

Reflection of Social Conflict of Kazakhstan of the 90s of the 20th Century by Visualizing Spatial Models in the Film Directed by Darezen Omirbaev

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Abstract

The article highlights the issue of social and cultural clashes of different segments of the population of Kazakhstan. Art is a way of communication; so Darezen Omirbaev expressed his opinion about the current situation in independent Kazakhstan in 1991 through the film "Kairat". According to the plot, the main character, Kairat, leaves his village and moves to a big city - Alma-Ata. These are two fundamentally different spaces, both architecturally and socioculturally. As the director demonstrated, - the city did not accept a resident of another class, a different type of thinking. Kairat, as a representative of the Kazakh-speaking culture of Kazakhstan, ineptly tries to integrate into the Russian-speaking urban environment. The frames are filled with archetypal images that allow a more in-depth look at the conflict between the film and society. The article provides data that demonstrate how the situation with the film industry and language policy in Kazakhstan has changed.

Keywords: Film, Director, Kazakh Cinema, Language Policy, Social Conflict, Space, Kairat, Darezen Omirbaev.

1. Introduction

One of the most pressing issues of Kazakhstan nowadays is the language issue and the introduction of the Kazakh language in all segments of the population. Kazakh linguists identify several problems in the study of the native language by the indigenous population of the country. Its main factor is the lack of a clear policy on this issue. One of the important steps of the state was to transfer office work to the state language, but such a sharp change revealed a number of problems, one of which was the unpreparedness of the population. According to the results of 2017, only about 23% of the population speaks three languages, while the share of document flow in the Kazakh language was 92% (Kuzekbay, 2018).

The problem of the Kazakh language originates from the Soviet period, when a strict language policy of the state took place. Kazakhstani linguist Zhanna Umatova reports the following:

“...the USSR had a strict language policy; you could not get a job, go to university without knowing the Russian language...” (Caravan, 2012).

Thus, the issues of the Kazakh language are very acute; a whole generation was brought up on the fact they are required to know only the Russian language and use it in everyday life. Of course, it was almost impossible to eradicate Kazakh, since the villages remote from the city preserved their culture and some identity.

There have always been talks about conflicts, but not always as loud and clear as time and place require. Cinema is both a director's tribune and art, which is often controlled by the state. In this article we will consider the conflict of the population at the language level and compare the mentality of different segments of the population on the example of the film “Kairat” (1991) by Darezhen Omirbaev. There are many directors in the post-Soviet space who told their stories through filming films at the beginning of the independence of their states. For example, the Latvian director Olgerts Kroders was one of the first who dared to step over the canon of socialist realism and portrayed heroes without a heroic connotation (Levalde, 2018).

1.1. Special Role of the Space in the Cinema.

One of the biggest problems of art has always been to convey something that cannot be described or perceived through language; at the same time words can become a springboard in the work of any creator. Cinema is a creative reflection of reality through the eyes of the director. And each director seeks to create a film through individual vision, using different techniques. For example, the film's screen aesthetics of the Kazakh director Darezhen Omirbaev are always filled with hidden symbols, essential archetypes and unusual spatial solutions. His unusual outlook on life made the director one of the founders of a new wave in the system of Kazakhstani cinema. Time and the subconscious also work in the concept of the image of his films, besides space. All this is harmoniously assembled into a film mechanism called “Darezhen Omirbaev's cinema”, in which you can see a reflection of the structure of Kazakhstan's society through the prism of the internal conflict of the main hero.

Cinema and photography always go together; they are united by the nature of the image enclosed in a film. As stated in an article by Grazioli (2018):

“The photographer creates a unique image that evokes a dream, but the image is the appearance of an object that can be decrypted using visual photographic language”.

The object on the film appears as a clean canvas. And we, the spectators, already give him a characteristic depending on the knowledge of the visual language. Besides dynamics, emotionality works as the main difference between cinema and photography, which holds together still images and establishes a connection between them (Vitale, 2018).

The famous American director Stanley Kubrick works with space as an integral part of the image of dramaturgy. His care about the depth of the frame opens up due to various elements, one of which is the architectural space. His spaces can easily disorient the viewer, and can become the key to the whole film. Stanley Kubrick's cinematic spaces go beyond the frame, expanding its visual and deep boundaries (Melia, 2017).

1.2. Art and Life.

What does imitate one another: the art to life or life to art; the question is still pending. Aristotle believed in life imitating art, while Oscar Wilde thought the opposite. But nevertheless, no matter in what form art exists, it is inextricably linked with a human and human's feelings. Obviously, each sphere of art is able to touch all forms of human self-expression to one degree or another. Cinema tells stories about big and small people, young and old, about the past and the future, exploring life from villages to big cities, trying to affect all human feelings. The book tells the story through the senses just like the symphony, while films tell the story through actors (Bogoni & Michel, 2018).

Since the cinema appeared, there have always been disputes around its nature, giving it the meaning of language, the form of art, industry, live photography, a tool for capturing reality (Negri, 2017). Cinema connects the world more than the media, it allows us to see, hear and feel a foreign culture. It unites people from all over the world, demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of human, based on tough, but well-disguised inequality between the parties, uncovering conflicts (Aaron, 2016).

2. Reflection of Social Conflict of Kazakhstan of the 90s of the XX Century in the Film by Darezen Omirbaev

Conflicts are such a sharp topic that it's difficult to portray it in feature films. This was especially acute in Soviet times, when everything was under the control of the Soviets. It wasn't easy to portray the working class in film, partly due to criticism, which refuses any notion of cause-and-effect. (O'Regan, 2016) A cinematic appearance can cause a sense of shame and fear, offering the spectator a variety of "meetings" with the images, causing their first reaction before the image is revealed. Thus, the director can change the viewer's opinion to the same image from complete rejection to sympathy (Schultz, 2018).

2.1. Spatial Component in the Film "Kairat" by Darezen Omirbaev.

The work on a spatial component in the film "Kairat" is a director's artistic tool. Darezen Omirbaev tells the viewer his vision of social and political conflict, nicely putting all this into a dramatic narration. The film didn't become breakthrough or socially dangerous, it has just been there, telling the story of the unsuccessful assimilation of the main character. Of course, the director is not the first and not the only one who touched on a hot topic as a clash of layers of the population of one particular country, but his picture is a contribution to the treasury of Kazakh cinema, which cannot be ignored. Darezen Omirbaev is one of the few directors who work with space as an integral part of the image. In the film, the spaces are divided in the following way: railway represents the road to the big world; dormitory represents the male world; cinema represents the female world; dreams are a mirror image of the real world.

The first thing the spectator sees on the screen is the empty railroad tracks, which play the role of the main character's guide to the big world. Kairat leaves the village by taking a train and goes alone to the big city. Passing by the next village, a calm trip becomes gloomy when someone breaks a window of the sleeper room by throwing a stone at a passing train. After that, Kairat fails the entrance exam because he decides to help a stranger. Ultimately, when they turned around, and he meets her eyes, she only showed him her tongue, not having shown a bit of sympathy.

These misfortunes seem to be a simple series of events in the storyline at first glance, but in reality this is a gap in the quiet life of a village guy. A broken window plays the role of the shattered border of his comfort zone, and the exam is the first test failure in a big city.

And if the railway brought him to the city, then the place he lives in is a dormitory, which is the space of male life. Everything seems to be ascetic and sharp: clear perspective of wall angles, floor, ceiling and furniture. Deprived of any softness, the male world is very similar to the military barrack: Spartan-like rooms where nothing is superfluous, beds for each person in the room, wardrobe, table and chairs. The dormitory scene can be called tough.

Darezhen Omirbaev emphasized that the dormitory space belongs to men by using a contrast technique. One of the scenes of the film demonstrates the local dining room: the camera moves along an endless line of featureless guys, dressed in identical clothes, as if this is not a dormitory, but a real army. A girl stands at the table and serves one type of dishes: she is young, beautiful, and sexy with her dressing gown coquettish open, her hair is loose; she is a bright spot against the background of young guys full of testosterone.

If we talk about contrasts, it is worth saying that the antagonist of the male world of the dormitory is the female one in the guise of a cinema. The image of the cinema itself is always romantic, since it is associated with first meetings and dating. It's the place where Kairat meets his first love Indira, and has his first date with her. And the cinema's program itself is a small reflection of the protagonist's life: the first film is an acquaintance with Indira, the second is a romance date, and the third is Indira's betrayal.

Art space and time in space-time art are essential categories, without which the whole semantic structure of a work of art cannot exist; this structure conveys a sequence of events, their logical chain and figurative connection, the beauty of form and, as a result, gives rise to word pictures in the spectator's imaginations (Poznin, 2019).

2.2. Light in the Film “Kairat” by Darezhen Omirbaev.

Besides space, Darezhen Omirbaev also works with light. For example, the scene in the sleeper room, where Indira two-times Kairat with the bartender from the restaurant car, is depicted in the following way: he turns off the light, and she turns it on several times. This game with light in the sleeper room intersects with the game of light in the dormitory, when Kairat walks along the hall of the dormitory turning it on and off. If in the first scene the game with the light is connected with the future betrayal by Indira, then in the case of Kairat this is an awareness of the impending negative changes. Light and darkness are a metaphor for good and evil, purity of feelings and betrayal. Everything appears to come down to a love conflict between young people. But the essence of the hero's inner conflict is truly revealed only in the space of dreams; there are four spaces shown in the film.

2.3. Different Spaces in the Film “Kairat” by Darezhen Omirbaev.

The first dream shows that Kairat moves from the village to the big city. In a dream, Kairat first goes with his friend, but when he is distracted by an apple tree, a symbol of Alma-Ata, he suddenly appears alone on a countryside road. Loneliness scares him. And if in the film “July” (1988) the hero overcomes the boundaries, breaking out of his small but protected world, then

Kairat hides: behind a fence, doors, a lock, locked in a dark room. Each of these boundaries helps to hide from the vast world.

The second dream is the conflict of Kairat and the society of the big city. There is a concert in the huge hall, all the seats are occupied by the audience but Kairat not only does not have free space but also no place in the hall. Not only he doesn't take part in this, he looks at everything from the outside of the hall where the doorway becomes a clear boundary. You can again make an analogy with the dream of the protagonist of the film "July" (1989) that shows a scene where everyone gathered at the local club to listen to the boy playing the piano, because he is the centre of this world, while Kairat is just a casual observer. A huge world is conveyed in this room, which didn't invite the main character, and he feels it. Kairat himself doesn't want to enter the room, he calls Indira, she turns and gestures to him he can't talk here, that he's wrong, as if pointing him as if it's not his place. But as soon as she leaves the room and comes up to Kairat, the concert ends and the room immediately gets empty.

The third dream is about the loneliness of Kairat. In this dream, Kairat is on a Ferris wheel. Suddenly this wheel stops and Kairat remains at the top of the wheel alone. The Ferris wheel is a symbol of a city that lives by its own rules, heading to its own direction and at the time it needs, and Kairat can't but obey. Just like in real life, the main hero is alone in this dream and his mother is waiting for him far away somewhere below; she is as alone as Kairat.

In the fourth dream, the hero sees himself dead and hears a conversation between his mother and Indira about his body. Already being dead, he remains lonely; there are no friends, relatives, only his mother and Indira, who refuses him.

His mother appears only in dreams in this film: she sends her son to study in the city, setting her hopes on him and staying in the village. Staying alone with the whole world, Kairat is lost in its huge flow and tries to hide from it, which we can see from the dream scenes. While the film "July" shows the confidence of the hero, the desire to "penetrate" the big world and "conquer" it both in dreams and in reality.

2.4. Film "Kairat" Among Other Works by Darezhen Omirbaev.

After the film "Kairat", there was another film called "Cardiogram" (1995) shot, but chronologically it should be between "July" (1988) and "Kairat" (1991), since the main hero is depicted as an adolescent. In the film "Cardiogram" by Darezhen Omirbaev, the main character finds himself in a recreation center, which is a kind of intermediate space between the village and the big city. This film raises the same matters there:

- how to survive in the male world;
- a child from an aul among city children;
- native speaker of the Kazakh language and Kazakh culture among Russian speakers;
- the mother is the only person who supports and understands hero;
- escape from an alien world.

The trilogy of the films "July", "Kairat", and "Cardiogram" by Darezhen Omirbaev addresses a very delicate, but important issue of the coexistence of different groups that are

divided not by ethnicity, but by language - Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking population of Kazakhstan. The conflict based on the difference of cultures has never been discussed or publicized. Therefore, no one focused on this, living in their own world, either urban or aul. It's rare when a resident of a particular group can combine both cultures, perceiving them as equal to each other.

2.5. The Art of Darezhen Omirbaev as a Reflection of the Reality of Kazakhstan of the 90s of the XX Century.

Nowadays we know about the events of those times only from retelling of the older generation. But is collective memory capable to record these events? It's not able to exist without appealing to an individual person from a person, where the person is a carrier of events in his memory, while the information may not be identical. But the films don't speak, they tell. They retain collective memory by filtering it through their own ideology of filmmakers (Kanbur, 2018).

Cinema and video have become the two most popular disciplines of contemporary art in the last decade. Often they are used to solve a wide range of issues, including identity, globalization, history, modernity, ecology, aesthetics, etc. For many artists memory and methods of processing information is a big topic for thought, since they are creating their own project, work with how we understand and remember the past and history related to the present (Rosario, 2017).

Partially, the film "Kairat" affects not only social conflicts in Kazakhstan in the 1990s, but also some political issues. Political cinema is based on the formation of subjectivity; such films depict the formation of the political nature of the characters. Since the subjects can be politicized from the very beginning, they reveal social, moral and ethical requirements, and in this case the sharpness of the film becomes apparent when we deeply examine the matter, which we spoke about earlier (Holtmeier, 2016).

The conflict exists at the level of cultures and intercrosses at the level of everyday communication. The main characters in the films by Darezhen Omirbaev find themselves in those situations where the difference in cultural values is most clearly visible, that is society, where the hero is alone. The main characters go through the stages of adaptation in different ways, based on their life experience. In the film "July" the hero strives to leave his world and get into a big one, in the "Cardiogram" the main character, on the contrary, seeks to leave the big world, and in "Kairat" the hero simply dies.

The art of Darezhen Omirbaev became a reflection of the reality of his time, rising up the matters that are not spoken from the tribune. Language discrimination in Kazakhstan doesn't cease to be an acute topic of the political and social communities. But work in this direction is being carried out in a positive direction for both parts of the conflict. Eisenstein S. was one of the first to use cinema in war projects to visualize conflict within the framework of dialectics. He wrote that "film editing is a conflict". His accents are not always an outspoken assessment of the war, in the usual sense of the word; it's more like a clash of two opponents, a clash of plastic elements (Conrath, 2019). The film industry is the field of creativity and the platform of the director, regardless of the subject of his direction.

Kazakhstan has always been a country with two cultures: modern urban and traditional aul. These cultures have always existed in parallel, and they are usually called Russian-speaking and Kazakh-speaking cultures, which often caused conflicts. At the beginning of the formation of

the state, there was an active policy of Russification - the media, newspapers, music were subjected to severe reissuing.

Virilio P. offers a model of society and the media: "War is cinema, and cinema is war." (Stojanova, 2017)

We don't mean war at the level of armed aggression, but at the level of a conflict of interests. Cinema, like propaganda, reaches an area of interdisciplinary research that concerns issues of paradox, propaganda, and controversy. Philosophical, cultural and ideological contexts exist in the cinema as eternal followers of the plot.

The cinema of the post-Soviet space has a dual heritage. The aesthetics in which directors and screenwriters were brought up, formed by previous generations, started to diverge from the reality that all sectors of the population had to face. The new conditions have changed the point of view, highlighting the duality of the heritage of traditions, exposing a number of controversial issues (Bozovic, 2016).

Nowadays, on the contrary, the country is actively affecting all social spheres, introducing the state language into them. This process cannot be called smooth or painless, since fundamental changes in the system always cause resonance among its participants. Kairat, as a representative of traditional culture, cannot find common ground with representatives of urban culture. This is how Darezhen Omirbaev perceived the world in 1991. The conflict of modern Kazakhstan has become diametrically opposite. As a rule, the school program of Kazakhstan includes the study of three languages, which are Kazakh, Russian, and English. But there may be some problems with a parallel study, for example, the language of communication is most often acquired spontaneously within the family and society, but the languages studied at school are abstract and logical, which may not be stored in the memory of the student (Zakharov & Baidildinova, 2014).

We must talk about problems, but we must talk about them in our own language and using our own tools, like Darezhen Omirbaev does. Visualization of the social and political conflict on the example of one guy from the village and a subtle game with spatial models have become an excellent example of the directorial work. The development of cinema in Central Asia is considered from the point of view of the formation of national identities. Kazakh cinema has come a long way from "Amangeldy" (1938) by Levin M. to "She" (2018) by Sataeva A. Soviet ideology put a lot of pressure on the creativity and culture of the Kazakh people. Propaganda could be traced in everything, in all types of art, including cinema. Therefore, it was difficult to speak openly about what was contrary to the political worldview of the whole country; but the ability to work with space and its components as visualization tools brings all the elements together.

Cinema, as a representative of the media culture, combines textual information of a written and colloquial nature. We have different sources of information that we receive in different forms, but they remain in the blind zone (Petho, 2018). Thus, we can conclude that talking about the problem on the same plane, for example, writing about it in the media, you can remain unheard, but the information received in different forms becomes more voluminous and effective, while the media can become "louder" when using a photograph that carries an image and information (Wolf, 2016).

Table 1. Comparative Statistical Table

Parameters / Periods	2009	2019
Population (people)	15,776,492 [*]	18,034,400 ^{**}
Kazakhs (people)	9,540,806 ^{***}	12,505,251
Russians (people)	3,869,661	3,553,232
Kazakhs (%)	60.47	67.96 1
Russians (%)	24.53	19.32
Knowledge of the Kazakh language: oral speech (%)	74	89
Knowledge of the Russian language: oral speech (%)	94.4	92
Total number of film screenings (total)	243,354	687,274
The number of film screenings (national cinema)	-	77,203
The number of visits to film screenings, people (total)	7,565,650	17,606,749
The number of visits to film screenings, people (national cinema)	-	2,433,320

^{*} According to Ministry of Popular Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2019).

^{**} According to Institute of Demography of National Research University (2019).

^{***} According to Wikipedia, (2019)

Cinema, as part of the culture of the nation, directly depends on various parameters, including the attitude of the population to the language. Today, the process of their rehabilitation can be traced having compiled a comparative statistical table, which will cover sociological research on the issue that is currently being studied.

Cinema in Kazakhstan has turned to a sort of a social platform on which the state language has become one of the main topics. But cinema itself, as a national product of Kazakhstan, is at the stage of conquering the position. Due to historical circumstances, the Kazakh language has undergone some difficulties, and the extreme transition from one language field to another has caused its vulnerability.

Thus, we can trace a positive trend in issues of the state language and national films in the period from 2009 to 2019 (Ministry of Popular Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2019; Institute of Demography of National Research University, 2019). The number of people who are fluent in the Kazakh language has grown significantly (Table 1). But these studies cover the spoken Kazakh language, the structure of which has some differences from the literary and political styles. This, in turn, demonstrates a lack of willingness to switch to the Kazakh language, completely abandoning the Russian document flow. Another issue is that the dynamics of the data also depends on population migration, which affects another political issue that affects indicators, but which won't be considered in the framework of this article.

Is it possible to say that cinema is a source of inspiration not only for artists but also for politicians? Of course, since today we see a more active introduction of the Kazakh language in society at the legislative level. Cinema, as an unconditional part of the entertainment industry, in cinemas of Kazakhstan is obliged to broadcast with subtitles in the state language. Studies show that information obtained in a game form is better remembered and stored in long-term memory. But the presence of subtitles in the cinema doesn't fill the entire niche of the motivational field

that the population needs to learn the state language. At the moment, Kazakhstan doesn't support the volume of entertainment content in the Kazakh language in order to make Russian-speaking society representatives interested.

3. Conclusions

Based on the above mentioned, we can conclude that the linguistic policy of Kazakhstan should not only expand the boundaries of the distribution of the language but also change itself. For example, take the technology of learning English (as a world representative) as a basis, analyze their essence and develop your own learning system. Due to the lack of a clear learning structure in the school curriculum that part of the motivational field that we spoke about is lost.

Today we see that artists who are very sensitive to critical issues and visualize them in their works are able to change our society. Darezhen Omirbaev showed a clash of two cultures that refused to accept each other's strengths and weaknesses. And now the current social situation in Kazakhstan is undergoing changes, where there is a large increase in the Kazakh-speaking population, which is the exact opposite situation in the film "Kairat". The moment when both cultures will take each other as equals is a matter of time and the right political orientation.

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