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**THE GENEALOGY OF GESTURE:  
FROM KIRA MURATOVA TO RENATA LITVINOVA**



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**A**bstract. The long-term creative collaboration between Kira Muratova and Renata Litvinova began with the film “Uvlechen’ya” (“Pastimes”, 1994), in which Litvinova took part both as an actress and a screenwriter. Since then, Litvinova has become one of the most striking personifications of Muratova’s ornamental film style, which brings about a specific regime of visibility by foregrounding the eccentric corporeality of non-professional actors, or gesturality as a category of bodily and speech performance. This article focuses on the primary scene of gestural genealogy linking the two directors: thus, the pathologist’s gesture from nurse Lilya’s monologue, written and recited by Litvinova in her inner eccentric manner in Muratova’s film, unfolds in a full-length film narration of “Rita’s Last Fairy Tale” (2012), with a phantasmagorical plot and spectacular visuals characteristic of Litvinova’s directorial style. The article addresses, on the one hand, this gesture, expressing concisely the manifold and bidirectional relation between Muratova’s and Litvinova’s films, and, on the other, discusses possible ways of theoretical conceptions of gesture in text and cinema. Gesture is conceived of as a borderline figure of speech and/or of body, aimed at an absent object, whereby the grasping function of the hand makes gestures to a figure of metalepsis which, translated into the language of cinema, emphasises the haptic character of the image. The missing object around which gesticulation arises leads to a discussion of the problematic status of gesture as a sign as well as to the disturbed process of signification during its interpretation. Since gesture only indicates and signals but does not signify, one can speak of the semiotic function of monstration. A gesture appears as a monster in the literal sense of the word, that is, the one who shows itself and, in so doing, warns. Thus, using gestures, to some extent requires adopting the position of a monster – to designate by putting oneself on the show, by making oneself the object of spectacle. Both films and the figure of Litvinova therein are viewed through the prism of monstrosity of gesture and language – it is through the disjunction between showing and speaking that gesture becomes exposed as a pure medium.

**K**ey words: gesture; thing; narrative; metalepsis; media; surface; monstration; monster; language; mediality.

## **I**ntroduction: Milan Kundera's gesture of Immortality

In the opening scene of Milan Kundera's "Immortality" (1988), the protagonist contemplates a woman walking around the pool and waving at her lifeguard with a gesture of "enchanted lightness" ("okouzlující lehkost") – "as if she were playfully tossing a brightly-coloured ball to her lover" [Kundera 1992: 3; Kundera 1993: 11]. Mesmerised by this charming but painfully familiar image, the narrator recollects Agnes, whose peculiar farewell gesture he felt reminded of in that very instant. He recounts how Agnes, in her turn, borrows this enamouring movement of lifting the arm in the air from her father's sweetheart, and how later Agnes's younger sister Laura appropriates the same gesture representing "a misty idea of love" and "eternal femininity" [Kundera 1992: 4, 101, 384]. In this mimetic chain, the gesture is passed on from one female character to another as a kind of magic fetish and epitome of timelessness, or immortality. The gesture brings together the characters in mum proximity and serves as an embryo from which the narration springs just as the female character arises in a generic act of literary (pro)creation – "Just as Eve came from Adam's rib, just as Venus was born out of the waves" [Kundera 1992: 7]. As early as the first chapter, the narrator ad-

mits Agnes to be merely a spontaneous figment of his imagination – "Agnes. I had never known a woman by that name" [Kundera 1992: 4] – confirming it again in the novel's ending.

Kundera's unsettling patriarchal demiurgic logocentrism put aside, what strikes in the novel most is the central role of gesture as the momentum of text generation: it opens the narration, unfolds itself into an exuberant fictional world, frames the novel's composition, and serves as the leitmotif. In the beginning, was not the word but the gesture, muses the narrator, "the thing that started it all, the gesture of a woman waving to a lifeguard by the side of a pool" [Kundera 1992: 38].<sup>1</sup> Kundera masterfully creates a poetics of gestural heredity interlacing divergent storylines and overcoming spatial-temporal discontinuity. What is more, he reveals the potential of gesture to unfold the plot from a figure of speech and a figure of body, bringing the renowned formalist device of trope realisation back to corporeality. A figure of speech is, first of all, a bodily posture, and, as such, it underlies figurative language.

In the following remarks, I inquire into the tension between word and body, the sayable and the visible, which is crucial to my understanding of gesture across art, philosophy, literature, and cinema. Michel Foucault and, after him, Gilles Deleuze convincingly showed that "what we see

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<sup>1</sup>The original in Czech "to, co bylo na počátku všeho" [what was at the beginning of all] [Kundera 1993: 41] was unfortunately lost in the English translation.

never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying” [Foucault 2018: 10; Deleuze 2006: 66]. However, it is only from this crucial incompatibility, or a (non-)relation between discursive practices of statement and non-discursive practices of visibilities, that new knowledge can emerge [Deleuze 2006: 51]. Deleuze defines the relation between the enunciable and the visible as a “battle” of two heterogeneous series corresponding to the logic-mathematical operation of disjunction and finds the most complete examples of such disjunction in the art of cinema [Deleuze 2006: 64–65]. A discussion of the relation between the visible and articulable, their “prodigious... interweaving” and a “perpetual irrational break” [Deleuze 2006: 65–67] inevitably leads to cinematography, “the homeland of gestures”, in Agamben’s words [Agamben 2000: 55].

Drawing on the idea of a gestural genealogy inspired by Kundera’s novel, this article addresses two films – Kira Muratova’s “Pastimes” (“Uvlech-en’ya”, 1994)<sup>1</sup> and Renata Litvinova’s “Rita’s Last Fairy Tale” (“Poslednyaya skazka Rity”, 2012) – which enter the relation of cinematic lineage with each other while offering a paradigmatic film case of narratological “unfolding” of a single simple gesture (fabula) into a plethoric plot (syuzhet),

nearly in the sense of the formalist *razvertyvanie syuzheta*. This gesture belongs to the pathologist who, performing an autopsy, throws a cigarette end into the stomach of the corpse. Whereas this absurd gesture is employed in Muratova’s still decidedly realistic film on the level of discourse and a hand gesture (an embedded story told by the protagonist), a *divertissement*, diverting the attention from the main plot, in Litvinova’s film, this gesture unrolls into a full-length phantasmagoric plot – a fairy-tale, as the title promises. Both films feature Renata Litvinova, who recites the tale in “Pastimes” and enacts it retroactively in “Rita’s Last Fairy Tale”.

### “Pastimes”: Telling gesture

It is exactly during the shooting of “Pastimes” that Kira Muratova claimed to discover erstwhile screenwriter Renata Litvinova as an extraordinary actress.<sup>2</sup> Impressed by her demeanour and voice intonations Muratova invites Litvinova to play the lead role of the circus artist Violetta, but then changes her mind, and, at Evgeniy Golubenko’s suggestion, decides to “split” the female protagonist into two characters [Litvinova 2007: 7]: the lively brunette Violetta (Svetlana Kolenda), and the blonde Lilya, fascinated by death and beauty (Renata Litvinova).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The other translations of the title in literature and movie databases are “Enthusiasms”, “Passions”, and “Hobbies”.

<sup>2</sup> See Muratova’s foreword in [Litvinova 2007: 6].

<sup>3</sup> The nurse’s storyline was based on Litvinova’s screenplay “Monologi medsestry” (“Nurse’s Monologues”) which she wrote as a student of the VGIK [Litvinova 2012] and which was later published in her book of prose “Obladat’ i prinadlezhat” [Litvinova 2007].

Defying traditional cinematic narratives, the event structure of the film is confined to the characters' conversations about their hobbies and passions. The film plays out in three principal locations: a hippodrome, a sanatorium and the circus of a resort town, and centres on jockeys, circus artists, and the nurse Lilya. Muratova described "Pastimes" as "a superficial film <...> it is a film about the surface of things. But it is a very deep film about the surface" [cit. in Graham 1998: 151]. In the course of the film, the morbid nurse Lilya, who works in the hospital morgue, keeps telling various semi-absurd stories to the patients of the seaside sanatorium, including the story of her friend's disease and death [6:19–10:00]. The name of the friend – Rita Gotë – patently plays on Marguerite Gautier, the heroine of "La Dame aux Camélias" by Alexandre Dumas *filis*. In the spirit of Litvinova's thanatopoeics, Lilya recounts the scene of autopsy she observed, during which the pathologist throws a cigarette butt into Rita's stomach and lets his assistants sew it up.

«Вскрытие уже началось. Я встала у стены. Я не подошла близко, но я видела иногда ее голову с забросанными назад волосами. Лицо в профиль. В тот день патологоанатомом был такой парень. Он всегда мне был похабен. У него были маслянистые волосы – черные прожиренные пряди, и, мне кажется, он знал... он знал и поэтому-то в конце вскрытия закурил и, сделав разве что вида две-три затяжки, бросил окурочок прямо в живот Риты

Готье, и тут же его ассистенты так и зашили. И он был доволен такой своей выходкой несколько мгновений. И никто ничего не сказал. Никто не взял на себя право вмешиваться в их прозекторские дела! И я ничего не сказала. Потом я вышла. Потом я видела его на остановке. Он отвернулся. У него было упавшее настроение в окружении живых людей».

The eerie and somewhat derogatory scene that Lilya describes fades into the background – at stake is her unearthly demeanour, eccentric poses, and unusual gestures (Fig. 1). Remarkably, while telling Rita's story Lilya is twirling a nail file between her fingers which, in this context, alludes to the traumatic scene of the dissection (to the scalpel and/or cigarette end in the pathologist's hands) and, by the same token, serves as an unequivocal indication to castration (Lilya is there to manicure her patient, the jockey, whose entire body is immobilised by plaster). Zara Abdullaeva describes the scene in the following way: "The hands and the nail file are playing along with the narration. These 'ballet' hands are improvising 'choreographic miniatures'" [Abdullaeva: 199]. The pace of the main plot slows down, as the action seems to be bracketed, while Lilya mesmerises her listeners with her comical solemnity and shamanic voice. She seems to enjoy every sound in this foreign literary name "Rita Gautier" so that it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that her whole monologue unfolds from the pleasure of articulation, or some kind of "au-

ditive hedonism” which makes palpable the link between sound and gesture. Lilya’s mellifluous, spellbinding monologue only opens up a space for a gesture performance – she throws up her hand with an invisible cigarette butt and keeps talking.



Fig. 1. Nurse Lilya (“Pastimes”) is telling her story about Rita and miming the pathologist’s gesture

Oleg Aronson rightly observes that any text, written or spoken, is alien and even traumatic to the nature of cinema. It erupts into the visual field and substitutes visuality with words creating a gap that signals: here is a brief moment of

sense-making.<sup>1</sup> Aronson emphasises that Muratova seeks to create a distance from speaking, reading, or sound as bearers of meanings (semantics), in order to foreground their secondariness vis-à-vis the cinematic image and to return to pure visuality. She achieves this through the specific device of visual defamiliarisation, which Aronson calls “недоприем” [under-device] or “манера” [manner] [Aronson 2003: 208]: “Text and voice in film require a device. Repetition, artificial amplification of intonation, declamation – all this allows to translate the speech articulation into visuality, to create a zone of visibility where speaking and an illusion of comprehension used to be” [Aronson 2003: 213]. For example, Litvinova’s mannered speech in “Pastimes” represents for Aronson such an “under-technique” of text defamiliarisation in the film [Aronson 1997: 107].

Gesture is often associated with suspension or deflection of action, movement, or narrative. Thus, analysing Laurence Sterne’s “Tristram Shandy”, Viktor Shklovsky points out that Stern makes his characters freeze in a particular posture or gesture. Shklovsky compares this function of gesture with a technique of defamiliarisation [Shklovskiy 1921: 35] and, somewhere else, calls it deviation and suspension of narration [Shklovskiy 1983]. Likewise, Andrey Belyi compares gestures in Gogol’s “Overcoat” with

<sup>1</sup>The original reads as follows: «перед нами малый участок неизбежного включения смысла» [Aronson 2003: 212].

a narrative digression: “The gesture leads away from the plot”; in “The Government Inspector”, gesture transforms at once into a “frozen countenance” (think of the famed finale of the play) testifying to petrified, or dead gestures [Belyi: 160–162]. Walter Benjamin, too, in his reflections on Bertold Brecht’s epic theatre suggests that gesture has “frame-like, enclosed nature” and, therefore, interrupts the action, just as a quote interrupts a text – “the more frequently we interrupt someone engaged in an action, the more gestures we obtain” [Benjamin: 3, 24]. For Jacques Lacan, gesture, in contrast to action, arrests movement insofar as it enters the scopic regime – in this manner, a threatening gesture stops the action, and this power of stoppage is comparable with the function of “the evil eye”:

“This terminal time of the gaze, which completes the gesture, I place strictly in relation to what I later say about the evil eye. The gaze in itself not only terminates the movement, it freezes it. Take those dances I mentioned – they are always punctuated by a series of times of arrest in which the actors pause in a frozen attitude. What is that thrust, that time of arrest of the movement? It is simply the fascinating effect, in that it is a question of dispossessing the evil eye of the gaze,

in order to ward it off. The evil eye is the *fascinum*, it is that which has the effect of arresting movement and, literally, of killing life. At the moment the subject stops, suspending his gesture, he is mortified. The anti-life, anti-movement function of this terminal point is the *fascinum*, and it is precisely one of the dimensions in which the power of the gaze is exercised directly” [Lacan 1998: 117–118].

The link between gesture and the moment of seeing highlighted by Lacan is essential for cinema, for arresting movement, gesture offers it as a spectacle – the showing (*le donner-à-voir*) [Lacan 1998: 115], or “the laying down of the gaze” [Lacan 1998: 114]. It is exactly this bewitching power of gesture that we discover in Litvinova’s persona throughout her cinematic works and media appearances. After starring in “Pastimes”, Litvinova has taken part both in the leading and bit parts of almost all of Muratova’s following films and has become a filmmaker and a media celebrity in her own right.<sup>1</sup>

### “Rita’s Last Fairy Tale”: Showing gesture

Eighteen years later, Litvinova returns to the story of Rita Gautier.<sup>2</sup> The outlandish nurse Lilya incarnates in the figure of the nurse Tanya Neubivko

<sup>1</sup> Litvinova stars in the following Muratova’s films: “Uvlechen’ya” (Pastimes) (script and the part of nurse Lilya, 1994), “Tri istorii” (Three Stories) (script and the part of nurse Ofa, 1997), “Nastroyschik” (The Tuner) (the part of Lina, 2004), “Dva v odnom” (Two in One) (as the author of the second part and the role of tram driver Alisa, 2007), “Melodiya dlya sharmanki” (A Melody for a Street Organ) (cameo, 2009), “Vechnoe vozvrashchenie” (Eternal Homecomings) (the female part, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> The film is based both on the screenplay “Monologi medsestry” (Nurse’s Monologues) and “Ochen’ lyubimaya Rita, poslednyaya vstrecha s ney” (Very beloved Rita, the last encounter with her) [Litvinova 2007: 28–61].

(literally, ‘the one who cannot be killed’), an infernal figure that accompanies moribund patients to the other world. The nested story that served in Muratova’s film as a salon discussion becomes actualised in a complex narrative and visually exuberant spectacle, forming a series with “Pastimes”. Two friends, nurse Tanya Neubivko (Litvinova) and a doctor named Nadezhda (Ta’yana Drubich), take care of their terminally ill friend Rita (Ol’ga Kuzina) in the hospital where they both work. The three women spend Rita’s last days on earth talking, smoking, and preparing her transition to another world. After Rita’s death, Tanya and Nadezhda organise the funeral. The film includes numerous fantastic sequences, including Rita’s surrealist dreams and Tanya’s traversing the threshold between this and the other world through the portals hidden in the ancient buildings, but, basically, follows the fabula of Lilya’s monologue from Muratova’s film.

The pathologist’s wicked gesture that Lilya mimes in Muratova’s film develops here, first, into the pervasive smoking of all characters, from doctors to patients, and, second, into a macabre scene of dissection and burying a still smoking cigarette in Rita’s stomach. Although everywhere in the hospital we see banners saying “No smoking!” this prohibition is rendered void. Smoke becomes an important element of Litvinova’s translucent visuals (Fig. 2). Olga Mukhortova, analysing the gesture of chain smoking in “*Rita’s Last Fairy Tale*,” observes that slow smoking underscores the contemplative character of Litvinova’s directional style: the viewer is compelled to refocus their attention from the plot

to “the mise-en-scène, gestures, movements, actors’ performances and their faces, bodies, costume design” [Mukhortova 2019]. One might also say that the gesture of smoking makes the film image durable and photogenic. Rita’s story told by Litvinova’s characters unfolds as an aestheticised and prolonged realisation of the metaphor of smoking the last cigarette before death.



Fig. 2. A scene of smoking in “*Rita’s Last Fairy Tale*”

The murky dissection room is shown through a muddy plastic screen – a reminder of the cinema dispositif – that distorts the view and separates Nadezhda, observing the procedure, from the team of pathologists. Remarkable is the low-angle shot of the crucial scene when the pathologist named Bezzaborkin throws the cigarette into the body (Fig. 3–4). It evokes an uncanny feeling of some inanimate matter looking back at you. The gaze comes from the corpse hidden from the camera view – from an ‘impossible’ perspective,



whose origin remains beyond visualisation but within the scopic field. The camera thus acts as a bearer of an unworldly gaze. As Lacan warns, the gaze always comes from outside, from things, and it is the superimposition of the subject's looking at things and the things rendering the gaze that the scopic field gains its tension [Lacan 1998: 106–109].



Fig. 3. Pathologist Bezzaborkin is throwing the cigarette into the corpse

Why do this nonsensical episode and this strange and somewhat jocular gesture play such an important role? It is unlikely that Litvinova was unaware of the set of psychoanalytic clichés associated with a cigarette and its utter over-use in cinema.<sup>1</sup> Bluntly speaking, this gesture



Fig. 4. The 'impossible' perspective

stands for a monstrous inversion of conception, quite in the spirit of Litvinova's fascination for death and related anti-generative and anti-patriarchal poetics.<sup>2</sup> There is also a pragmatic explanation: a surgical instrument forgotten in the patient's body is not only an urban legend but also quite a possible occurrence which gains a grotesque dimension in Litvinova. After all, surgery is another name for a work of hand (Greek χειρουργία – 'handiwork, surgery', from χείρ 'hand' and ἔργον 'work'). Remarkably, this motif appears in the script of Muratova's unrealised film "Watch Your Dreams Attentively" (1969), namely in the female protagonist's dream sequence:

<sup>1</sup> Mukhortova rightly argues that the smoking in "Rita's Last Fairy Tale" reclaims the iconic cinematic gesture irrevocably disappearing after the law banning smoking in film came into effect in 2013 [Mukhortova 2019].

<sup>2</sup> In the novella "Ophelia" (from Muratova's "Three Stories"), written by Litvinova as well, Ofa (shortened from Ophelia) smokes a cigarette after having sex as well as after having committed a murder.

“Something’s missing in me, or maybe on the contrary, I have some extra part which has been left in me, *like some inattentive surgeons might forget their pincers*. There are sometimes surgeons like that, *who stitch up a person’s stomach and forget that they’ve left the pincers inside*” [Muratova/Zuev 2014: 80; emphasis added].

A thing left inside serves as plot inception, a fecund seed forming the narrative. Contrary to the Barthesian insignificant detail that creates the effect of reality, we confront here a significant detail producing the effect of irreality. What else is Rita’s death than pure fantasy, a literary factum generated by Dumas and borrowed by Litvinova thanks to her fancy name and “beautiful death”?<sup>1</sup> In Muratova’s “A Melody for a Street Organ” (2009), Litvinova’s character quotes from another epochal novel of a different historical context – Maxim Gorky’s “Klim Samgin” – and exclaims theatrically: “А был ли мальчик? [Was there a boy at all?]. This query has become a common phrase in colloquial Russian, expressing an ironic distance towards any ideological construct, as well as unabating epistemological doubt regarding the status of reality.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, was there any

Rita Gautier? Or is she just an embodied figure of speech doomed to eternal return? After Rita’s death, her sweetheart Kolya (Nikolay Khomeriki) discovers her dying note saying, “My beloved Kolya. I’ll be back soon. Unnoticed to everyone. Don’t worry. Yours, Rita.”

### A figure of a figure

Curiously enough, José Ortega y Gasset compares metaphor with “a tool for creation which God forgot inside one of His creatures when he made him” [Ortega y Gasset 2019: 33] like “*a distracted surgeon forgets his instrument in the stomach of his patient*” [Ortega y Gasset 1947: 372; emphasis added].<sup>3</sup> Thus, the surgeon’s gesture figures in Ortega y Gasset no less than a metaphor of metaphor as well as a thing hidden from the eyes and concealing a fruitful potentiality of creativity verging on magic. Gesture is, however, structurally closer to another “master trope” – metonymy, since it yields foremost on the syntagmatic axis. Without going into details regarding the terminological ambiguity of metaphor and metonymy,<sup>4</sup> it suffices to evoke Roman Jakobson’s classic opposition of the two tropes

<sup>1</sup> Litvinova deploys the plot of staging a bookish death also in “Ophelia”, in which the nurse Ofa fulfills her mother’s idea of a beautiful death – the one of Shakespeare’s eponymous heroines – by drowning her. In “Pastimes”, Lilya also monologises about her fatal penchant for beautiful dying.

<sup>2</sup> On the meaning and context of this motif in Gorky, cf. [Hamidy: 273].

<sup>3</sup> My translation. The comparison with a surgeon is omitted in the English translation.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account of this problematics, including the lack of a sound theoretical treatment of metonymy, see [Matzner 2016].

that convey two kinds of relation: the one of similarity/substitution which stands for metaphor and the one of contiguity/combination which stands for metonymy [Jakobson]. It is the latter that determines the pathologist's gesture as any gesture, since gesturing substitutes nothing (idea, words, etc.) but rather refers and points out to something else (would it be a narrative context they produce, or an allusion to a precursor, or to a trope they realise, or just a thing). Gesture offers a contiguity relation in the literal sense as a point of contact (Latin *contingere* means "to happen" and "to touch") and hence hints at a possibility of a genealogy.

Gesture is, more precisely, a specific variety of metonymy, namely metalepsis, the rhetorical figure known since antiquity that consists in replacing a logically preceding concept with a subsequent one and vice versa; or in "the metonymic substitution of a word for a word already figurative" [Bloom: 74]. Quintilian considered metalepsis, or transumption in Latin, as a form of permissible speech error and dissuaded to use it unless only in a comedy [Quintilian: 323].<sup>1</sup> Elaborating his concept of poetic influence, Harold Bloom rehabilitates metalepsis, pronouncing it to a full-fledged trope and "the major mode of poetic allusion" since the Renaissance [Bloom: 102]. Bloom calls metalepsis "the trope of a

trope" and elevates it to the status of the ultimate figure for the act of reading and interpretation [Bloom: 74].

That metalepsis is fundamentally a gestural concept that follows also from its etymology: *μετάληψις* derives from the Greek *μετά-* ("what is above") and *λαμβάνω* ("to grab", "to seize"). Any metalepsis can be reduced to "a grabbing gesture that reaches across levels and ignores boundaries, bringing to the bottom what belongs to the top or vice versa" [Ryan: 441]. Metalepsis, therefore, entwines body and language, the visible and the sayable in one single figure on the borderline between elocution and movement. Put another way, metalepsis redefines the field of the visual in terms of contiguity and hapticity, and thus offers the figure of speech for a tactile epistemology, to use Laura Marks's term [Marks].

### **Grabbing a missing object**

There is, however, a highly problematic relationship between the gesture and the object it seeks to grab. Touch is not always involved in the process of gesticulation, for the thing evades the field of visibility – the object often gets lost, and even if it can be grasped it will only be a *pars-pro-toto*, a partial object. The hand cannot grasp its object in its entirety if at all, it can only point at it as an index. One can go on to say that

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the concept of metalepsis in narratology as interweaving of incompatible diegetic levels and the arising comic effect thereof. See [Genette; Ryan].

gesture shows an inextricable and always asymmetrical link between the subject and the object, between the hand and the thing, and, eventually, obstructs the process of cognition (grasping, comprehension) and symbolic appropriation.

One of the collective publications on gesture mentions in passing that gesture has become “a peculiar thing” on the margins of theoretical thinking [Görling et al.]. It is symptomatic that gesture not only signals problematic verbalisation but is recurrently referred to as nothing other than a “thing”, another floating signifier prone to be filled with any arbitrary content. The association of gesture with a thing makes unwittingly emerging psychoanalytic associations utterly hard to ignore. Would not gesture be that binding element between the subject and the object? Ortega y Gasset wrote that metaphor offers an escape from the realm of the real and substitutes one thing for another not in order to get to it but to conceal and avoid [Ortega y Gasset 1947: 373]. But in gesture, the relation with reality and with objects is no less antinomic. Here, we face the Freudian orientation of the human subject to the object, reassessed as in terms of disjunction: either the body or the object is missing. If the object is lacking, the gesture is or appears as manipulation with a missing object. It is exactly when I seek – mostly in vain – a proper word my hand tries to reach some invisible thing and is doomed to merely circling around and contouring in the void. The desired object can never be (re)found, since, as psychoanalysis teaches us, it never ex-

isted in the first place. It is nothing, a no-Thing [Lacan 1992: 121]. Similar to Lacan’s claim that all art is characterised by a certain mode of organisation around emptiness [Lacan 1992: 130], gesture, too, should be defined in relation to a lost object and the emptiness effectuated by this loss. Gesture originates from the fundamental desire, from striving for and nostalgic mourning of a missing object, so that absence is a necessary condition for bodily movements to be perceived as gestures.

The feminine gesture glorified in Kundera’s novel is constructed around an invisible ball whereby triggering the working of memory and generating a gestural genealogy. In a like manner, the protagonist of Nabokov’s outwardly gestural novel “Pnin”, a Russian emigre professor in America, enters a sports shop and asks for a “football ball”. Having received a prolate American football, Pnin has to resort to the last available means to make the salesman grasp what he wanted:

“And with wrists and palms he outlined a portable world. It was the same gesture he used in class when speaking of the ‘harmonical wholeness’ of Pushkin. The salesman lifted a finger and silently fetched a soccer ball” [Nabokov: 99].

Similarly, Nadezhda (“Rita’s Last Fairy Tale”) outraged by the desecration of her friend’s dead body describes, still shaking, this scene to Tanya and imitates the pathologist’s gesture by holding

an invisible cigarette (Fig. 5). Lilya (“Pastimes”) does the same by drawing a line in the air in her usual histrionic manner. Interestingly, both films form a reversed – metaleptic – chronology: the events of Litvinova’s film precede their description in Muratova’s film, shot much earlier, while in both films there is the same gesture interconnecting the two directors by its genealogical bond of mutual influence.



Fig. 5. Nadezhda demonstrates the pathologist’s gesture to Tanya

Even more significant, however, is that the gesture of holding a cigarette is a perfectly transferable hand movement which one can easily imitate and repeat but also perform without any actual object. Put differently, a gesture of smok-

ing can be demonstrated without actually smoking, just as the gesture of throwing can be shown without actually tossing anything. It is a perfect example of a gesture as a pure means. Agamben prominently defines gesture as the sphere of pure mediality emancipated from the relation with an end and exhibiting the endless potentiality of the human body. He posits gesture as a third type of human action at the intersection between *praxis* (action) which has its end in itself and *poiēsis* (production) which has its end in a work. What makes gestures different from the other two modes of doing is that their ends coincide with their effectuation and the exhibition of the media character of corporal movements [Agamben 2000: 69]. In gesture (from Latin *gerō* – ‘to bear’, ‘to carry (on)’), “nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported” [Agamben 2000: 56].

### Illegible gestures

“An enchanted look, brittle gestures, ariose intonation of surprise, habits of semblant helplessness...”, so describes film critic Tatiana Moskvina [Moskvina] the recognisable diva-image.<sup>1</sup> Litvinova fancifully incorporates the elegance of a sophisticated *femme fatale* with the demeanour of an ungainly clownish plebeian. She embodies this comic duality both in her texts, in

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Litvinova as a star persona, see [Mukhortova 2017].

which the grotesqueness of the plot intersects with the ludic monstrosity of the language, and in her spectacular on-screen performances, as if the linguistic clumsiness (stylistic errors, pretentious neologisms, pompous figures of speech adjoining vernacular expressions, etc.) finds its continuation in the various bodily mannerisms. Muratova sagaciously remarks that Litvinova's mannerism has nothing to do with artificiality: "You can equally call mannered a lily flower or a cat. But it is just their way of being natural" [Star-odubets].

It is mainly thanks to her mannerisms that Litvinova has become the most representative figure of Muratova's cinematic style.<sup>1</sup> Muratova recalled that Litvinova's role in "Pastimes" arose from nothing else but "plasticity" [plastika] [Litvinova 2007: 7]. Gesture underlays Litvinova photogénie,<sup>2</sup> or, more precisely, her cineplasticity. The latter term, implying a gestural dimension of the cinematic image, was coined by French art historian Élie Faure in his 1922 essay "De la cinéplastique". Drawing on plastic art, dance, and architecture, Faure understood cineplasticity metaphorically as "architecture of movement" incorporating time into space [Faure: 8] and representing "an autonomous language of visual

signs, akin to gestures and ideographs" [Bulot: 246].

It is hardly possible to draw a clear distinction between the fictional characters embodied by Litvinova in different (Muratova's and her own) films and her media personality. Thus, the nurse Lilya, fascinated by death, transforms into Ophelia, a maternity hospital nurse of Muratova's "Three Stories" (1997), who is obsessed with the idea to take revenge on the women who abandoned their newborn children. A similar function fulfils Lina, Litvinova's character in "The Tuner", who assumes the role of "the hand of God" and, under the pretext of punishing the women who had abortions, commits frauds. Mannerism is to be understood here as a work of hands (from the Latin *manus* – 'hand') and manipulation. The effect of interference reaches to the apparently intentional alliterations in the names of the female characters intrusively pointing out to Litvinova's own name: Lilya, Ophelia, Lina, Alisa ("Two in One"). The phonetic fluidity of vowels and sonorants, also called liquid consonants, and the curves of the letters reveal the underlying sonic and graphic gesturality, which, in turn, reverberates in Litvinova's corporeal image: the stooped shoulders, the slightly

<sup>1</sup> As Anatolii Vasil'ev notes, "Muratova has only one object [of depiction], and it is Renata". Cit. in [Abdullaeva: 270].

<sup>2</sup> In 1919, Louis Delluc formulated his renowned term *photogénie*. As early as one year later, Jean Epstein observed: "With the notion of photogénie, the concept of cinema as an art was born" [Epstein: 300]. It is to Epstein that we are indebted for a theoretical elaboration of this term.

bowed head, the expressive hands, often raised at the level of the face, and the arcuate fingers as if ready to grab something. Her fictional personae represent variations of the same character which, in turn, is based on her real media image. This flickering effect resulting thereof broaches the issue of media subjectivity and related power dispositif.<sup>2</sup>

In her discussion of Robert Wilson, Erika Fischer-Lichte emphasises the reorientation in the category of a fictional character which occurs through “desemantisation” and “deconstruction”, so that the audience is no longer able to perceive the performers’ movements and gestures *as signs*. Rather, their attention would be now drawn to speed, intensity, strength, energy. It is, hence, no longer the playing of the character’s psychology that is at stake but presenting one’s own physicality [*Körperlichkeit*], the process of incorporation itself [Fischer-Lichte: 146]. Litvinova’s performance of her corporeity reveals a similar mechanism blocking the process of signification and offering instead “a contemplative immersion into the gesture” [Fischer-Lichte: 246]. To read the body and gestures has little to do with cherology, the science of sign language, but abuts instead on chiromancy. The knowledge produced in this process resembles a divination and the interpreter – a fortune teller.

Delving into the intricacy and polysemy of body concepts, Jean-Luc Nancy repeatedly claims that a body (*corpus*) constantly shatters signification oscillating between meaning and meaningless. The only thing the body (and its gestures) can offer without fail is its visibility; put differently, the body presents itself to other bodies as an image:

“To see bodies is not to unveil a mystery; it is seeing what is there to be seen, an image <...> There is nothing to decipher in a body – except for the fact that the body’s cipher is the body itself, not ciphered, just extended” [Nancy: 47].

Litvinova’s speech and gestures enchant but disturb and bewilder at the same time. But any gestures “arouse anxiety,” as Matthias Schöning puts it boldly [Schöning]. The deportment of Litvinova’s heroines appears strange and comical, for it resists the habitual process of perusal. What one expects from such a body-reading is to look ‘under the skin’ where some message lurks, or, on the contrary, to find confirmation that all is just irony and mockery – that the gestures simply make no sense, just as palmistry is a pseudoscience. Boris Groys describes such an effect in terms of “media ontological suspicion”, meaning an inevitable assumption that something invis-

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<sup>1</sup> Somewhere else, I argued that Litvinova represented an authorially privileged character in Muratova’s films [Schulzki, Eshelman].

ble must be hidden behind “the media surface” [Groys: 29, 22]. Whether there is indeed some “submedial subject” lurking in the depths of the sub-media space and manifesting itself through a manipulative emission of signs can neither be proven nor refuted, for it would contradict the bedrock of Groys’s phenomenology of ubiquitous suspicion.<sup>1</sup>

Remarkably, the opposition surface/depth frequently emerges in the literature discussing the phenomenon of Litvinova. Emma Widdis observes that Litvinova

“is almost an object herself, to be experienced haptically, at once surface and depth. In a sense, Litvinova has become Muratova’s most perplexing comment on human subjectivity. In this film, as in all those where she appears, she provides a bewitchingly empty symbol, a human being in which all *meaning* appears to be entirely external” [Widdis].

In the same vein, Mikhail Iampolski remarks that Litvinova has an incredible ability to exaggerate all the external, visible and superficial sides as the primary medium of signification, which, after all, agrees with the ontology of cinema [Yampol’skiy: 92].

Gestures compel to a different modus of engagement with the media surface, which Aleida

Assmann called “wild semiosis”: reading as a natural human propensity to decipher the world by moving from the signifiers to the signified is replaced by the posture of staring or goggling. One cannot turn one’s eyes away from the density of the surface [Assmann: 240]. This lingering (the Lacanian *fascinum*) renders the surface illegible. Yet the illegibility of gestures is probably what breaks their relation to purposiveness and renders them inoperative while elevating to the status of pure means [Agamben 2018: 82].

### Monstration

There is, however, a possibility to adopt a different stance by grasping Litvinova’s gesturality as a sort of ontology. Thus, Vlad Strukov argues that

“<...> Litvinova’s gesture is not a means to obliterate depth but rather to display depth in a contoured manner on the surface of our perception <...> What to some critics appear as affected, chichi and flamboyant gesticulation is, in fact, a *haptic documentation of the visual path of the gaze*. Were it possible to trace the movement of Litvinova’s hands with a marker, it would reveal that her hands draw figures in the air in the shape of the zigzag. The zigzag is a geometric idiom, a grapheme of Litvinova’s internal gesture, that is, a movement of thought embodied in physical circumlocution” [Strukov: 70; emphasis added].

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the Groysian media theory in relation to Muratova and Litvinova, see [Schulzki, Eshelman].



From this quite interesting observation follows the formation of a gestural sign, in which both the signifier (“physical circumlocution”) and the signified (“internal gesture”) are formulated as an asymmetrical gestural composite functioning akin to a Möbius strip.

Curiously enough, an identical figure of thought as a zigzag was performed by one of the most prominent thinkers of surface, namely Gilles Deleuze, in the concluding part “Z as in Zigzag” of the series of conversations with Claire Parnet.<sup>1</sup> Picturing the letter Z in the air with his hand, Deleuze says that it reminds him of a lightning and the zigging trajectory of a fly what brings his reflection back to the beginning, to the letter A (as in Animal).<sup>2</sup> He recalls the wisdom of Zen, which is the reverse of Nose [*nez*], a zigzag, too. At the same time, zigzag represents “the elementary movement that presided at the creation of the world” – instead of the Big Bang, there was “an infinite curving” of the route of a fly, or the trajectory of the sombre precursor, which, invisible and imperceptible, places different potentials into interaction and thus lets a visible event emerge. In other words, the zigzag

gesture illuminates things and facilitates their appearance, just as philosophy and thinking do if they enlighten and reveal formerly invisible entities. Philosophy becomes, therefore, a zigzagging gesture in Deleuze and the most efficient way to demonstrate it is to use the hand.<sup>3</sup> Much earlier, in “The Logic of Sense” (1969), Deleuze called showing and giving examples instead of speaking a strategy of degression, or an art of descent – “monstration”. It is therefore remarkable that in his rare appearance on screen and shortly before his death, Deleuze resorted to this antediluvian trick of monstration himself. After all, as he says, the Z is the final word, and thus the end of speaking – the big silence.

In monstration – Deleuze, strangely enough, overlooks this link – lurks *monstrum*, the one who shows itself and, in so doing, warns (from *moneo* – to warn, to remind, to foretell, to reveal etc.). To some extent, a gesture is a sign revealing a monstrous structure. Furthermore, any sign is a monster, as Derrida convincingly showed in his reading of Heidegger [Derrida 1987]. Thus, using gestures requires adopting the position of a monster in the literal sense – to designate by

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<sup>1</sup> The 1988–1989 documentary “L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze” is directed by Pierre-André Boutang. I refer to the English translation of the film transcript made by Charles J. Stivale. Retrieved from: <http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/cstivale/d-g/abc1.html> (date of access: 03.09.2021).

<sup>2</sup> This part of the interview can be watched here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywQXi\\_z\\_59k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywQXi_z_59k). Examples of the zigzag movements [01:09-01:17].

<sup>3</sup> On zigzagging as an elementary gesture in Deleuze, see [Pisters].

putting oneself on show, by making oneself the object of spectacle. Isn't this the reason cinema – no matter whether silent film or talkie – has successfully claimed the status of “the homeland of gestures” (Agamben and, before him, Balázs) and incessantly exploited the monster topoi ever since?

Monstrosity, first and foremost, pertains to body visibilities and body irregularities. Since antiquity, a teratological figure of a monster is essentially a mixture of two realms, two species, two individuals, two sexes [Foucault 2004: 63].<sup>1</sup> It is no coincidence that critics have repeatedly noted Litvinova's ‘monstrosity’ by foregrounding the hybridity of her image. Thus, Aleksandr Arkhangel'skiy once called her acting style “serpentine”: “she slides rather than moving and hypnotises [обволакивает] rather than speaking” [Arkhangel'skiy: 22]. Yampolskiy writes that she “reproduces the structure of a *monster* combining incongruous elements of different animals” [Yampol'skiy: 92; emphasis in the original]. Her chimerism, comparable to Charlie Chaplin, consists in the “bizarre combination of ‘lumpenship’ [деклассированности] and mundane mannerism [светской манерности]” [Yampol'skiy: 92]. For Muratova, likewise, Litvinova has “a rare combination of a character actress with a

strange manner of speaking, thinking, moving, and being sometimes just insanely funny – and of a beauty” [Desyaterik]; she is both “voguish an old-fashioned... a Barbie doll and Marlene Dietrich” [Muratova 2004].

Whereas in Foucault the medieval monstrosity as a kind of morphological irregularity called not only the biological but also the juridical domain into question [Foucault 2004: 64], the monstrous beauty of Litvinova undermines the primitive law of aesthetics through the grotesque sinking from the sublime into the ridiculous. Such a comical turnover is characteristic of monsters and monstration. Deleuze reminds how Diogenes the Cynic answering Plato's definition of man as a biped and featherless animal brings forth a plucked fowl, and to the question “What is philosophy?”, responds by showing a cod on a string to the amusement of the audience [Deleuze 1990: 135f.]. Deleuze rightly notes that the fish poses the problem of muteness and, thus, of language. Already Plato criticised mere pointing to objects as a dubious and even degrading argumentation strategy: he “laughed at those who were satisfied with giving examples, pointing or designating, rather than attaining the Essence” [Deleuze 1990: 135f.]. In short, instead of an ascending movement (towards the heights of

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<sup>1</sup> As a matter of chance, “Pastimes” epitomises such monstrous mixture between humans and animals both on the level of the narrative (the photographer shows pictures of centaurs which he claims he saw and captured for real) and on the level of editing (the match cuts of human feet and horses' hooves, for example) – monstrous montage, one can say.

language and the Ideas), one descends (down to bodies). To do this, “what is required is humor” [Deleuze 1990: 135f.]. As we learnt above, such an art of descent is not alien to Deleuze either.

### **Monstrosity of language**

Gestures as monstration have an overtly comical effect also because of the clash between the visible and the enunciable they entail. It is in this sense that Litvinova and Chaplin are comparable. In one of the last sequences of *Modern Times*, the first movie where we hear Charlot’s voice, his character rehearses a song but keeps forgetting the lyrics. Each time it happens he freezes in an awkward posture. His girlfriend writes the text on the cuffs of his shirt, so the problem seems to be solved. Charlot walks onto the stage, yet, when he starts performing, he loses his cuffs, and, thus, cannot utter a single word. The orchestra is playing the introduction over and over again, but Charlot is inhibited to sing and has no choice but to improvise a gestural dance singing in a ‘Bogus’ language, a kind of gibberish, to the delight of the audience. Monsters rarely talk, and if they do their language is a Jabberwocky and *zaum*.

“The sleep of reason produces monsters,” says Goya’s famous aquatint. A similar collapse of language occurs in Muratova’s “Two in One”, when Litvinova’s character Alisa and the male protagonist (Bogdan Stupka) first passionately gesticulate Cavaradossi’s aria for a couple of minutes uttering gutturally, husky sounds, and then imitate

a catlike language. Nothing from the language remains intact: neither grammar nor syntax, neither any discernible words nor even morphemes. What remains is pure articulation and gesture. As Derrida once said about Artaud, speech is inseparable from gesture when it “lays bare the flesh of the word, lays bare the word’s sonority, intonation, intensity – the shout that the articulations of language and logic have not yet entirely frozen <...>” [Derrida 1978: 302].

Language becomes a gesture when the limits of language appear insurmountable and we feel the need to show with the hands, or, as Giorgio Agamben puts it, when we find ourselves “at a loss in language” [Agamben 1999: 78]. For Agamben, a pure gesture is intrinsically intertwined with the functioning of language, since it contains the possibility to speak (or not to speak). Agamben’s famous metaphor of gesture as a gag in the proper sense of the word – as “*something* that could be put in your mouth to hinder speech” [Agamben 2000: 58; emphasis added] – not only indicates the difficulties of signification and articulation, both the birth of speech and its decay, but have two additional implications. First, the psychoanalytical understanding of the subject’s primordial orientation towards the search of the Thing, that unreal object “beyond-of-the-signified” [Lacan 1992: 54], or “the dumb reality” [Lacan 1992: 55], which lies at the basis of all creation. Second, gesture as a gag unequivocally opens up gesturality to the comic. Speaking occurs not despite the gag/

gesture but because of it, both as a failure and an artistic device.

Apart from eccentric gesticulation, Litvinova's characters are quite loquacious, yet their speech is full of phrasal and lexical irregularities, out-of-place inversions, vernacular expressions and archaisms, puns, stylistic errors and mannerisms enhancing the comical effect. For instance, in Lilya's recital ("Pastimes") there are some droll inversions and unusual expressions: "В тот день патологоанатомом был такой молодой парень. Он всегда мне был похабен" [The pathologist was such a young guy that day. He was always sleazy to me]; "И он был доволен такой своей выходкой несколько мгновений" [And he was pleased with this mischief of his for a few moments]; "То есть она встретила мне вся подрастая, но веселая" [That is, I encountered her all dishevelled but cheerful]. Tanya ("Rita's Last Fairy Tale") is no less inarticulate: "Я теперь еще более близкая и более новейшая подруга" [I am now an even closer and more newest (sic!) friend].<sup>1</sup> Litvinova's tongue-tied verbosity turns out to be linguistic feebleness elevated to a literary device.

Particularly conspicuous, the comic effect becomes when she utters diminutives (such as "пятиминутка" [five-minute-briefing] or

"пакетик" [plastic bag]) or the Gogolesque names (Neubivko, Bezzaborkin)<sup>2</sup> with solemn and majestic intonation. It is not out of place to bring up Boris Eichenbaum's notions of "articulatory expressiveness" and of "phonetic gesture" (*zvukovoy zhest*) which he develops in his famous reading of Gogol and which consists both in the use of specific words (diminutives, *zaum'*-words, etc.) and in the phrase construction: the juxtaposition of rhyming words, their succession and rhythmic interaction, and, at last, the gradual increase of tension, resolved unexpectedly (like in the name Akakiy Akakievich Bashmachkin or in the lengthy description of his appearance ending with the grotesque word "hemorrhoidal") [Eykhensbaum]. The fantastic "abnormality" of Litvinova's texts results from a grotesque combination of the melodramatic and comic *skaz*.

In "Pastimes", Lilya tells a slightly absurdist episode how she and her unnamed friend were looking for a white burial gown for Rita explaining that if a deceased girl is innocent, she is supposed to be buried in white clothes ("А мы с сослуживицей в тот день ходили искать Рите белое платье, потому как если девушка невинна, то ее непременно кладут в белом"). Suddenly Lilya digresses: "Но нигде мы не

<sup>1</sup> All translations are literal and for that reason contain deliberate errors to correspond to Litvinova's original style.

<sup>2</sup> The ridicule of their names (both from "Rita's Last Fairy Tale") comes from lack: both names contain negation (ne-, bez-). Litvinova has a penchant for funny names: the cafe "Zapredel'e" (The Other World), the funeral home "Vechnost'" (Eternity), etc.

могли ей найти этого белого платья, а вместо этого купили отчего-то в тот день красного карпа. В *этой...* в полиэтиленовом пакете” [But nowhere could we find a white gown for her, and instead bought, for some reason, a red carp that day. In this ... in a plastic bag]. This comic digression is illustrative of Litvinova’s monstrous language style in several respects. On the one hand, it spans from logical and verbal fallacy, even absentmindedness, to a rhetorical strategy of so-called “red herrings”, a distraction manoeuvre, literalised, estranged in “Pastimes” (“red carp”) and visualised in “Rita’s Last Fairy Tale” (Fig. 6).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, this fragment yields that enchanting power of monstrous juxtaposition which, according to Foucault, can only take place on the heterotopic site of language [Foucault 2018: xvii-xix].



Fig. 6. The red carp in “Rita’s Last Fairy Tale”

While Lilya stumbles over the gender category (“В этой... в полиэтиленовом пакете”), Tanya’s clumsy parlance goes further. Conversing with the undertaker about cremation, she struggles with her inability to find the proper word, which she then has to replace with a gesture: “Нам нужно сжечь одну подругу. И вот эту купить... [demonstrates a gesture], с крышечкой” [We need to burn one friend. And to buy this thing... with a stopper] (Fig. 7). The strenuous and vain search for the right word, the fragmentary phrase, and the replacement of words with pronouns (“одну”, “эту”) typical of the artless vernacular, brings Tanya Neubivko on a par with such literary characters as Bashmachkin. The phrase is funny also because it turns the uniqueness and singleness of the event (death and burial) into a potentially infinite series of similar and casual occurrences – all this by the use of the word “одну”: *one* friend to cremate. Litvinova’s discursive encumbrance (be it an artistic device or her natural trait) inevitably enhances her gesturality – the gesture becomes the most immediate means to grapple (in the direct tactile sense of the word) with the reality and, if not grab the Thing, at least show its direction. Monstrous gestures go hand in hand with a monstrous language.

<sup>1</sup> Red is also Rita’s dominant colour.



Fig. 7. Tanya Neubivko gestures the thing

### Conclusion

Needless to say, that both films are not exhausted by one gesture of the pathologist as it is not the only example of a meaningful allusion.<sup>1</sup> Muratova and Litvinova develop different, although, overcrossing strains of gestural cinepoetics in these and other films. In a nutshell, Muratova remains in the realm of immanence, while Litvinova reaches out to transcendence – her point of interest is the metaleptic intertwinement of possible worlds, or “the gesture of alterity”, as Strukov encapsulates it [Strukov]. The pathologist’s gesture, however, reveals some essential issues arising from any theoretical grappling with

gesture, such as the gesture’s defining role in the narrative development and figurative language, as well as in the formation and structure of a sign as an indication and the concepts of (film) poetics and mediality, at last, in our understanding of artistic succession beyond a unidirectional linear progression. The lineage of Muratova and Litvinova is a complex phenomenon of interferences and mutual influences that whittles down any discussions regarding originality and imitation, the master and the apprentice. Litvinova has become the haunting epitome of Muratova’s idiosyncratic style and her thankful disciple, paying homage to her predecessor in her own films.<sup>2</sup> Harold Bloom’s somewhat paranoid notion of *apophrades*, “the return of the precursors” [Bloom: 73], underlying his genealogical theory of poetic influence, can be revisited as the return of the disciple, for the latter is, from the outset, present in the work of the master.

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<sup>1</sup> Litvinova’s film includes some other references to her predecessor, for example, the scene of the improvised dance in the cafe quotes the weird dance of the clinic patients in “Pastimes”.

<sup>2</sup> Litvinova’s latest film “Severnny veter” (“The North Wind”, 2020) is devoted explicitly to Muratova and feeds on her visual topoi: the last long sequence of the film is a direct quote from “Asthenic Syndrome” (1989).

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## ГЕНЕАЛОГИЯ ЖЕСТА: ОТ КИРЫ МУРАТОВОЙ К РЕНАТЕ ЛИТВИНОВОЙ

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**А**ннотация. Многолетнее творческое сотрудничество Киры Муратовой и Ренаты Литвиновой началось с фильма «Увлеченья» (1994), в котором Литвинова выступила в качестве актрисы и сценаристки. С той поры Литвинова стала одним из самых ярких олицетворений орнаментального киностила Муратовой, в котором особый режим видимости создается благодаря эксцентричной телесности актеров-непрофессионалов, или, другими словами, жесту как категории телесного и речевого перформанса. В данной статье внимание сфокусировано на первосцене рождения жестовой генеалогии, связывающей двух режиссерок: жест патологоанатома из монолога медсестры Лили, написанного и прочитанного Литвиновой в муратовском фильме в свойственной ей эксцентричной манере, разворачивается в полнометражное киноповествование «Последней сказки Риты» (2012) с фантастическим сюжетом и зрелищными визуальными эффектами, определяющими уже индивидуальный режиссерский стиль Литвиновой. Статья, с одной стороны, прослеживает сконцентрированную в одном простом жесте многоуровневую и двунаправленную взаимосвязь фильмов Муратовой и Литвиновой, а с другой, рассуждает о возможных путях теоретического осмысления категории жеста в тексте и кино. Так, жест предстает как пограничная фигура речи и/или тела, направленная на отсутствующий предмет, причем хватательная функция руки понимается в том числе и буквально. Жест в тексте предстает как металепсис, который, переведенный в кинопространство, подчеркивает хаптический характер образа. Отсутствующий объект, вокруг которого возникает жестикуляция, приводит к рассуждению о проблематике знакового статуса жеста и о процессе затрудненной сигнификации при его интерпретации. Поскольку жест лишь указывает и сигнализирует, но не обозначает, можно говорить о семиотической функции монстрации. Жест – это не что иное как монстр в прямом смысле слова, т. е. тот, кто указывает и тем самым внушает беспокойство. Жестикулирование вынуждает примерить на себя образ монстра, т. е. обозначать, делая из себя зрелище. Оба фильма и фигура Литвиновой рассматриваются через призму монструозности как жеста, так и языка. Именно дизъюнкция между показом и говорением обнажает жест как сферу чистой медиальности.

**К**лючевые слова: жест, вещь, нарратив, металепсис, медиа, поверхность, монстрация, монстр, язык, медиальность.

