

ISCKMC 2022**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****CITY CULTUROLOGICAL PORTRAIT - WAY OF
INTERRELATION BETWEEN A MAN AND CIVILIZATION**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the image of the city from a cultural point of view. The material of the study is the novel by the modern French writer Guillaume Musso "Seven years have passed". Particular attention is paid to the transformation of an individual under the influence of civilization. Musso's point of view coincides with the opinion of many, both Western and Russian cultural scientists, that genuine spiritual culture is concentrated far from civilization, in the provinces, and megacities disfigure the soul and lead humanity to death. The city becomes the backdrop for the events described the place that determines the development of the plot, and even one of the main characters in the story. In the first one, the city is described optimistically, using bright colors. In the second approach, the writers' resort to gloomy tones, portraying the city as depressing and repulsive. This can be observed in the novel by Guillaume Musso. The plot of his work develops in two cities, namely, Paris and New York. Guillaume Musso creates an impressive series of objects, where every detail hides a deep meaning. Such a "theory of things" goes back to G. Flaubert and continues in the works of such masters of the word as F.S. Fitzgerald and E. Hemingway. As a result, the article shows that the urban space and civilization are identical to it are detrimental to the moral foundations of a person.

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1. Introduction

The image of the city and urban space occupies a significant place in the work of many artists of the world. Moreover, the city becomes the background for the events described the place that determines the development of the plot, and even one of the main characters in the story. The creation of a culturological portrait of the city also plays an important role in the dialogue of cultures.

It is impossible to talk about the relationship of people, about the conditions of their life, without touching on the theme of the city, without conveying its spirit, atmosphere, those subtleties that connect its inhabitants with the city. The city becomes a living being that influences the people living in it, highlighting the best and the worst in them (Kubanev & Nabilkina, 2014, p. 187).

2. Problem Statement

In cultural studies, two approaches to the depiction of the urban environment are distinguished, namely, humanistic, and dehumanized or alienated approaches (Luckx, 2019). In the humanistic approach, the city is described optimistically, using bright colors. With a dehumanized approach, writers' resort to gloomy tones, portraying the city as depressing and repulsive. Curiously, we can find such diametrically opposite descriptions concerning the same city from one author. This depends not so much on the real features of the urban space but on the subjective perception of the artist in a certain period.

3. Research Questions

This article is due to an analysis of the novel by the French writer Guillaume Musso. The plot of his work develops in two, probably the most famous and attractive cities, namely, Paris and New York. The author depicts a modern city for us. The novel takes place in September 2012. But his image echoes what we see in the pages of classical works by American, French, and Russian masters of writing. Nonetheless in no way can this be called secondary or imitation. On the contrary, Musso creates in line with the classical literary tradition, rethinking it in a new way and introducing a new sound into it.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the work is to analyze the culturological portrait of the city in Musso's novel "Seven Years Have Passed", to reveal the connection between the individual author's style of the writer and the traditions of world verbal culture, to trace the influence of nature and civilization on the formation of moral categories that determine the essence of an individual.

5. Research Methods

The main research methods are systemic, which allows considering the culture of the urban space, the elements of which interact, being in unity, hermeneutic, aimed at understanding the city as a cultural phenomenon, as well as the method of cultural analysis.

6. Findings

The main characters of the novel are Sebastian and Nikki, they are a divorced married couple who live in New York. The author describes in detail the areas in which they live, thereby emphasizing the difference in their social status, namely, a successful master violinist, the best in his field, and an unemployed model. "The Larabee townhouse sits between Madison and Park Avenue, at about the level of Seventy-fourth Street, in a small pocket lined with trees. Despite the morning hour, the quarter was full of life. A stream of taxis and cars flowed around private mansions and luxurious hotels. Fully buttoned, uniformed janitors added liveliness to the noisy ballet, calling yellow cabs, opening doors, packing things into the trunk. Camilla jogged to Millionaire's Mile, the alley of billionaires, where the most famous museums in New York lined up along Central Park: the Metropolitan, the Guggenheim, the New Gallery" (Musso, 2019, p. 44). The author creates a rich semantic series: the reader understands that only a very wealthy person can afford to live in the very center of New York, next to the iconic places that are the symbols of this city. At the same time, Musso stipulates that Larabee is not nouveau riche, three generations of his family live in this place. Meanwhile, the motif of the road can already be traced here, constant movement, i.e., cars drive up, things fit, which indicates to the reader that soon the main character will have to hit the road. A completely different impression is made of the area in which Nikki lives. "After their divorce, Nikki settled west of South Brooklyn, in the Red Hook Quarter, home of sailors and the mafia. The lack of urban transport has made the neighborhood an isolated island full of dangers" (Musso, 2019, p. 10). For everyone in New York, there is a natural "habitat": for hereditary aristocrat Sebastian Larabee (an elite mansion in the center, for the Polish emigrant Nikki Nikowski) a small apartment on the outskirts of crime. Meanwhile, the city is not static, it is constantly changing. Describing Brooklyn, Musso (2019) remarks, "The air was filled with the scent of rosemary and wildflowers. A fresh wind tugged at the lashes of lavender and the leaves on the bushes" (p. 29). It seems that we are in the French Provence and enjoy the view of the famous lavender fields. But no, this is a biogarden located on the roof of a former factory, which overlooks the East River, Manhattan skyscrapers, and the Statue of Liberty. "High above the houses, away from Manhattan and the busy bustle of the metropolis, here, on the roof, peace reigned" (Musso, 2019, p. 29). We see the opposition between nature and civilization, which has already become customary but no less fair. Only in the bosom of nature can a person find peace and harmony with himself and with the world as a whole. "From a height of two hundred meters, New York seemed empty and calm, it was like a stationary liner surrounded by a cloud of light" (Musso, 2019, p. 49).

The novel "Seven Years Have Passed" is a real guide to the writer's favorite cities in which he lived and which he knows best. Together with him, the reader is immersed in the atmosphere of these cities, who now knows exactly in which restaurant you can eat deliciously and in which store to make the most successful purchases. Macy's isn't just a superstore, it's an entire city block between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. And on December 24 "this biggest store in the world" was packed. Clothes, cosmetics, watches, jewelry, books, toys – in this temple of consumption, any hunter could find prey to his taste" (Musso, 2019, p. 54). So, the whole city becomes one big bazaar where you can buy and sell anything you want. And this happens on Christmas Eve, the time when people should become spiritually purer and

brighter. However, in the world of the "dollar", even the sacred holiday is commercialized, turning people into "hunters" in search of "prey", and not into magicians who bring gifts. Sebastian stands out from the crowd; he is not like everyone else. "I sighed and looked around at the people around me, feeling like a lone outsider among many determined hunters" (Musso, 2019, p. 66). But meanwhile, even in this consumer society there is a place for a miracle. And it happens to those who are ready for it. It is in this supermarket that Sebastian meets the love of his life, even in the form of a shoplifter.

Nonetheless not only New York is a city in which you can buy and sell anything. The same is true for other world capitals. It is no coincidence that the well-known cultural scientist O. Spengler noticed that genuine spiritual culture is concentrated far from civilization, in the provinces, and megacities disfigure the soul and lead humanity to death (Taylor, 2020). Almost the same picture we see in the center of Paris.

Sebastian crossed the street, found himself on Barbès Boulevard, and moved along a huge store with a bright pink sign on which "Tati" flaunted in blue letters. In search of bargains, shoppers rummage through large plastic containers lined along the sidewalk. Dresses, trousers, shirts, bags, lingerie, pajamas, toys... The containers are overflowing with everything and nothing: leftovers of batches, stale goods in the warehouse, discounted and unsold items were dumped here (Musso, 2019, p. 118).

The author creates an impressive range of subjects, where every detail hides a deep meaning. Such a "theory of things" goes back to G. Flaubert and continues in the works of such masters of the word as F.S. Fitzgerald and E. Hemingway. The material world prevails over the spiritual, people become slaves of things, wasting their time and money on something that they do not need at all. And this is also a characteristic of a big city.

In the provinces, a person has fewer financial opportunities, and he also approaches leisure more rationally. In a big city, one of the entertainments is going shopping. In *Tender is the Night*, Fitzgerald paints the following picture:

Nicole made her purchases from a two-page list, and in addition, she bought everything that she liked in the windows. What she could not fit herself, she bought as a gift to friends. She bought colorful beads, artificial flowers, beach cushions, bags, shawls, flower honey, and about ten bathing suits. I bought a rubber crocodile, a folding bed, furniture for a dollhouse, a couple of lovebirds, a piece of new-fashioned mother-of-pearl fabric, ivory and gold travel chess, a dozen linen handkerchiefs for Abe, two Hermes suede jackets – one in aqua, another strawberry-and-cream color (Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 263).

The stringing of numerous details and a detailed enumeration of objects is an indirect characteristic of the heroine of the novel and her environment. Emotional emptiness is easiest to fill with purchases from expensive stores, loneliness is not so much felt in the crowd of visitors to shopping centers. Now it is called "shopping therapy", a way of treating residents of big cities.

Guillaume Musso used the technique of "double vision" when describing Paris. A genuine "city of contrasts" appears on the pages of the novel, in which romance and sublimity coexist with the rough realities of the metropolis. The author sends his heroes on a night boat ride on the Seine, which, as you know, is an integral part of a tour of Paris. It was here, in the "best city on Earth," according to the apt expression of Topolya, Sebastian and Nicky came during their honeymoon. They also come here to resurrect their feelings.

The boat glided silently past the Suffren and Bourdonay piers. Their two arches, crossing, formed two circles reflected in the water. The esplanade for walking stretched to the Eiffel Tower. Even the most jaded passengers like Sebastian could not help but admire this extravaganza. The food was so-so, the crooner was unbearable, but the magic of Paris fascinated, turning out to be stronger than all the hindrances (Musso, 2019, p. 187).

But meanwhile, the capital of France is not only a postcard with a view of the Eiffel Tower and a glossy picture in a tourist guide. Sailing under the Charles de Gaulle bridge, visitors to the boat saw an "unexpected picture". "Near to the bridge, homeless people were camped – rags, stench, bonfires. The spectacle is not for the faint of heart" (Musso, 2019, p. 187). Musso describes the phenomenon as "Paris Syndrome", referring to the reaction of traumatized tourists when their expectations collide with reality. They cannot stand the contrast between the illusory Paris that they admired in the films and the unsightly picture that they see in reality.

Guillaume Musso turns to the theme of the insignificance of man in the industrial space of a big city. People lose their natural essence, becoming only biomaterial.

The station looked like a multi-tentacled octopus, which holds in its arms the most diverse fauna: hard workers returning to their suburbs, idle tourists, hurrying businesspeople ... They were swallowed and began to be digested by a huge, growling, rumbling belly (Musso, 2019, p. 200).

This Paris was at the beginning of the 21st century. In 1896, more than a century ago, Musso's compatriot Emile Verharn wrote a collection of poetry "Octopus Cities". He was one of the first to notice the insidious essence of cities as if enveloping their inhabitants with tentacles. Verhaarn (1984) resorts to vivid, memorable epithets: for him, the city is "a huge, stupid monster", "a stinking ditch", and "a furry mud of sewage" (Verharn, 1984). Similar naturalistic images bring Verhaarn closer to other French writers Zola and Sartre. Analyzing the images and symbols of Verhaarn's poems, the critic B. Raskin notes "the flashy contrasts and ugliness of the capitalist city with its" monsters ", which the poet embodies on the pages of his collection (Raskin, 1961). Of course, the writer of the 21st century Musso is far from criticizing the capitalist system, and this is not at all the task of his seemingly adventurous light novel. However, a perspicacious and talented writer, no matter what genre he belongs to, cannot remain aloof from the social problems that time itself presents to him: the disunity of people, the departure from natural life in an urbanized space, the loss of moral values (Lovrich, 2018).

Musso (2019) also emphasizes the illusiveness, the unreality of the urban space of Paris, in which people wander, as if in a fog, and cannot find themselves. The same thing happens with the main character of the novel. "I have never heard of this quarter of Paris, which seems to hover over the city. No wide streets, no Ottoman houses, cobbled lanes, provincial houses. I seemed to myself Alice, who found herself in the Looking Glass" (p. 202). The writer resorts to vivid antitheses, comparing the "two" Paris, and the reader is left to guess which one is real.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the city is the same hero of the story as the people. Urban space is dynamic and diverse depending on the angle from which it is illuminated. In the novel "Seven years have passed", Musso follows the canons of classical world literature, embodying it originally, avoiding patterns and clichés. He fully succeeded in creating the polyphony of the metropolis, deploying a panorama of large cities on the pages of the novel. Meanwhile, the author emphasizes that the urban space and civilization identical to it are detrimental to the moral foundations of a person (Smith, 2021). Analyzing the cultural portrait of the city, it becomes obvious that, regardless of nationality, people are both united and separated by "eternal" universal problems. Finding common ground and establishing contact between representatives of different peoples is the goal of the dialogue of cultures.

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