: 142).

Although in the end, LiveJournal soon gave way as a result of stiff competition to other social networks, similar trends can be noted in any of them, and the initial optimistic and idealistic interpretations of social networks proved illusory, and the social networks themselves have largely turned into spaces of harsh political confrontation, fakes and network garbage.

In 2021, E. Maisel turned to an even more vibrant and influential Internet phenomenon: YouTube. Here, E. Maisel, in our opinion, quite reasonably noted that over the past quarter century the Internet has changed too, and quite a lot. From a space of scientists, geeks and freelance artists, from an environment full of creativity, hope and enthusiasm to assert the independence of cyberspace from state control... The Internet has gradually transformed into a sphere managed by managers, into a global – regulated, commercialized and mostly translucent – extension of the offline... Like Facebook, YouTube, once a fashion startup for the university public, has become the actual embodiment of this new, police (legal) commercial model of the Internet, which has gone from primary anarchism to a society of control, and now from a society of control to an increasingly confident biopolitics, personalizing news, advertisements and films for each user. Having started out as a youth platform for publishing and promoting music videos and home videos, today YouTube is not just one of the most intense centers of global digitization, but also a media outlet that competes with television with confidence (Maisel, 2021: 27).

One cannot but agree with E. Maisel when he writes that on YouTube the famous passivity of the moviegoer, the scopophile and the voyeur, the pervert, immobilized in a darkened cinema hall, has also undergone corrections. In the YouTube cinema, we can stop watching at any moment, rewind the movie, play it any number of times at any minute, finally, we can download the video file and subject it to our own manipulations and use in order to produce our own movie. From a spectator, we turn almost into a co-author, into a VJ, the degree of our inevitable active involvement is much higher than in a traditional film screening (Meisel, 2021: 29).

At the same time, it seems premature to us to believe (as film critics S. Taroshchina, 2020: 13-21 and K. Tarakhanov, 2018: 313, for example, believe) that by the beginning of the 2020s, the Internet had finally defeated television, since there together a lot of money goes with advertising, and there Internet platforms produce the most talked about films, including “new documentaries”. In fact, television in Russia has so far lost popularity only among a relatively small segment of the advanced (mainly youth) audience, and in general it still surpasses the Internet in its influence.

At the same time, with all the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet, one can agree with the opinion of film critic and culturologist K. Razlogov (1946–2021) that adherents of mass communications and information high-speed roads make the world space even more multifaceted, creating a technological basis for the formation of cultural communities of the most diverse types: from continental and national to regional, socio-demographic, sexual and translocal (Razlogov, 2006: 60).

Film critic and researcher A. Artyukh devoted one of her theoretical studies to the problem of cyberspace, emphasizing that the idea of cyberspace destroys the dichotomy of cybernetic technology and the human sphere, since each computer exists in consensus with the nervous system of its user. Cyberspace is both pictures on a screen and a nervous system directly connected to a computer network; this is a sign of the total triumph of technology: deeply intimate, thanks to biotechnological implants, existing not outside, but inside the body and brain... The transuniversal existence of cyberspace expands, liberates consciousness like drugs. It provides the possibility of

multivillage, hyper-dimensions, an enchanting look at things from different points of view (Artyukh, 2002: 53).

Further, A. Artyukh, in our opinion, quite reasonably wrote that limiting the fantastic idea of cyberspace with the concept of a “global information network”, users are trying to master the newly discovered “unknown lands” using the most advanced principles of colonial policy. The computer screen turns into a kind of mirror reflection of the society of late capitalism with its new digital economy, net-politics... For users, cyberspace is not a world of dreams, but a place for creating fandoms and a mirror of the society that masters it... The user position is an alternative to the romantic myth of the information age, the myth of freedom of information, which owes much to the first hackers, who were called collective dreamers of a universal computer utopia... The shamanic position is based on fundamentally different laws. Shamanism is alien to the idea of the limits of knowledge; it was the belief in its infinity that contributed to the search for knowledge in divine revelations, ecstatic visions, and dreams. The idea of cyberspace as an electronic hallucination organically fit into the mysterious spheres, possibly hiding secret knowledge (Artyukh, 2003: 91-92).

In this context, A. Artyukh wrote that the cinematography of technomisticism responds precisely to digital esotericism. Here the directors work using motifs and matrices of various mythologies, constructing a certain universal mythical image of the modern high-tech world. This construction is accompanied by a search for ways to update the mythopoetic language, as well as a new edition of the concept of "mystical experience", which is now interpreted as a kind of technological experience. The 1960s and 1970s were also accompanied by an explosion of mystical cinema in Europe and the United States, but modern film technology focuses on other ways of visionary based on new technologies. Unlike the previous generation of cinematic mystics, who sought the possibility of reality through occult methods and rituals based on the triad soul-nature-cosmos, modern technomysts build their visionary experience on another triad: psycho-bio-techno, which fits into the posthumanist or cyborgian paradigm (Artyukh, 2003: 94).

4. Conclusion

The authors of sociological articles in *Cinema Art* journal have managed to identify the main trends characteristic of the 21st century through a thorough analysis of the film process:

- the system of state support for film production in Russia began to have a negative impact on the situation with film distribution: the Ministry of Culture's financing of only the end result – film production – was reduced to a control and regulatory process, to the implementation of an economic function in the interests of a narrow circle of film producers, who make money from (almost) gratuitous state financial support in the film production process; producers do not care at all about the artistic quality or the distribution fate of the films;

- the Russian media's reliance on sensationalism, scandals, crime, vulgarity, etc. (in the pursuit of audience ratings) is palpable;

- a content analysis of stories from highly-rated media formats allows us to identify the following system of content attitudes for the perception of media texts: the danger and aggressiveness of the surrounding world; the need to live for today; the sphere of a person's private life becomes a material that can arouse enormous interest in the mass audience, etc;

- at the same time, the demand of a significant part of the mass audience for the producers of media texts is different: show us society in such a way that we would like to live in it;

- Russia (almost) does not have an artistically trained audience, so entertainment media texts predominate;

- the media not only inform, educate, and entertain; the media are a powerful tool for shaping millions of people's tastes, social samples, patterns, feelings, attitudes, ideology, and so on, and ultimately, national consciousness;

- the majority of Russian television viewers today make up approximately two-thirds of the urban population and unite older, less educated groups (this is the most numerous and permanent audience, dependent on television in terms of information, values, ideology) and relatively younger contingents, peripheral in the volume and nature of resources, in the type of orientations. They are characterized by a relatively low level of education, a small amount of their own financial resources, because of the dependence on more accessible and cheaper television;

- against this background there is an increase in the volume and projects of television series production, including Russian online platforms; this production is largely subject to the following

stereotypes: characters' feelings are presented in close-up, without half-tones; key scenes contain suspense; the intrigue is tense and based on fairy-folklore stories; socio-cultural and historical, patriotic significance of the theme;

- Russian viewers' trust in these kinds of media texts is caused by their desire to return: from the disunity of recent years to unity, to the values of kindness and mutual assistance; from individual success to that "common" that continues the work of fathers and grandfathers; from the feeling of Russia's "second-rate" to its paramountcy, to the multiplication of its wealth;

- against this background, the Internet has significantly transformed the media: a substantial segment of the youth audience has formed, which (almost) has no contact with television, but is in the field of social networks and other products of modern information technology; the most active representatives of this audience become the authors of media texts, many of which, being very successful, attract advertisers.

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