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The Aesthetics of Dream and Fairly Tale at the Service of a New Russia Founding Myth. The Opening Ceremony of Sochi Olympics 2014

ABSTRACT:

THE ARTICLE IS DEDICATED TO DECODING SIGNS AND SYMBOLS THAT WERE INCLUDED IN THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE AT THE OPENING CEREMONY. THE AUTHOR STARTS WITH RENDERING A DEFINITION OF A FAIRY TALE AND WITH THE TERMS AND CONCLUSIONS PROPOSED BY BRUNO BETTELHEIM, IN THE KONSTANTIN ERNST'S SHOW, THE AUTHOR UNVEILS ELEMENTS OF A FAIRY-TALE AESTHETICS: THEME, DELIVERY, PROTAGONISTS, OBJECTS, AND THE AIM. ALSO, THE ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE BEARS MANY FEATURES OF THE POETICS AND LANGUAGE OF A DREAM, WHICH CORRESPOND WITH THE WORKS OF ERICH FROMM DEDICATED TO THIS TOPIC. THE AESTHETICS OF A DREAM AND A FAIRY TALE USED IN THE SHOW ARE UTILIZED, AS THE AUTHOR MAINTAINS, TO CREATE A FOUNDING MYTH OF "NEW RUSSIA" UNDER THE GOVERNANCE OF VLADIMIR PUTIN. SUBJECTIVELY SELECTED ELEMENTS FROM HISTORY, USE OF SYMBOLS, MUSIC, HISTORIC AND LITERARY FIGURES, PIECES OF ART, COLORS - ALL OF THESE WERE THE INGREDIENTS OF THE BASE OF RUSSIA'S FOUNDING MYTH, A STATE REBORN AFTER THE DEMISE OF THE SOVIET UNION. THE AUTHOR ARGUES THAT THE SHOW WHICH OPENED THE ATHLETES' OLYMPIC COMPETITION WAS AN ELEMENT TO BUILD AN IMAGE OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA, A PERFORMANCE IN THE SERVICE OF THE STATE PROPAGANDA.

KEYWORDS:

FAIRY-TALE AESTHETICS, DREAM AESTHETICS, FOUNDING MYTH, OPENING CEREMONY, SOCHI WINTER OLYMPICS 2014, NEW RUSSIA.

An epic literary genre, a fairy tale as is built on a simple pattern and is permeated with fabulousness. The characters are psychologically simplified, and their deeds are morally classified in a one-sided fashion. They believe in a possibility of external interference performed by supernatural powers, fairy-tale characters and by means of magical objects, unusual creatures or wise animals; they can overcome the limitations of the human condition, and thus travel in space and time, disappear only to reappear a few moments later, frequently in another place or time. At the end of the day, after experiencing extraordinary adventures, they reach their goals and live long and happy lives ever after¹. As Bruno Bettelheim, a distinguished psychologist and educationalist, once said: "A fairy tale is to bring consolation and communicate symbolical meanings, tell about ideal social bonds and fair behaviors"².

It was already in the very first scenes of the 22nd Winter Olympics in Sochi that one could experience a fairy-tale atmosphere. The *Dream about Russia* show was directed by Konstantin Ernst, the Head of Russia's Channel One. It is based on a motif of wander and shows a triumph of good over evil. Lubow (Love), a little girl and the main character of the show, travels through space and time using magical artifacts: a kite flying high or a little red balloon. She takes the spectators on a tour across the history of Russia, starting off from the Middle Ages and going up until the present. On her way, she overpasses different cities and geographical regions. She makes stop-overs in the Petersburg of Peter I, the Moscow of the first half of the 20th century or today's Sochi, redeveloped and modernized for the purposes of the Olympics.

The fairy tale originates from folklore(...) being created and recreated while recounted for an innumerable number of times by various adults for other adults or children. Every storyteller left some elements out and added others in order to give their stories a deeper meaning; on the one hand, for themselves and, on the other hand, for the listeners, which was possible since they knew them well (...). The following people reshaped the story further, responding to the child's questions, to the signs of her feeling pleased and afraid, expressed explicitly or implicitly by the way she was behaving.³

Mr Ernst's fairy tale presented during the opening ceremony was also a subjective tale about Russian history. Some elements of its history were passed over, left unsaid, e.g. Lenin's or Stalin's politics, the history of gulags, and the period of World War II such an important time in the history of Europe. Out of a rich Russian heritage and culture

¹ Głowiński, Kostkiewiczowa, Okopień-Sławińska, Sławiński, *Słownik terminów literackich*, hasło *Baśń*, Wrocław 1988, p. 57-58.; *Słownik pojęć i tekstów kultury*, red. E. Szczęsna, term: *Gatunki i teksty kultury ludowej*, Warszawa 2002, p. 92.

² B. Bettelheim, *Cudowne i pożyteczne. O znaczeniach i wartościach baśni*, translation, foreword, commentary and afterword by D. Danek, Warszawa 1996.

³ B. Bettelheim, *On the Art of Telling a Fairy Tale*, in: *Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, edited by: A. Mencwel, G. Godlewski, R. Sulima, foreword and editorial supervision by G. Godlewski, Warszawa 2004, p. 219.

there had been selected only those elements that seem to be pleasing for the audience and reduce a sense of fear: flying domes of the Medieval Orthodox churches, happy laborers at work after the revolution of 1917, dancing students in the 1960s. The story had been composed in such a way in order to make the most colorful and positive story of the "new Russia" ruled by Vladimir Putin.

In *Cudowne i pożyteczne. O znaczeniach i wartościach baśni* (Uses of enchantment) Bettelheim argues that parents who do not remain in harmony with their child while telling a story, not only fail to follow their listener's needs and desires but their own. Did the story recounted in Sochi take the expectations and needs of the audiences in the stadium and in front of their TV-sets into account? It is hard to find an explicit answer to a question put this way. It seems that the Russian audience needs are different than the ones of a globalized world, which are not so emotionally connected with the culture and history of Russia. For Russians, the fairy tale may cater to their needs and desires, it may realize their dream of every powerful fear that can still shape different spheres of people's lives. As it is in the case of telling a story to a child, the aim of a fairy tale is to strengthen hopes, relieve anxieties and to make one's life enriched as well as to help in understanding oneself⁴.

In his story about the "new Russia", Konstantin Ernst included dreams that are often found in a wonderful epic stories. As I mentioned it before, he entitled the show *Dreams about Russia*. Dream naturally becomes a part of a fairy tale poetics, because it does not also abide by the laws of logic; and categories like time and space are not taken into account. As Erich Fromm argued: "In our dreams, we are the creators of the world in which time and space - that set limitations to all the activities our bodies can perform - are powerless⁵." All the myths and dreams are put in a language of symbols, whose logic rather departs from the conventional one that we use in our everyday lives. The most important categories are intensity and associations. The language of symbols is the most universal language of mankind. It can be understood in every culture or historical period. In the words of the author of *Forgotten Language*, it has its own grammar and syntax which you need to understand if you want to read out the meanings of myths, fairy tales or dreams⁶.

This universal language was also used in the Konstantin Ernst's show. The fairy tale in which you are following the images dreamed by Lubov, is intensive, emotional, sentimental and based on associations that are simple, almost straightforward, so that everyone could understand the story. Due to its universal symbolic nature, the language used in the show becomes clear for many audiences, no matter their cultural identification. One should bear in mind that all dreams are meaningful and important. Meaningful since they carry a message which you can understand if you decode it and important since we do not dream about trivial things⁷. Lubov's dreams are stories about beautiful,

⁴ ibidem, p. 222.

⁵ E. Fromm, *Zapomniany język*, translated by K. Płaza, Kraków 2009, p. 10.

⁶ ibidem, p. 12.

⁷ Ibidem.

powerful Russia, a country of great opportunities and a huge potential, where ~~it is~~ collective effort exists - not individualism that prevails in the Western culture - that makes a critical value to be observed. If we agree - following the psychoanalytical approach - that "a dream is a way in which one fulfills their irrational desires suppressed in one's daily lives when awake"⁸, one can assert that the little girl's dreams reflect not the desires of Russians but irrational and hidden yearnings of the Russian leader, Vladimir Putin. However, there is still a question that remains to be answered: How many more Russians have similar dreams

When analyzing and interpreting the Sochi Olympics opening show, one should think about the following scenes of which the dream is built. Lubov's first dream shows a primer from which one can not only learn the Cyrillic but also have an insight into Russian tradition and culture. Claude Levi Strauss argued that a language is a fundamental cultural fact and its coming to existence coincides with a birth of human culture⁹. To learn about the culture you need to know the language. Since it is in the language that the spirits of nations dwell. During the Olympics opening ceremony a word that was always meant to be to the point - to mean something to its addressee - was bolstered with an image. This was necessary and it was so for quite prosaic reasons. The great majority of the spectators did not know the Cyrillic and could not understand words put in this way. The following Cyrillic letters that made a word displayed on big screens were not only a lesson in Cyrillic, but also showed a bit of the Russian culture. Out of 33 characters, 13 referred to terms connected with arts. Virtually all arts disciplines seem to have been presented: music (Tchaikovsky), literature (Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Tolstoy, Pushkin, Chekhov), painting (Malevitch, Kandinsky, Chagall), architecture (Shchusev), theater (Russian ballet, also Chekhov), cinema (Eisenstein), animation (*Hedgehog in the Fog*), folk art (hohloma). 7 Cyrillic letters created words connected with the universe and airspace (Gagarin, sputnik, lunohod, space station, Sikorsky's chopper, parachute, Ciolkovsky, a creator of a rocket propelling system and an astronaut). 4 referred to the Russian society and the state. Among the terms there appeared: Russia, Russian empire, Catarina II and We - through which the authors referred to the best times of the Russian state. Only 2 Cyrillic letters referred to nature (the Baikal and Fiszt, a summit in the Caucasus, and a name of the newly constructed Olympic stadium, where the opening ceremony was taking place). It was already in this multimedia presentation of the Cyrillic that showed the areas that are of special importance for Russia. What drives the Russian spirit is art and cosmos. These are the areas that Russians can compete in with the entire Western world.

Polish media workers in their reports noticed that the presentation excluded some important artists like Okudzava and Vysotsky. Obviously the list of important artist could be much longer and one could ask why the dreams about Russia lacked distinguished female poets like Akhmatova and Tsvetaieva or Solzhenitsyn, a Nobel Prize winner, and Bulgakov, a great novelist, the author of *The Master and Margarita*. The situ-

⁸ ibidem, p. 26.

⁹ C. Levi-Strauss, *Kultura i język, w: Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, p. 21-24.



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ation was clarified, at least partially, during the closing ceremony, where 12 portraits of distinguished Russian writers were shown. There were Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy and also Bulgakov, Turgenev, Gogol and Brodsky, a Nobel Prize winner (sent to prison for being a "pest", and then banished from the USSR and deprived of the citizenship) Akhmatova, Mayakovsky, Tsvetaieva and Solzhenitsyn. Despite this I would still argue that Konstantin Stanislavsky - a theater director, actor, art reformer, and, in the first place, a creator of an acting method key for the 20th century theater - should also feature in the primer. The creator of the Moscow Artistic Theater, Stanislavsky developed a method of psychological approach in the acting practice, the so-called identification, incarnating or going through an experience, which spread not only across Russia and Europe, but also throughout the world. This method was used, with little modification by Lee Strasberg in Actors Studio, by many distinguished actors, e.g. Marlin Monroe, James Dean, Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman. In my opinion, Stanislavsky is one of the most important Russian artists, who exerted a great influence on the 20th and 21st centuries.

As it was said before, the dream about Russia is a subjective choice of content, symbols and signs. The purpose of this choice is to build an image of Russia that is solid and powerful, one that, in my opinion, remains in accordance with the politics of Vladimir Putin. If we accepted, following the President of the Russian Federation, that USSR downfall was one of the most tragic events of the end 20th century, that with 1990 the great Russia of the past had come to an end, Putin wants to make Russia strong again, realizing the dream about a beautiful and powerful Russia, or in other terms, he wants to create a foundation myth of new Russia. What is he building it on? If one agrees that Ernst's opening ceremony is a projection of Vladimir Putin's aspirations and pursuits, and such thinking seems fully justified, those artistic images point to tradition, imperialism and the best manifestations of culture, with art taking the central position. The foundation myth is a symbolic event, or a number of them, that mark a beginning of a new state, political model, social or political movement. The source of the myth for new Russia, as one can learn from the show, is tsar Peter I, his victory over Napoleon and the revolution of 1917, social engineering and industrialization. Creating a foundation myth, a political myth, is an element of establishing and stabilizing power. Once recounted, as ar-

gued Mirce Eliade, a myth becomes an uncompromising truth, an absolute one, "it is so, because it has been said that it is so". To announce a myth is to recount what happened at the beginning, how something came into being¹⁰. In this case it is about the origins of Russia. The political myth, being a mystified form of political awareness, makes the intellectual factors less important. It is primarily based on emotional factors¹¹. A human beings identify themselves with a myth through emotions. Reality exists in a way it is felt. Therefore, if one can make the spectators feel that Russia is a great modern and happy country, it will be perceived this way.

During the Olympics opening show the director drew on Greek mythology but it was put in a Russian context. Before Lubov began her flight over the lands of Russia, in the sky, there had appeared a chariot of the sun. The Sun's disc was drawn by three horses. In the Greek mythology, Helios traveled through the sky in a golden chariot drawn by four horses. The mythical god was a source of life and light. He governed how the time - days, months, years, centuries - should go by. In the Konstantin Ernst's story, the myth got changed: the Sun was drawn by a Russian troika, a group of three horses harnessed to draw a chariot/cart running in a differentiated way. The one in the middle trot and the ones on the sides gallop. Thanks to this fact such three-horses carts can reach high speeds, even 50km/h. In the past, in Russia troikas were used by important people and on special occasions, e.g. at wedding ceremonies to highlight the splendor of the event. Troika is tightly connected with the Russian culture and identity, it is a symbol of Russia. They were mentioned in *Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol:

Russia, where are you going so fast, answer me! It does not reply. A little bell rings a beautiful sound: you can hear the thundering rush of air that gets torn into pieces; everything flies by, whatever the earth bears, and dissatisfied, other nations and countries yield, giving her the way.

A political myth focuses on engaging people's imagination, not on presenting facts. What is really important is "the meaning of dramatic atmosphere being controlled and licensed, the meaning of a theater of people's emotions that through arranging scenes with masses in line, facilitate various ruling strategies come true"¹². A myth, therefore, is an instrument that allows people to steer social imagination. It can be successful in changing attitudes, and what follows, in facilitating others to exercise their power effectively. Thus, a myth has a power to create a world in which there is no room for freedom, but also there are no dilemmas, disputes or controversies. One should remember that what a political myth gives to an individual - as it is in the case of Vladimir Putin - is a justification of their policies. It builds a basis of power.

¹⁰ M. Eliade, *Sacrum, mit, historia. Wybór esejów*, selected by M. Czerwiński, translated by A. Tatarkiewicz, Warszawa 1974, p. 86-113.

¹¹ *Leksykon Politologii*, collective work under the editorial supervision of A. Antoszewski and R. Herbut, term: *Mit polityczny*, Wrocław 1999, p. 303-304.

¹² S. Filipowicz, *Mit i spektakl władzy*, Warszawa 1988, p. 218.



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Created on the aesthetics of a dream and a fairy tale, a myth is to build social bonds and collective identity of Russians. In accordance with its function, it is to play a role that facilitates identification and interpretation. Thanks to it, Russians can identify themselves with some events from their history, they can recognize their own involvement, contribution, and importance in the the history of the world (cognitive function) and obscure their inhibitions in some areas, where they are not so powerful, by means of focusing on the ones in which they prevail, the ones that give them the an edge over the world (compensatory function)¹³.

However, one should pose a fundamental question of when and where a myth can occur. According to Eliade, a myth should not be recounted whenever or wherever. It requires a holy place and a holy time. The Olympics, which take place every four years, actually always in a different country, is a global event, almost of holy character, that puts time on hold and moves everything into a special enclosure. Being a specific kind of a myth, a political myth has some more requirements. It occurs in difficult times, bringing hope for a renewal of the world. It refers to the past to rediscover the present and to get inspired to change the reality. It is a peculiar fusion of the past and the future that reshapes the historical time into a mythical time. "Myths usually accompany ambitious enterprises of great scale, ventures that are underpinned with great hopes which extend beyond the boundaries of everyday politics. Significant events of historic breakthrough character are often accompanied by expectations that are linked to the archetypes that create a fertile ground for myths"¹⁴. Russia, as it seems basing on the show, wants to reclaim its former status of a great empire. Therefore, Russia needs to refer to the myth, the historic events which make the building blocks of the Russian state. In the times of crisis of the Western culture, Russia, by means of its culture, wants to take over the role of a powerful, domineering country of traditional values.

In Ernst's spectacular show, Russian identity is bolstered by national symbols: the flag and anthem. One should point out here that the present Russian anthem was adopted at the end of 2000 on Vladimir Putin's initiative. This is actually an adaptation of the USSR anthem. The music was composed by Alexander Alexadrov, the lyrics written by Sergey Mikhalkov - the same one who wrote the anthem's lyrics in the 1940s and 1970s.

¹³ *Leksykon Politologii*, p. 304.

¹⁴ S. Filipowicz, p. 93.

The national piece of choral music was performed by the Orthodox monastery choir of the Vladimirsy Virgin Mary Encounter. According to the tradition, this Orthodox church was built in a place where people had been gathering to thank the Virgin Mary for saving their lives that could have been lost in the Tatars' invasion (end of 14th century). The Orthodox church music is one of the most central elements of the Russian culture. It is tightly connected with the Orthodox Christian denomination. Its role is to be played in honor of the religious practices and to conserve the principles of the Orthodox Christianity. In the first place it is to support the evangelization. The Orthodox Church music that goes without any musical instruments, transmits the word, teaches the word of God, teaches the faithful to concentrate on the word¹⁵. In the Olympics opening show, the Orthodox Church music aim was to focus the attention on the lay word, on a "lay religion": on the state. And what does the lyrics of the anthem say?

Russia is our holy superpower,
Russia is our beloved country.
The great willpower, great glory
Are yours forever!

Refrain

Glory be Yours, our free Motherland
You ancient brotherhood of nations,
People's wisdom passed over by the predecessors!
Glory be Yours, our country! We are proud of you!

From the southern seas up to the Polar lands
Extend our forests and fields.
You are the one! You are the one
Protected by God, our Motherland!
Refrain ...

Extensive space for dreams and for life
We can see in the years to come.
We source our power from our allegiance to the Motherland.
It has always been so, it is and it will be forever!

An important and perhaps the most beautiful part of the show was a reference to *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy. Out of the extensive novel the director chose chapter 15, volume 2, part 3 where Natasha Rostova makes her debut at a ball among the Russian aristocracy. Ernst used this scene as a part of ballet choreography that was masterfully performed by the dancers from the Moscow Bolshoi Theater. Svetlana Zaharova and Vladimir Vasilev were dancing to a waltz composed by Eugeno Doga, a Romanian artist based in Russia, to a *Hunting Accident* movie. Presented with a great panache, the scene was to get the spectators by focusing on two messages. On the one hand, it showed the beauty and

¹⁵ <http://tygodnik.onet.pl/wwwylacznie/wprowadzenie-do-muzyki-cerkiewnej/bl8t9>



What else drives the political myth of Vladimir Putin? As it transpires from the fairy tale story, what is important for the future of Russia is the Russian Revolution of 1917, which was preceded by a flourishing period of Russian abstract art and the development of constructivism.

mastery of the Russian ballet, which has been consistently regarded as best of its kind since the 19th century, has its important and significant tradition. Its history is marked with such figures as Sergey Diaghilev who organized Russian ballet seasons abroad or distinguished artists like Vaslav Nijinsky and Anna Pavlova, whose performances in the US and the UK left their mark on the face of the world ballet¹⁶. Apart from the form, one should also take a more careful look at the topic which was presented with this scene. It was a reference to a national epic which focused on the unity of the nation when it was in a dangerous situation. The figure of Napoleon. In the 19th century Russia, this French leader was regarded as the Beast of the Apocalypse, a son of the devil, an embodiment of evil. Napoleon was seen not only as an enemy of the motherland but also as an enemy of mankind and the world in the first place. He would break the order established by God. That is why every Sunday and on holidays in all the Russian Orthodox churches he would get excommunicated¹⁷. The victory over the Napoleon forces was then a victory over evil, an act of saving the motherland and also the rest of the world. Therefore, this historic event has a special importance for the foundation myth of the new Russia, it is a kind of an ancient event which needs recounting and holding as very much up-to-date. For Russians it is an event of truly global significance, not only a local one.

What else drives the political myth of Vladimir Putin? As it transpires from the fairy tale story, what is important for the future of Russia is the Russian Revolution of 1917, which was preceded by a flourishing period of Russian abstract art and the development of constructivism. It was a time when one could see an explicit link between the art and the problems of the developing, industrial society, an idea of a new world emerged, a hope for a fast social and cultural advancement. Artists reinforced and consolidated the faith in progress and humanity. Being negative about the bourgeois art, their fascinations with abstract art often went hand in hand with socialist ideology. They used

¹⁶ During the Olympics opening show the language of ballet was used once again. The scene called "Dove of Peace" performed to the Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* was danced by Diana Vishneva along with the team. In 2007, this prima ballerina of Mariinsky Ballet and American Ballet Theater was announced the Russian National Artist.

¹⁷ S. Filipowicz, p. 140.



The Post-World War II history was treated in that same way. You would not find there anything about Josef Stalin. Instead, there was engineering and industrialization that had brought prosperity and happiness. In the foreground, one could see pioneers, pilots, cosmonauts, athletes and students.

geometrical shapes referring to the design of machines. All these images appeared in the show, they were full of geometrical shapes and parts of big machines operated by uniformly dressed laborers. The red color was dominant. In Ernst's show, the society was compared to a construction in which people are wheels in a machine. As the signs used in the show suggest, Russia played an influential role for the entire world. Especially in the scene in which ~~from~~ the performers gathered in one point from which rays of light started to be flashed around. Russia rose to a dimension of Eliade's axis of the world (*axis mundi*) which marks the middle, brings order to the space and gives a solid point of reference. In the Sochi dream-like fairy tale, however, there is not a sign of the fact that after 1930 Stalin put to an end ~~to~~ the art of avant-garde and many of the artists were sent to gulags, imprisoned, banished or even executed, like Vsevolod Meyerhold, a distinguished theater artist. But as the structure of a fairy tale or a myth is open, in a story some elements of the story can be omitted and other ones included. After all, a political myth is based on emotions, not facts.

The Post-World War II history was treated in that same way. You would not find there anything about Josef Stalin. Instead, there was engineering and industrialization that had brought prosperity and happiness. In the foreground, one could see pioneers, pilots, cosmonauts, athletes and students. It is them who jointly contribute to the national prosperity. It is worth noting that sports, arts and cosmos are still the areas which are celebrated and that are stressed most, which is, among others, marked by the selection of the team who brought the Olympic flag to the Fisht Stadium. It was done by a sportsman, an actress and a journalist. In this carefully selected team, one could see Nikita Mikhalkov, a distinguished film director, an Oscar award winner for *Burnt by the Sun*, a son of a communist poet Sergey Mikhalkov, who is the author of the Russian anthem lyrics, and Natalia Konchalovskaya, a poet. She is an artist who through her art eulogize the beauty of Russia, more often than not idealizing the picture, and Vala Tereshkova, a weaver and a cosmonaut, the first woman in space, dubbed as "Columbus in a skirt", "Miss Universe", whose bust is displayed in Moscow. One of Moon's craters is named after her name¹⁸.

¹⁸ J. Hugo-Bader, *W rajskiej dolinie wśród zielska*, Wołowiec 2010, p. 327-342.

Getting back to the Ernst's story, the 1950s and 1960s are shown as time of happiness, full of color and diversity. Beautifully dressed young people dance, drive cars, study. Over their heads ~~there~~ hang symbols of socialism: carved busts of leading laborers, the sickle and hammer. Lubov, who guides the spectators through the dreams, is sitting comfortably on a shoulder of a policeman, who is happy to protect law and order. This scene was accompanied with music made of two very well-known pieces, a classical one and a modern one. With the previous one being Aram Khachaturian's "Dance with Swords" of the Georgian *Gajane* ballet about a young kolkhoz woman and some parts of *Nas nie dogoniat* of a controversial, and for the government incorrect, group Tatu, which is widely recognized as the best Russian group ever. Out of the piece of the two singers, Julia and Lena, only the refrain was used, whose text in translation asserts: "They won't get us". In the show, this phrase was to suggest that no country can beat Russia in development, R&D, sports or conquering the universe. In the original piece, these words refer to quite a different situation. They are about a conflict of generations and mutual misunderstanding.

Just say i
Let's go, the two of us
Only lights
Of the airport.
We'll escape,
They won't get us.
As far away from them as possible,
As far away from home as possible,
The night will guide us
It'll hide our shadows
Behind a cloud
Behind clouds
They won't find us,
They won't change us.
They are not meant to do so

This popular and widely known refrain, with a memorable tune, was used for the propaganda purposes. The entire piece was reduced to only one line. Taken out of its original context, it gained a new political meaning. It seems worth noting that Tatu's piece was used three times during the Olympics opening ceremony and thus became a leitmotif of the spectacle. Apart from the fragment of the show discussed before, it was used at the beginning of the ceremony when it was performed by the group singers in full. Yet, television stations were not allowed to broadcast this performance. The official part of the ceremony started a little later. For the third time *Nas nie dogoniat* theme was played when the Russian team entered the stadium during the sportsmen parade. It was a clear signal that the Russian Olympic competitors are ready to lead in the Olympic medal count.

In Ernst's fairy tale the Soviet Union had never been ruled by a bloody dictator, had not lead the cold war or experienced any economic problems. It was a country of

great opportunities. Though Stalin's face did not appear, the stage design elements, artists' movements and gestures reminded of the myth of the communist times. The protagonists of the fairy tale dreams are heroes, art furthers the case of unbeatable labor leaders and the world of historic miracle, a beautiful and noble world of dreams of power and glory that have come to being. The people who inhabit this country are perfect, beautiful and successful. The last scene in Konstantin Ernst's show is an apotheosis of youth. The men and women, who were previously jointly studying and having fun, now they are getting married and having children.

In the final scene all the characters formed a circle. They gathered around a "children" plaque, and one could hear a very well-known tune *Let the Sun Be Shining Every Day*, which was supplemented with a line "*Let the Sochi be always there*". A circle is a very important symbol for a political myth. It is opposite to a pyramid, which shows that power is concentrated in the hands of an individual or a small group. The circle is a symbol of equal status and participation, collective decision-making. The circle is a community of the equals. It is up to them how they would fill up the body of the circle. For the political myth, this symbol means that one can organize the world anew and the windows of opportunities are open and many. The circle also carries an idea of recurring youth: thanks to the cyclical nature of time, one can start everything anew, one can reconstruct the past¹⁹. It is an idea of struggle for a better world, a world that corresponds with the dreams. However, the circle is also a fundamental shape that is used to introduce some spatial order to the world, by drawing a circle we cut some area from the rest of the world turning it into a "cosmic enclave"²⁰. There is no denying that the idea of community constitutes a significant element of the Russian identity. The today's dream about Russia is about organizing the world anew, or maybe to get back to the former imperial greatness. But does everyone have equal opportunities in this dream to create the world that corresponds with their dreams? It seems that the answer to this question is positive but refers only to a dream, because in the reality dreamed by Vladimir Putin such a possibility is non-existent.

All the preparations to the Olympics and realizing the *Dream about Russia* show involved many illegal behaviors and decisions. Putin's vision was meant to be realized perfectly, regardless of the possible social costs. When the last finishing details were polished and the Fiszt stadium was brimming with slogans advocating for peace, statements about tolerance and respecting each other, the Russian president must have had already his military plans prepared to intervene in Ukraine.

When analyzing the spectacle opening the Sochi Olympics, one should focus not only on the images but also bear in mind the entire visual spectrum of things, i.e. a dynamic sphere of relationships playing out between the human being, the image and the reality.²¹ In this composition, the human being takes center stage. Also human being create and organize the act of seeing, manipulate, compose, record, destroy it. In

¹⁹ S. Filipowicz, p. -177.

²⁰ P. Kowalski, *Kultura magiczna. Omen, przesąd, znaczenie*, hasło *Koło*, Warszawa 2007, p. 231-234.

other words, they is takes over the power over seeing- and control emotions. In the case of the Sochi Olympics opening ceremony, it was Vladimir Putin who took this role. It was him who took control of the way the spectators saw the reality and imposed the only possible image of contemporary Russia. He utilized the power of images, their potency of influencing individuals and a society. Mitchell seems to be right when asserting that our social ways of organizing our reality take some specific forms and this arises from the fact that we are animals that can see²². However, instead of staying at the level of image, we can look more inquisitively, switching on our imagination and reason to take—a more skeptical look at the image and transgress our own seeing. This seems to be the only way you can evade the Vladimir Putin's power of images, and see the reality as it is in its actual proportions. ■

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²¹ Zob. I. Kurz, *Wobec obrazu - wobec świata. projekt antropologii kultury wizualnej*, w: *Antropologia kultury wizualnej*, opracowanie I. Kurz, P. Kwiatkowska, Ł. Zaremba, Warszawa 2012.

²² W. J. T., Mitchell, *Pokazać widzenie*, w: *Antropologia kultury wizualnej*, dz. cyt., s. 59.