

კრასიმირა ივანოვა,
ბულგარეთის თეატრისა და კინოს ხელოვნების ეროვნული
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დიალოგი თეატრსა და კინოს შორის – ახალი მეთა-მიდგომა

რეზიუმე

თეატრსა და კინოს შორის კავშირები ჯერ კიდევ ხელოვნების პირველი ნაბიჯებიდან შეიმჩნევა. კინოში თეატრალურ ნაკვალევს ხშირად მიიჩნევენ სისუსტედ და წარსულის გადმონაშთად; არსებობს მოსაზრებები, რომ თანამედროვე თეატრში კინემატოგრაფიული მიდგომის არსებობა მოწმობს თეატრალური ფორმის კრიზისს.

წინამდებარე ნაშრომი აანალიზებს, აფერხებს თუ არა ორ ხელოვნებას შორის დიალოგი თვითგამოხატვის საშუალებების განვითარებას; ან პირიქით – ხელს უწყობს და ახალი ფორმების დაბადებას იწვევს.

მთავარი თეზისია, რომ არსებობს მაგალითები, რომლებიც ადასტურებს ახალი მეტა-ენის არსებობას – ენისა, რომელიც თეატრსა და კინოს შორის კავშირების პროდუქტია.

მოხსენება განიხილავს ამ დიალოგის სხვადასხვა გამოვლინებას ჟანრული, ეროვნული და საავტორო სტილის სპეციფიკების ტრილში და ცდილობს გამოავლინოს კინო-თეატრალური ურთიერთქმედების შედეგები თანამედროვე ხელოვნებაში.

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DIALOGUES BETWEEN THEATER AND CINEMA, THE NEW META-APPROACH

The present work analyzes whether the dialogue between the two arts hinders or helps, pulls back the development of the means of expression or leads to new ones.

Keywords: theatre, film art, meta-language

A quick look at theory shows there is no shortage of research on the topic: e.g. Rachel A. Jones “Film and theatre: Hybridization and the convergence of mediums”,¹ also “Theater and Film” Kin-Yan’s Szeto.² As well as acclaimed authors such as Bazin “Theatre and Cinema. In What is Cinema?”.³ But the present work, based on what is known,⁴ will try to give different accents.

If cinema is an art patronized by the ancient Greek muses, it would perhaps be the only art where none of the nine goddesses, daughters of Zeus and Harmony, would feel out of place. Calliope, the muses of epic and lyric poetry, can engage in film plots, and Euterpe, the guardian of music, has a very successful specific genre of musical

1 Jones, Film, 2016.

2 Szeto, Film, 2014.

3 Bazin, Cinema, 1967.

4 Other important authors on the subject: Brewster, Ben, and Lea Jacobs. Theatre this Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Esslin, Martin. The Field of Drama: How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning him/her Stage and Screen. London: Methuen, 1987.

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film, where Terpsichore also reigns tirelessly with her dances. The roles of Melpomene and Thalia, the muses of tragedy and comedy, are self-explanatory, while a whole array of specific genres and areas for self-expression are available for Erato, the inspirer of love poetry, Polyhymnia, the deity of pantomime and hymns, and Clio, the muse of history, along with Urania, the protectress of astronomy. Whichever of the numerous aspects of the manifestations of each muse we take, it is invariably present in the syncretism of cinema. For example, Polyhymnia, as the muse of eloquence, dance, pantomime, hymns and serious poetry, is in its own waters in the art of cinema. Cinema was related to pantomime in its silent period: Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton. As a muse helping remember what has been learned, Polyhymnia swirls in popular science cinema and educational films, and as a bearer of fame for writers, through their immortal works, she is present with enormous force in film adaptations. Her contemplation is part of many experimental works and even more emotional scenes, likely the reason why, in the 1960s, film historian Jerzy Toeplitz mentioned those still remembering the challenge to the independence of cinema as an art,¹ i.e. obtaining this status was not easy, although rapid, compared to the emancipation of other arts. But this is how Toeplitz describes the driving force of this rapidity: “The desire to improve the creative process and overcome the inadequacy of the means of expression inevitably leads to the dream of a kind of ‘super art,’ which would use all means of influencing people, would appeal to both sight and hearing, and would include elements of painting, music and literature. In the 19th century, the embodiment of this ideal was most often observed in the theater”.² And cinema is the next stage of the embodiment of the ideal. Toeplitz sees “being spectacular and theatricality” as a higher stage in the development of cinema, when it surpasses the purely photographically adequate fixation of reality. Here I can add that the point of “spectacle” as well as “theatricality” have become frequent grounds for reproaches towards cinema to this day. Spectacle as an end in itself is condemned in commercial, genre cinema, and theat-

1 Теплиц, Е., История, р.20.

2 Ibid.

ricality in inept or experimental films is rejected as an unnecessary rudiment, an impossibility of achieving the inherent authenticity of presence, naturalness of acting, of cinema. Building on the vision of cinema as an opportunity for embodying the ideal of maximally impactful art, it will be with an emphasis on the greater freedom of the director to guide the audience's attention: "Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov talk in detail about the so-called 'ball of attention.' In essence, Stanislavsky defines the art of directing as the ability to throw an invisible 'ball of attention' at different speeds and tempos from one object to another. The organization of this invisible process is directing".¹ In cinema, changing plans easily achieves this, but what about poly screens? Is it adequate and functional to have two or more "balls of attention"? Stanislavsky and Vakhtangov would object, as would specialists in the psychology of perception. Practice shows that often throwing in more balls of attention is not juggling on the part of the director, but an effective trick that conceals helplessness. This is what happened in the latest attempt to squeeze financial success out of the Spider-Man theme in Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse.

The "theater-cinema" relationship is very flawed in terms of dialogue, with theatricality in cinema considered a drawback, and cinema having more possibilities for Stanislavsky's aspiration for the functionality of dialogue: "And dialogue on stage is not just a conversation between two people. It is important to clearly determine who should be the focus of attention at any given moment. And it may not even be one of the two people who call for it, but a third, silent presence".²

But let's focus on another aspect of the presence of Melpomene and Thalia in cinema. The muses of tragedy and comedy onscreen also have a meta-being. And not as specific genre characteristics, but as evidence of the inseparable, even subconsciously functioning connection between the two arts of theater and cinema. Much can be said about the semantic and semiotic references of the several obligatory elements in the image of Melpomene: the vine wreath,

¹ Товстоногов, Зеркало, 1984.

² There too

the theatrical mantle and the tragic mask, the scroll or lyre and the sword/dagger/staff. The occasion for a holiday, elevation above the profane, connection to the sacred, heavy themes, the inevitability of fate, mournful songs for poets—all these elements are present as a red thread in films thematically related to theater. There are many examples, though some that stand out and are not stereotyped: the semi-documentary film by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani *Caesar Must Die* from 2012, winner of numerous prestigious awards, including the Golden Bear. The meta-theatrical approach, combined with a reality tint, the sharpness of black and white shots and accent of colors, build on making effect. The meta-levels are multiplied by the references and context brought by the author, whose play is set in an Italian prison: Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar". The distant connections are even with Hamlet "Denmark is a prison", "Oh, God, I could sit locked up in a walnut shell and still feel like the ruler of endless expanses! If I didn't have bad dreams!",¹ and the direct ones come from the lines that have become iconic and quoted daily: "And you, Brutus ?!?" (Et tu, Brute?), "Cowards die many times before they die; the brave taste death only once".² This is the connection to the personal stories of the prisoners participating in the rehearsals—betrayal, murder, fear of death, dignity.

This example shows that the interaction between the arts of cinema and theater is fruitful and can be beneficial for their development even today. Back at the dawn of cinema studies, in the texts of theorists and historians we find not only directions for interaction, but also possibilities for their interpretation and reflections on the benefit. The most elementary direction is for cinema to serve as memory, an archive not so much of specific productions as of the theatrical spirit, of the backstage, of the mental and spiritual horizons of theatrical figures, of creators and of spectators. We are time's interior, not the other way around. We, our thoughts and actions are part of the world's "duration" (*durée*), a synthesis of duration and continuity. The past is a "past present" is preserved and remaining unconscious in its entirety for us. Remembrance, Deleuze

1 Shakespeare, Hamlet.

2 Shakespeare, Caesar.

insists after Bergson, is a leap, or a dive, into the heterogeneous reservoir of “pure memory” (...) What follows is the focusing of memory (compared to the rotation of the rings of a telescope) and bringing actuality to the plane (...) Cinema quickly seizes an opportunity to convey through images-movements different relations between the layers of memory. “Because memory is clearly no longer the ability to have memories, it is the membrane that, in various ways (continuity, envelopment, etc.), makes the layers of the past and the layers of reality correspond, the former coming from an inside that is always there, and the latter from an outside that is always about to happen. The present therefore becomes a battlefield between memories and a possible or impossible coming”,¹ Deleuze refers to Alain Resnais.

The most elementary example of cinema-theatrical memory is directly fixed productions, which we can hardly call a real adaptation, such as the 1899 attempt at “King John” by William Shakespeare. Bringing iconic plays to the screen is a challenge usually dealt with using theatrical means, rather than searching for equivalents in the specifics of film language: there are many examples, but here are just a few: Norma Shearer and Clark Gable in “Strange Interlude” (1932). This approach was highly appreciated in the case of “Anna Christie” (three Oscar nominations) based on the play by Eugene O’Neill’s 1930 and starring Greta Garbo. And, as an example of the sustainability of the approach, I will only use the numerous adaptations of “King Lear”, from 1910 by Gerolamo Lo Savio, 1916 by Ernest C. Warde, 1953 and 1971 by Peter Brook, 1971 by Grigori Kozintsev, 1987 by Jean-Luc Godard, 1999 by Brian Blessed, from 2008 by Trevor Nunn to 2015 by Antoni Cimolino and 2017 by Carl Bessai, also 2018 by Richard Eyre. Among the works above some (Brooke’s 1971 film, for one) were admired by filmmakers such as Chaplin. We also must highlight Jean-Luc’s unique approach and Godard, an example of inspiration, transition from theater to cinema, connection with the painful themes of modernity.

The 2011 film “The Invention of Hugo” delicately removes the argument about spectacle as an end in itself in cinema and the view of Méliès as the progenitor of this. It replaces it with respect and love

¹ Янакиева, Памет, 2020.

for dedication, sacrifice in the name of creative flight, also mildly condemns the lack of memory, continuity, and belated respect and recognition. There are few good films that so adequately and memorably defend the theater-cinema connection.

Töplitz says of Méliès: “Méliès was very closely associated with the theater and viewed cinema as a special kind of theatrical spectacle created with the help of a different technique. Consequently, his films fully preserve theatrical conventions – the curtain, the separation of actions, scenes and, most importantly, the constant distance between the camera and the object or person being filmed. Méliès made films for an audience sitting in the first row of the stalls. Consequently, the image on the screen exactly reproduced the scene as this imaginary spectator saw it. Changing the level of magnification was not practiced”.¹ But despite these defects from our point of view, through the pursuit of magic, of overcoming the everyday vision and plot in the theater, Méliès gives way to science fiction in cinema.

Let’s move on to one of the most curious forms of theater-cinema dialogue, films using theatricality in their construction not only as a sought-after effect, but also uniqueness, an approach enriching cinematic language. Theatrical vision is literal, dialogue corresponds to the old maxim: “the deaf in the cinema and the blind in the theater lose a lot, but not the most important thing”, formality reigns, immersion in the illusion, in the duplicate of reality is replaced by stylization: “Dogville” (2003), “The Sunset Limited”, “Vanya on 42nd St”. It is no accident that “Dogville” has 21 wins and 33 nominations, was appreciated in Cannes, and received awards from critics. The convention works brilliantly for the overall impact, emphasizes the message and corresponds to the characters’ feelings, turning out to be an element defining the cinematography of the film no matter how absurd it sounds. In “The Sunset Limited”, this approach returns to the adaptation of plays, concentrating entirely on dialogue and acting, removing everything that could “distract” viewers from the depth, what is hidden behind the words. Samuel L. Jackson and Tommy Lee Jones do a great job using theatrical means to engage us in a philosophical debate that resonates in the mind long after the film ends.

¹ Теплиц, Е., История.

In “Vanya on 42nd St,” the combination of Chekhov, David Mamet and Louis Malle, rehearsal setting and good acting seems like Chekhov’s “dialogues for the deaf”, in which the characters supposedly communicate, but in fact do not hear each other. The play with the principle of theater in theater is inventive: the exit from the work process, contact with the audience require attention to follow the line of the play, to be careful when reality enters. Capturing Chekhov’s sense of humor (which is rarely done), good work with rhythm, the approach without sets, costumes and the immediacy of the game (Julianne Moore shows a multi-layered interpretation) as elements give the feeling of lightness. They also emphasize the relevance of what is embedded in Chekhov’s dramaturgy. The cinematic approach here emphasizes everything that good theater can offer its viewers by building on it, compensating for what theater cannot give.

At either end of the pendulum we can place films that use theatricality literally and unproductively, such as a series of musicals and horror films that only apply the topos and the external characteristics of the characters, and at the other end auteur films such as director Alejandro González Iñárritu ‘s 2014 drama “Birdman” or The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance” with the Oscar for Best Picture in 2015 and, remarkably, 193 wins and 297 nominations. At this end of the pendulum is also “Official Competition”, a brilliant comedy by Gaston Duprat and Mariano Cohn from 2021: a good knowledge of acting education and styles, avant-garde directorial pursuits and the collapse in the face of reality create an extremely curious film that gives a lot to both the professional viewers (actors, directors, screenwriters) and ordinary viewers who have nothing to do with the guild.

The aspect of transition from cinema to theater is also very interesting. Transferring films to the stage is a common practice with the well-known animated musicals, such as “The Lion King” (1994), “Aladdin” (1992), “Beauty and the Beast” (1991), etc., but also with films like “Life of Pi” (2012), “War Horse” (2011). In the latter, theatricality is overt: the puppeteers are visible (as in the stage “The Lion King”), but perhaps it is this making style that makes the performances in question extremely successful.

An similar approach by Eastern cinema combines the influence of puppetry with a metaphor: “Kitano deceives the audience. It is not the people in the film who die. It is the puppets who die, who were once living people”.¹ A curious approach that deserves special attention.

Multimedia theatre art is also a product of the dialogue between the arts discussed so far. Possible generalization shows that the exchange between theatre and cinema has not really stopped since the birth of the seventh art. It is multidirectional. There are hundreds of examples, most often as thematic fields: films about theatre artists, or as a topos, as use of space, though only few are masterpieces. But, approached with necessary reflection, dialogue in question, can be extremely fruitful. As a product of a significant author’s intention, it can contribute to the multifaceted nature of messages and unexpectedness in the means of expression.

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