

Коммуникативные и кинематографические приёмы модернизации образа Александра Пушкина в фильме Феликса Умарова «Пророк. История Александра Пушкина»

Communicative and Cinematographic Techniques of Modernizing the Image of Alexander Pushkin in Felix Umarov's Film *The Prophet. The Story of Alexander Pushkin*

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Аннотация

В статье рассматривается фильм Феликса Умарова 2024 г. «Пророк. История Александра Пушкина» как современный акт коммуникативной и культурной интерпретации образа Александра Пушкина, «канонизированной» фигуры русской литературы для аудитории XXI в. Настоящая статья носит синкретичный характер, определяя, *каким образом* современные коммуникативные и кинематографические приёмы (прежде всего, интеграция современной музыки, хореографических эпизодов и динамичного монтажа) функционируют как психологические инструменты и кинетико-кинестетические (невербальные) средства, переводящие внутренние конфликты личности Александра Пушкина в визуально-аудиальный язык, доступный современному зрителю. Образ великого поэта, традиционно представляемый как монументальный и почти мифологизированный национальный символ, переосмысливается через используемые режиссёром коммуникативные и кинематографические приёмы его [образа] модернизации и, определенные репрезентативные средства: Александр Пушкин в литературе и кино нередко изображался как отстранённый, безупречный гений. Фильм Ф. Умарова нарушает этот устоявшийся нарратив, демонтируя статичный образ поэта и реконструируя его как эмоционально уязвимого, политически ограниченного и внутренне противоречивого человека.

Опираясь на теории экранной репрезентации, позволяющие установить механизмы представления реальности и образа (или медиаобраза), а также на психологию музыкального восприятия и концепцию исторической периодизации, формируется современный визуальный образ. Особое внимание уделяется изображению личностных и социальных отношений Александра Пушкина с Наталией Гончаровой, его сложному взаимодействию с императором Николаем I и эмоциональным последствиям восстания декабристов. Исполнение Юрой Борисовым, молодым, но уже ставшим известным среди широкого круга любителей кино, роли Александра Пушкина рассматривается как центральный элемент гуманизации образа поэта и как фактор, обеспечивающий эмоциональную реалистичность стилистических экспериментов фильма и «новое» прочтение известного национального символа.

Ключевые слова: Александр Пушкин, национальный образ, режиссёрская идея, коммуникативные и кинематографические приёмы, культурная идентичность, исторический миф, киноязык, средства репрезентации.

Abstract

This article examines Felix Umarov's 2024 film *The Prophet. The Story of Alexander Pushkin* as a contemporary act of communicative and cultural interpretation of the image of Alexander Pushkin as a "canonized" figure of Russian literature for a twenty-first-century audience. The present study has a syncretic character, determining how modern communicative and cinematographic techniques (primarily the integration of contemporary music, choreographic episodes, and dynamic editing) function as psychological instruments and kinetic-kinesthetic (non-verbal) means that translate the internal conflicts of Alexander Pushkin's personality into a visual-auditory language accessible to the modern viewer.

The image of the Great Poet, traditionally presented as a monumental and almost mythologized national symbol, is reinterpreted through the communicative and cinematographic techniques of his modernization used by the director, as well as through specific representational means: Alexander Pushkin in literature and cinema has often been depicted as a detached, flawless genius. F. Umarov's film disrupts this established narrative by dismantling the static image of the poet and reconstructing him as an emotionally vulnerable, politically constrained, and internally contradictory individual.

Drawing upon theories of screen representation that make it possible to establish mechanisms of representing reality and image (or media image), as well as upon the psychology of musical perception and the concept of historical periodization, a contemporary visual image is formed. Special attention is paid to the depiction of personal and social relationships: Alexander Pushkin's relationship with Natalia Goncharova, his complex interaction with Emperor Nicholas I, and the emotional consequences of the Decembrist uprising. The performance of Alexander Pushkin by Yura Borisov, a young actor who has already become widely known among cinema audiences, is considered as a central element in humanizing the image of the poet and as a factor ensuring the emotional realism of the film's stylistic experiments and a "new" interpretation of the well-known national symbol.

Keywords: Alexander Pushkin, national image, director's concept, communicative and cinematographic techniques, cultural identity, historical myth, cinematic language, representational means.

Introduction

In the multicultural space, contemporary Russian cinematographic heritage occupies a special place as an “instrument of dialogue and mutual understanding between different cultures” [16, 2024, p. 421]. Cinema is entrusted with educational and formative functions of representational means that help shape and strengthen national identity, transmit cultural images and symbols of the country, and comprehend and evaluate historical and human experience.

The subject of the study is cinematic language, including communicative and cinematographic techniques used by directors to achieve their artistic conception.

In the course of the research, specific objectives are addressed: to present the scientific and methodological foundation on this topic; to expand the established perception of the national cultural symbol through the language of cinema and its audiovisual series; to supplement the paradigmatic list of special cinematic techniques by describing communicative techniques and non-verbal means; to clarify the artistic conception of the filmmakers; to consider the image of the Great Genius within specific realities and historical events without destroying the cultural myth about him, but refining and modernizing it.

The relevance of the study is confirmed by the increased interest in the language of contemporary cinema [18], the “language of the current moment” [12], the history of cinematography, as well as the necessary communicative conditions, forms of communication, representational means, and various techniques of conveying the director’s conception [1; 3; 11; 22; 17, and many others], or the artistic idea of the narrator.

The novelty of the research is determined by a comprehensive analysis of the cinematic language of contemporary film art, which made it possible to identify communicative and special techniques of interpreting “past” reality and its transformation through the screen, where the world and its characters are conveyed; representational means reveal the image of the national symbol.

Methods and Research Material

The research material is practice-oriented and makes it possible to establish interdisciplinarity at the level of film studies, film pedagogy, the history of cinema, media linguistics, linguoculturology, genre theory, and the language of specialized spheres.

The analysis of the film material selected as the subject of the study is of interest for several reasons: 1) it occupies a worthy place among currently popular film works that have become objects of special description among journalists, film critics, and specialized scholars; 2) the “special” audiovisual cinematic language used by the creators of the film is noteworthy; 3) the completed

film material does not destroy the image of the national genius but reveals it, conveying the pure image of the Great Poet endowed with the qualities of an emotionally receptive person.

The principal methods employed include the general scientific method of media-philosophical analysis, the interpretative method, the method of analysis of visual (screen) arts and film images; the comparative method of different types of cinematic language; the cognitive method; and the method of conceptual analysis of the semantic space.

Research Results and Discussion

Alexander Pushkin in Russia is not merely a poet but a national symbol, solid and immovable, powerful and “indestructible.” For many generations, in schools, museums, and classical cinema, he was presented as the founder of the modern Russian language and Russian literature. His image became so mythologized that the real, complex individual, the linguistic personality, remained in the shadows. Traditional biographical films usually presented a “statuesque” Alexander Pushkin: “wise,” “heroic,” and “somewhat detached” from his own genius. They focused on major historical events and famous works but rarely allowed the viewer to feel what it was like to be him — to love, to rage, to create, and to fall into despair.

Felix Umarov’s 2024 film *The Prophet. The Story of Alexander Pushkin* [21] destroys this myth and image. The film became not merely a “restoration” of the established image of the Great Poet but a full-scale project of its modernization and reconstruction. The film represents a screen text that uses, on the one hand [14], an apparently “raw,” emotional, and often chaotic language of contemporary cinema, and on the other hand, innovative use of musical scenes and modern choreography. Such a “non-standard” combination of communicative and cinematographic techniques in cinematic language is used to dismantle the myth of genius. In its place, an image is created of a person who reacts vividly to various events yet remains respected — “passionate,” politically “angered,” creatively “tormented,” and emotionally “vulnerable.”

The film does not destroy the significance of Alexander Pushkin’s national image but transforms and modernizes it, performing a kind of “cultural magic,” extracting the poet from the dusty past and making him realistic and vitally relevant to a new generation raised on music videos, psychological dramas, and dynamic storytelling. The film represents a bold experience of balancing between “artistic invention and historical authenticity,” allowing the director’s imagination to synchronize the image of the Great Genius — Alexander Pushkin — and “revive” him [18]. It demonstrates how Felix Umarov’s creative

directorial conception and Yura Borisov's courageous acting, using various means and techniques of twenty-first-century cinema, present the image of the Great Genius, the national symbol, not "as an icon," but as a "human being."

Synchronization of the National Myth

First and foremost, *The Prophet* changes the story itself [17]. The very title of the film determines the course of its narrative development and shifts the focus from the impeccable literary image of Alexander Pushkin to his impeccably complex human nature — the "origin." The film declares that the poet can be understood only through the perception and comprehension of his emotional states, experienced feelings through situations and events — "passions," "conflicts," and "pain."

For example, the central line of the screen text becomes Alexander Pushkin's personal relationship with his wife Natalia Goncharova. In earlier biographies, she often appeared as a "beautiful background figure" or, worse, as the "culprit" of his tragic death. The director makes their relationship the "burning" core of Alexander Pushkin's emotional world: before the audience appears not a "calm" muse but an "all-consuming," "complex," and ultimately "destructive" love.

In one of the key scenes — at the ball — the emotional speech and behavioral tension of the hero is conveyed: their conversation is "tense," "filled with jealousy," and unspoken "accusations." The cinematographic technique of close-up (the camera approaching the hero's face) shows not a "confident" genius but a man "tormented" by insecurity and obsession. This representation resonates with Boris Vasiliev's traditional view of the "spiritual path" of Alexander Pushkin [22], which the screen text visualizes as a "road" full of emotional trials and overcoming. The creative energy of the great Russian poet is closely intertwined with his explosive "feelings."

The film also reinterprets Pushkin's official relations with authority, primarily Emperor Nicholas I. The ruler's image is presented ambiguously: a man issuing decrees, the poet's personal censor and "manager." In a powerful, claustrophobic scene, the emperor summons Pushkin for a "conversation": the space is chamber-like, almost intimate; Nicholas I's speech is "soft" (he addresses him by name), yet his words are "chains," "unfreedom," since he offers financial support and protection but demands control over every published word. In this situation, the director shows Pushkin not as a romantic "rebel" delivering a fiery speech but as a "driven animal," forced to sacrifice his "pride" and agree. The viewer feels the suffocating "pressure" on the Great Poet under dictatorship — pressure that poisons both creativity and personality.

Moreover, the film shows that major historical events were not merely a background but a personal tragedy: the

Decembrist uprising led to the execution and exile of his liberal friends, and Alexander wanders alone through the frozen night streets of St. Petersburg. There is no dialogue — only the "crunch of snow" and the exhausted "expression" of the actor's face (Yura Borisov), conveying experienced emotions [5; 6; 9; etc.], where guilt, grief, and rage are mixed. History becomes a "wound."

Contemporary Cinematographic Techniques: Music, Dance, and Bodily Expressiveness

1. Music as the Soundtrack of a Rebellious Consciousness

The use of such expressive music in the screen text is a bold directorial step demonstrating the authorial style and a certain "break" with established tradition of conveying "time/epoch." It is not merely orchestral accompaniment but a combination of modern genres functioning as Pushkin's inner monologue.

The "duel rehearsal" scene is illustrative: the sound of crossing swords and "heavy" breathing gradually "disappears," replaced by a modern aggressive rhythm; the tempo is "fast," "sharp," "tense"; the hero's movements synchronize with the music, turning into choreography of "violence." Though not realistic, it is emotionally truthful. As noted, "music in cinema can not only accompany but also evoke and represent emotion" [10].

Another musical episode shows Pushkin's "loneliness" at his writing desk, accompanied by a melancholic modern composition. The lyrics reflect "isolation" and "longing," reinforcing subjective perception [19; 15]. This technique modernizes the image of the "genius," reducing the two-hundred-year distance between poet and viewer.

2. Dance and Choreography as Emotional Metaphor

The ball becomes a space of psychological struggle. In the waltz scene, initial harmony gradually turns into tension; camera work "accelerates" rotations, movements become "sharper," and the dance becomes perceived as "struggle," metaphorically reflecting the dynamics of personal relations — externally "beautiful," internally "destructive."

The director also employs conditional, non-realistic plasticity — a "dance of objects" (papers, ink in water). During moments of creative uplift, sheets of paper "swirl" like a vortex; ink resembles dark "clouds of thought." These visualizations depict creativity as a "spontaneous" and "uncontrollable" force.

3. Acting and the Language of the "Body"

The artistic solutions would be impossible without the actor's performance. Yura Borisov's Pushkin is "mobile," emotionally "saturated," "active." His reflection appears in actions, states, and portrait reactions: rapid movements; despair; energetic dances; passionate love. The actor's face conveys nuances — "irony," "jealousy," childish "resentment," deep "sadness."

His “vitality” is especially significant: often shown “sweaty,” “disheveled,” “emotionally exposed.” The performance conveys not an “abstract genius” but a “human being” who is a “genius.”

Formation of a New Cultural Identity

The film creates a new version of the national symbol: Pushkin appears not as a calm and wise “national hero,” but as a “rock-star rebel” — “passionate,” “self-destructive,” “politically frustrated,” “emotional,” and “open.” As T. Barta notes in *Screening the Past* (1998)[8], cinema does not merely depict history but shapes its interpretation according to contemporary needs. The film creates an image of Pushkin for an era of “anxiety,” “individualism,” and “emotional openness.”

From the perspective of the “circuit of culture” model, the film acts as a production of new representation creating new identity.

Conclusions

Felix Umarov’s film can be considered a revolutionary act, a cultural shift in cinema: it successfully fulfills the ambitious authorial task — to transform Pushkin from a “monumental” canonical symbol into a recognizable human being. This is achieved not by altering facts but

by transforming emotional perception through a “special” audiovisual cinematic language and communicative techniques.

The shift toward internal and political conflicts, the use of modern music and choreography as psychological instruments [9], and Borisov’s embodied acting allow the viewer to enter the poet’s human experience.

The director’s concept conveys that true respect for an iconic image does not imply static perception or detachment from real life. The “screen text” represents a special genre conveying the anthropocentric paradigm “Human and the World” — “Human in Language” [4; 7], emphasizing internal and external dialogue.

By allowing Pushkin to feel, sweat, dance, rage, and love, Umarov did not diminish his greatness but infused the image of the Great Genius with new energy, presenting to viewers a linguistic personality [13] endowed with communicative qualities of speech [2]: clarity, precision, expressiveness, vividness, ease, and liveliness [23].

The authorial screen conception, conveyed through “cinematographic receptions” [20, p. 309], through intonation — loud, whispered, or sung — profoundly influences the more natural perception of the mythologized image of the poet by a new generation and actualizes it in contemporary reality.

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