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The category of the underground in the selected films of Andrey Zvyagintsev

Andrey Zvyagintsev is regarded as one of the best-known contemporary Russian film directors. His movies are most often discussed in the context of the development of religious, metaphysical or transcendental cinema. This presentation is planned to offer a new perspective of looking at Zvyagintsev filmography, which is the tradition of Russian literature. The talk will focus on the analysis of three episodes of TV series Black Room (Чёрная комната, 2000) - which constitute his directorial debut - from the point of view of the category of the underground. Firstly, the selected category will be introduced in the broad context of its functions in the Russian space of culture. In this regard Juri Lotman's findings will be taken into account. Secondly, the comparative study of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Notes from the Underground and Zvyagintsev's episodes Bushido, Obscure and Choice (Выбор) will be presented, focusing on thematic, structural and aesthetic solutions used by both artists. The interpretation will show the films as the critical discussion, update and reconfiguration of the category, which is primarily associated with Dostoevsky's novels. Besides, the talk will examine the presence of other intertextual elements in Zvyagintsev's films (e.g. Martin Scorsese's Taxi driver or Jorge Luis Borges's aesthetics of onirism). The conclusions should lead to the new understanding of the categories of the underground and the underground man encompassing both Russian and world literature and culture.

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