

# Cinematic Literature of LFA: Background and Functions

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## Abstract

This paper describes the origins of LFA literary cinematography, as well as the reasons for the perception of the unification creativity as the result of cinema and literature interaction. In the course of the research, they analyzed the works of culturologists and literary critics, works of art, the articles by the representatives of futurism and LFA as a new stage of a trend development. The comparative-historical, structural-typological method and the method of an accentual text analysis were used. Thus, three main aspects were revealed, reflecting the relationship between LFA and filmmaking. The first is related with the generality of cinematography and the creative principles of the futurist theory (and LFA representatives subsequently). The second one is related with the parallels between different types of arts, conducted by the audience of the early XXth century. The third one is related with the tasks that LFA set for itself at different stages of development, realized through the use of cinema techniques and principles.

**Key words:** LFA, Futurism, Literary cinematography, Russian literature of the first third of the XX<sup>th</sup> century

## INTRODUCTION

Avant-garde has been attracted the interest of culturologists, philologists, literary critics for more than a hundred years. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of works appeared that generalize information about an artistic phenomenon as a whole - for example, the fundamental research by P. Bürger "Theory of the Avant-Garde" [1], as well as about individual trends. One of the brightest events in the history of avant-garde was the work of Russian futurists, which has been studied quite versatile at the moment. They published the works covering the history of futurism development, its branches in Russian literature [2,3], the translations of art texts, articles, futurist manifestos with commentaries [4,5], as well as the works devoted to certain aspects of creativity are published still.

LFA is a literary association that represents a new stage of Russian futurism development during 1920-ies. It was

studied thoroughly. The works were created examining LFA theory and practice [6], but some issues require further study. The latter concern the problem of literature and cinema interaction in the group work.

LFA, known for its experimental character and propensity for artistic synthesis, paid a special attention to literature and cinema. M. Zalambani, analyzing the activities of the association, identifies the cinematic component as one of the main ones [7]. LFA representatives talk about a script, a film language, the actual genres of films, the specific features of this art form; And they also consider the possibility of literature enrichment with the cinema techniques. This aspiration was noted by contemporaries: for example, the "Dictionary of Literary Terms" (1925) has the notion of "cinema literature" sounds, which is associated, among other things, with the creativity of LFA representatives [8].

Modern researchers, as a rule, talk about the cinematography of individual author works (for example, R. Yangirov speaks about the V. Khlebnikov's views [9], M. Nemtsev discusses the methods of cinema in V. Mayakovsky's texts [10], etc.). The activity of the association as a whole has not been studied yet from this point of view. Literary cinematography of LFA works is connected with a whole series of reasons that can be considered in more detail.

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## METHODS

The empirical basis of research was represented by poetry and prose works (about 150), as well as by the articles and manifestos created by futurists and LFA representatives (including all published ones in "LFA" and "New LFA" journals). The comparative-historical method was used as the main one in the work. The studied phenomena were considered in dynamics and at different stages of development. The discovered facts were analyzed within the cultural context of the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the parallels between different types of artistic creativity were drawn.

Besides, the structural-typological method and the method of an accentual text analysis were applied. This allowed us to draw the conclusions about the specifics of literary cinematography in the works of art and highlight innovative techniques and principles.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literary cinematography in LFA works was conditioned by a number of circumstances that influenced directly or indirectly. First of all, it was related with the fact that the creative principles of LFA representatives coincided with the notion of literary cinematography in many respects.

Despite the fact that the issue of cinema and literature mutual influence was raised by researchers since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of "literary cinematography" is not clearly defined still. Modern researchers [11-13] characterize it in general as a set of certain characteristics inherent to cinema, but used in artistic literature. In this case, the fact of cinema direct influence on literature is not necessary; The author's manner of thoughts presentation is important, the emphasis is on the visual origin.

One of the main principles of literary cinematography is the dynamism of a plot development. It was singled out in 1920-ies by the creators of the "Dictionary of Literary Terms" [8]. In the works of the beginning of the XXIst century this feature is also significant. Thus, I. Martyanova speaks of a "dynamic observation situation" [11, p.8], T. Mozhayeva emphasizes that a cinematographic text has a "dynamic character of an objectified narrative" [12, p. 9].

Dynamism is a key concept in LFA theory. It was significant even during the period of futurism development, whose representatives sought to approach the future, to convey the accelerating rhythms of our time. LFA representatives emphasize this fact in the first issue of their magazine:

"<.> futurism put dynamics at the heart of the matter" [14, p. 19] - and claim that they will adhere to the indicated position. Many works of the association have a dynamic origin; This is also manifested in the way a story is plotted (a rapid change of events), and in the manner of a text organization (the fragmentation into small paragraphs), and in the choice of linguistic means (ellipses, nominal sentences, etc.), which helps to create a sense of continuous movement. LFA representatives recommend the authors to pay attention to this principle and evaluate the texts, relying on it.

A dynamic narrative is created through the use of editing. This is also a characteristic feature of a cinematic text. Using the combination of different plans, the pieces of space and time, the statics and the linearity of a plot development is removed. An editing organization of a text was characteristic of modernism as a whole [13, 15], but in the works of the futurists and, subsequently, in LFA representative works it was presented especially clear. Thus, Mayakovsky's poem "About this" has a fast alternation of events, the hero moves from one point to another, at that a journey often takes place only in his mind and is portrayed as a real one. Space is compressed at first, and then it is expanded:

Moscow -  
     the fields were silent behind Moscow.  
 Seas -  
     mountains are slender beyond the seas.  
 The whole universe  
     as if in binoculars,  
 In a huge binoculars (on the other hand).  
 The horizon straightened  
     Evenly.  
 Braid.  
     They will pull tight with a string.  
 The edge is one -  
     I'm in my room,

You are in your room - the edge of another one [16, pp. 70-71].

These works were characterized by so-called simultaneousness, a simultaneous image of a whole series of events. An experimental nature of creativity, the attention to the spatial-temporal organization of a text resembles the principles of literary cinematography, in which these elements are also fixed.

There were also indirect links between the creativity of the association and cinematography. These include, for example, the love of Futurists and LFA representatives for progress and mechanics as people of the future.

A camera and a film “combined” with this trend in the minds of contemporaries: “An eye of a futurist and a cinematographic camera is the one thing” [Cit. acc. to 9, p.307]. LFA representatives considered the theoretical issues of cinema art, they participated in the creation of films at all stages of the process by themselves, so the association of “cinema futurists” consolidated during 1920-ies.

Also, the attention was attracted to the “boon” aesthetics of the works. Early cinematography repeated the features of folk art in many respects (typical subjects and images, an exaggerated depiction of emotions, affectation, the orientation of a tamper on the public mood, and not on epy events occurring on  $\phi$  screen, etc.) [17]. Many artists at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries, including symbolists, acmeists, realists, showed interest in folk art, but due to their shocking manner of thought expression, futurists managed to draw the public’s attention to themselves. They use different features of the “popular” presentation: there is some naivety in the works, a deliberate simplicity, and the dialogue with an audience (sometimes literal one), and cheekiness, the play on emotions, etc. The researcher S. Dadswell, considering the works of the futurists, noted the “carnival” laughter in them [18]. These features manifested most clearly in theatrical productions of the trend, and they were also well noted in ordinary art texts.

Finally, the main reason of LFA literary cinematography was the desire of the association members to bring the elements of cinema into the works. This was related to the tasks of the group, and at different stages of LFA development different priorities are at forefront. There are two main periods in the history of LFA.

The first stage (1922-1925) is characterized by the development of the avant-garde principle in new reality terms. LFA representatives had to develop new principles of a text composition and a plot narration, to transform life using their creativity. And with this purpose they turn to cinema art, noting its special spatial-temporal organization. Back in the 1910-ies futurists borrowed some techniques, for example, reverse shooting. R. Yangirov, considering it in the texts of V. Mayakovsky, A. Kruchenykh, A. Shershenevich, V. Khlebnikov (who introduced the term “The world from the end”), came to the conclusion that it helped to make the works spectacular, and also allowed to express a special worldview [9]. During 1920-ies LFA representatives use an influx, a sharp transition from one scene to another, an accelerated and slowed down narrative tempo, etc. This was especially evident in LFA prose, which reflected the theoretical representations of the group most consistently.

Another principle of literary cinematography - an image of an observation situation - became the main one during the second stage of LFA development (1925-1928). It was used initially, but became more noticeable due to the change of the association tasks. LFA depart finally from the avant-garde principles and participate in the development of socialist realism. They still talk about the need to create a new type of works, but now they reject the very value of art. They proclaim a newspaper a modern epos, they affirm the priority of the journalistic and analytical origins over an artistic one and oppose imagination. LFA prose of that period is dominated by travel essays, which largely reflect the principles of cinematography (the first such a work was named by the author as “the path to a film” [19]). The advantage of cinema was in its clarity, the ability to set a certain angle of view, simply providing the pictures from life (as it happened in popular cinema magazines) - and the LFA representatives tried to embody these features into their poems and prose. The authors of travel essays stressed that everything described is absolutely real, all the details correspond to reality and their routes can be easily repeated. The narrative is dominated by the present, the effect of presence and a direct hero observation is created in a text. This is also a characteristic feature of cinematography, noted in a number of studies [12,13]. But despite the indicated removal of the author from an artistic comprehension (he provides the record of life to his readers, and not the result of its generalization), the LFA representatives tried to develop a certain perception of a text (and more globally - the life of the country). For example, S. Tretyakov’s essay states that a reader must change the “a consumer’s eye” to “production”, and then an opening picture will “dictate the brain the reflex of admiration” by the activity of socialists [20, p.24]. So the appeal to the principles of modern cinema art helps LFA representatives to implement an agitation task.

## CONCLUSIONS

The origins of the literary cinematography of LFA, as well as the perception of the association as cinematic one are associated with various reasons. First, there were points of contact between the principles of futurism (and then LFA) and the theory of cinematography. These include the desire to give dynamism, the specific spatial-temporal organization of works and the editing nature of the composition to a text.

Secondly, it is possible to note the moments that bring the trend creativity closer to the cinema art of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is a folk, “farce” atmosphere, implemented in different versions, as well as the attention of futurists to technology, progress and the world of

future. These features do not reflect the direct connection between cinema and literature of association, but act on contemporaries at the associative level.

Thirdly, the LFA representatives declare directly about the need of interaction between literature and cinema and use cinematographic techniques and principles. At the first stage of development, the group members conduct experiments with the transfer of time, space, the combination of different narrative layers; Due to this, the task of the approach radical renewal for an artistic text creation is realized. The second stage focuses on the “dynamic observation situation”, the hero’s fixation on the present tense, and the development of a certain angle of view among readers. This view makes it possible to carry out the agitation task.

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