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THE REAL AND THE FABRICATED IN THE SCREENPLAY “THE STATION OF FOSSIL MAN”

Shmavon Azatyan

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia

shazzai@yahoo.com

Abstract

My PhD project consists of a screenplay and an exegesis. The exegesis examines the issues of marriage and sexuality that are explored in the screenplay as subjects of disagreement between the old and new generations of intelligentsia in post-Soviet Armenia. This paper presents those sections from the exegesis, which investigate how this historical moment is reflected in my screenplay in terms of verisimilitude. I claim the representation of the Armenian intelligentsia in my screenplay is in the spirit of “authentic realism”. Reflecting on the real and the imagined in the narrative of my screenplay, I argue that there is “critical information,” directly based on the actual, that helps a writer create realistic fiction. I put forth a theory that the narrative discourse in my screenplay consists of two levels – fundamental and fictive, the former representing the real in the narrative, while the latter – the imagined. Using this theory I suggest that the degradation of the Armenian intelligentsia embodied by the protagonist in the screenplay captures realistically the actual cultural moment in post-Soviet Armenia.

Keywords

Verisimilitude, Realism, Narrative, Screenplay, Exegesis, Intelligentsia, Post-Soviet Armenia

1. Introduction

My PhD dissertation project consists of a screenplay, titled The Station of Fossil Man and an exegesis. In the screenplay, I explore the middle-aged Armenian man's psyche in a historical moment when the Armenian intelligentsia is undergoing an identity crisis, while in the exegesis I discuss this cultural moment in terms of how realistically my screenplay depicts the post-Soviet Armenian intelligentsia and issues related to the group. This paper concerns itself with the sections from the exegesis, in which I examine the process of reality being converted into a screenplay through narrative transmission, as well as with understanding how realistic my screenplay is. Based on James Chapman's definitions of realism, I make a case that my screenplay falls under the category of "authentic realism" in distinction to verisimilitude. Using the theories of aesthetic representation of reality and of referential generalization proposed by Gyorgy Lukacs and Pam Morris respectively, I recognize the aspectual feature of realism in the process of creating a fictional character, which I support by Roland Barthes' theory of assembling a character by using identity semes and Philippe Hamon's idea of recognizing semic codes. Although reality as a total entity cannot be represented in a screenplay, it is possible to use critical information in order to capture the essential elements of the particular culturally contextualized reality. This idea leads me consider the existence of two levels in fiction – fundamental and fictive, where the former mirrors facts and actual signs, whereas the latter is built on assumptions. At the end, I brief over Yulia Antonyan's study of the history of the Armenian intelligentsia and suggest that on the political, social and cultural level, my screenplay depicts the existing identity issues of the post-Soviet Armenian intelligentsia.

2. The Story

The screenplay runs in two major plotlines – past and present. The story in the past is set in the capital of Armenia, Yerevan. It is about Haik, a university lecturer, and two women Monica (striptease dancer) and Mary (university lecturer). Haik loves Monica and has been living with her. But his relationship with her is problematic – as a university lecturer he can't date Monica publicly. In addition, his parents and friends don't approve of his liaison. In the eyes of his family, Monica is a prostitute; his friends look at her as "a temporary entertainment." The pressure from the community, the social mores he was raised to believe in and his age make Haik

think of another option, Mary – a new hire at university. Haik falls in love with her. Now Haik is unable to decide, which woman will be a good wife for him, and whether he should get married at all. He starts dating both women simultaneously. He is sexually attracted to Monica, but he loves the intellectual conversations with Mary and draws inspiration from her views. However, Mary is too conservative, very innocent of sexual matters and not open about sex. Eventually, Haik is found out cheating. Afterwards he goes on a journey to find the fossils of the prehistoric man, which, he believes, should shed some light on the reasons why humans have evolved differently from animals in terms of sexuality. He is certain the information gleaned from the fossils will help him get sorted with his issues.

The story in the present tells about Haik's journey on train. The journey goes through various locations in the world, where Haik studies ethnic cultures in terms of courtship and marriage. On the train, he meets a single mother, Rita, and they both fall in love with each other. However, Haik rejects Rita's advances. He wants to wait and see if he truly loves Rita and what that love means. Delaying his intimacy with Rita for Haik means becoming a true human being. Haik succeeds in resisting Rita's advances, and she suggests they live together, but Haik has to complete his scientific mission. They part ways. However, the fossils Haik finds don't give substantial evidence on the nervous system of the prehistoric man, which could give him some clues about the dynamics between the evolution of culture and human sexuality.

3. Exegesis

In the exegesis, I self-reflexively explore the factual foundations of the screenplay and the degree of realism in the narrative with a purpose of studying the process of how reality becomes fiction and what realism means to me as a writer. A discussion of realism in writing can be approached from various perspectives. My study specifically examines how reality and the real are processed in my screenplay, hence my examination of realist narrative in The Station of Fossil Man is restricted to screenplay writing and doesn't touch upon mise-en-scene, cinematography, acting, and sound. In relation to narrative transmission, I try to answer the following questions: 1) how much of the real is communicated in my screenplay and whether that portion of the real can basically stand for the "whole" 2) which aspects of reality represented in the screenplay make it realistic, and 3) how I can self-reflexively measure how realistic my

screenplay is (and to what extent audiences could believe the story about Haik actually happened).

3.1 Realism

For the purposes of further discussing my screenplay, I need to define realism, reality and the real. I use the term realism to refer to a writing convention, which is characterized by depicting the typical mental and behavioral tendencies at a particular time and space with reference to facts, actual events and people, communicated through a close point of view. To add, a naturalistic view of social environment is emphasized in this process. By reality I refer to the continuous all-encompassing whole that is unfathomable for humans at a particular moment in a particular space. By the real I understand the authentic Self, as well as incidents, persons, actions, and phenomena. Humans can understand Self only to a certain extent by processing it through sense perception and substantiating it in a material order partly drawn on Lacan's theory (Eyers, 2012). My view of realism is similar to the definition of it given by James Chapman (2013), where he differentiates the terms actuality, authenticity and realism. Chapman sees these concepts as distinct when referenced to film, where actuality refers to documentary film, authenticity – to feature film that is based on facts, while realism is a “social or aesthetic construct, in which film represents characters and situations in a manner that conforms to our experiences of real life” (2013, p. 78). My conception of realism includes Chapman's interpretations of actuality and authenticity, since I see facts and actuality at the heart of realism.

In examining the process of how reality becomes fiction it is not reasonable to argue that my screenplay accurately corresponds to the external reality, in particular, the post-Soviet Armenian society. However, I claim that the essential spirit of the time (social phenomena and dominant beliefs) expressed in the basic screenplay and basic mechanism of human agency (individual behavior and mentality) that are manifest in the characters are realistic. Corollary to my claim, realism is the essential concept that guides and informs my investigation of the narrative transmission in my screenplay. The underpinnings of my practicing realist narrative are mimetic. I'm driven by the desire to write a story that the audience believes happened sometime in the past. I don't copy reality (which I believe is not possible), rather, I make a point to use “bits” from a true event/story I have known, observed, as well as heard or read about. I piece together these bits and weave a narrative plot and build characters. However, my information is not total for I can't know everything about a given situation, incident or a person. Therefore, I fill

the gaps necessary for the narrative to unfold effectively and also to achieve my own aesthetic goal. Pam Morris (2003) defends realism against postmodernist charges as to its inability to operate “a one-to-one fidelity between words and things” arguing for a theory she calls “referential generalization.” This theory is based upon consensus between writer and reader regarding “the possibility of a shared communication about our experience and the world” (Morris, 2003, p. 42). Having a firm belief in whether there is an extra-linguistic reality or not is not significant in positioning oneself as a realist writer, for any writing is already a “mediated” practice and whatever it achieves in terms of communicating reality is always colored by the author’s mental and psychological workings.

An authorizing principle for my view of realism in cinema is the idea that reality is “all-encompassing” and as such it can only be articulated in a screenplay in a fractured manner. According to this idea, reality is a heterogeneous entity, comprising a variety of elements. Subsequently, only an aspect or, at best, a combination of aspects of reality, but not the whole of reality, can be reproduced. By aspect I refer to individuals, their character traits, their actions, relationships and views, as well as properties and qualities of time and space.

Here, it is relevant to discuss the choosing and borrowing as actions that underlie the process of reproduction of reality in aspects. Choosing an aspect, for example a person, involves either borrowing a prototype through using “parts” of their actual personality, or borrowing some character traits, opinions, statements, habits and so on. In various cases, using of real facts may be executed conceivably to a lower or to a greater extent. The extent can be determined by the amount of facts about the actual person that are used unchanged in the narrative. Subsequently, the process of my writing a screenplay is of twofold: one, it is the activity of deciding whether to refer to facts and which facts and how many facts should be utilized in the narrative, while the other is an activity of deciding which aspect of reality should be depicted and or emphasized more than the others.

Analyzing the process of writing my screenplay, I conclude that there are three main facts about the prototype that I have used in the narrative. The origin of The Station of Fossil Man is the source of a brief exchange with a friend of mine, in which the person informed me about his then current life. For anonymity I will call the person X. The information X gave me was as follows: X is a PhD in Humanities, X is working at the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, X dates two women - X sleeps with one and spends time with the other, X’s comment on his

behavior: “I’m making up what I’ve missed out on.” I used these facts when creating Haik’s character. In theory, the facts used in the screenplay are the protagonist’s identity, his behavior and his moral judgment. The rest of the screenplay story is, with several minor exceptions, fabricated to be a real story that happened in Yerevan in mid 2000s. The fabricated characters, character traits and identities, attitudes to life, actions and behavior are based on my observations and assumptions. Since I don’t possess all the facts about the prototype (which is never possible), I use my assumptions, others’ opinions and views and my imagination. Using assumptions and others’ opinions and views is a delicate matter, since assumptions and opinions can be based on evidence. This means that I can consider the use of assumptions and opinions in addition to facts about the prototype as equal to changing facts about the prototype. Now, I can go back to the question about aspects and discuss which aspects of the real world I have used in the screenplay and which ones particularly make the story realistic. The following discussion will deal with both the process of how I chose aspects of reality and the question if assumptions discredit the realism in my screenplay.

3.2 Observation and Assumption

Belief held without proof discounts the argument about realist narrative. Nevertheless, supposing and assuming can have a basis in reality. In my personal experience, suppositions and assumptions come together with observations and are based on them. Forsake of being realistic, I make assumptions that are also based on the actual, in a way hypothesizing possibilities (for X) based on my observation of others. Namely, I infer aspects from specific cases and present them as a typical case of a middle-aged intelligent Armenian man. Assuming what X would do and having Haik behave in a certain manner equals changing factual information about the prototype. I don’t know how X ended up with either women. I assumed he broke up with the one he was sleeping with, while he may have considered marrying the other – a prospect that is based on the general view in the Armenian society that a woman’s engagement in pre-marital sex disqualifies her from suitability for marriage. It amounts to stating that I created Haik’s character through generalizing X’s identity and attitude to life. This, on its turn, involves reducing a real-life figure’s character traits, skills, talents, interests into a few.

The conclusion about reducing and generalizing information about the prototype also raises a question about the validity of my argument regarding realism in my screenplay. In defense of realism in my screenplay, I suggest that changing the factual information, in my case,

involves “extending” and replacing certain information and/or quality (ies). I call the fact in the narrative an “extension” of the real fact inasmuch as it partakes of the essential qualities of the real subject (or object). Both the extension and replacement of fact don’t entail an essential change in the character’s views and actions in the discourse. A major case of fact extension concerns the information about Haik’s family background. In the real world, the prototype comes from a middle-class family, of professions unknown to me, while Haik comes from upper-middle class family of a painter mother and a historian father. My perceptions of the prototype and his family spring from a more or less direct knowledge of him in the course of a long period of time, also from my observations of men with similar backgrounds and their families in Armenia. In the real world, the prototype’s parents may be more lenient regarding his relationship with a stripper, but they would by all means try stopping their son from marrying one.

Another example of fact extension is the specialization of the protagonist. The prototype majored in political history, while Haik studies art history. This discrepancy between the real and the fictive may implicate in considerable differences between the actual person and my character. Politics and art are in certain ways opposites. A man interested in politics is obviously different from a man keen on arts. Not only are their views of the world and people, but also their personal matters and private habits are supposed to be rather different. Notwithstanding, I believe that being a scholar is the factor that can smooth out any serious inconsistencies between Haik and the protagonist, because the higher degree in academia brings both persons to a general congruence of views on life and the world that should not largely affect the character in a negative sense as far as realism is concerned. As I have already mentioned, the character is only a reduced version of the real-life figure whose totality is not perceivable. It’s worthy to add that X himself was a well-rounded person, very knowledgeable in all the fields of humanities, including history of art. In connection with this, Haik’s behavior as an art historian may not be different from X’s behavior as a political historian, but it may result in differences with regard to the aspects of the plot and other characters. For example, Haik’s specialization (as a starting point) determines Mary’s personality, the nature of his relationship with Monica and with Mary, the kind of conversations he has with his parents and other characters. However, it doesn’t affect anyway the major conflicts between values and turning points in the plot, e.g. the scene at the swimming pool, where Haik as an academic is disgraced by Monica’s stripping herself publicly.

Also, Haik experiences serious discordances in attitude, behavior and companionship between him and Monica, slowly realizing that an academic will have a difficult marriage with a stripper.

There are two major replacements of facts about the prototype in the screenplay. First, I have changed the prototype's workplace. X worked at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, while Haik works at Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts in the narrative. In both cases, the prototype and Haik are scholars, holding a PhD, and both work at existing institutions in Armenia. The difference is between lecturing and carrying out research, which doesn't affect Haik's relationships (with Monica and Mary, parents and friends), nor does it have any impact on Haik's actions.

The second replacement of fact is Haik's age. The prototype was 27 at the time he worked at the Academy of Sciences and got involved with two women simultaneously, while Haik is 33 in the screenplay. It may be argued that the difference in age calls for different attitudes to the prototype's and Haik's behaviors. If the prototype was much younger and if supposedly he was having issues very similar to Haik's, then his cheating and deception, his parents' pressure on him, his indecisiveness and adolescent-like behavior could be read as relatively normal. In addition, what would be at stake for the prototype would be much less. Haik's age is a contrivance, which may not be convincing to some audiences, but it will be so to others still abiding by various religious and cultural ideologies that curtail individual freedom.

I argue that Haik is a realistic character not only because he is a copy of the prototype in terms of academic and social standing, his involvement with two women, as well as his explanation of his own behavior, but also because Haik's character has other features that are based on my observations and assumptions of Armenian men similar to the prototype. Haik's character combines traits, features, beliefs of real Armenian young men I observed and met early in 2000s. According to my observations, there have been serious social issues concerning courtship, marriage, and class in post-Soviet Armenia. In mid 2000s, in Armenia, it was typical of men similar to Haik to cheat on their girlfriends in the same way as Haik does in the screenplay. This behavior had somehow become normal with many people. Despite the norm, though, these young men and women had to keep their dating secret from their families. Otherwise, men would be under family pressure to get married with a decent woman often chosen by their parents, whereas women would be stigmatized as "damaged women," which would make their plans on getting married complicated later in their lives.

Besides observations, I had in mind opinions of other people when writing the screenplay. Aristotle and Plato believed that verisimilitude is the “relation between a particular text to the public opinion” (Todorov, p. 82). Within the context of writer / text reader, such practice is natural, indeed, if the writer has at least a subconscious or unaware inclination or intention to convince the reader about the truthfulness of their work. As Christine Brooke-Rose (2006) writes, Barthes proposes a mechanism for the creative reader to decode and understand a fictionalized character. He calls the way a character is built up a semic code (or voice of the person). According to this theory, a character is built up through identical semes, for example, femininity, grace, beauty, wealth, poverty, and so on, which converge upon a proper name (Brook-Rose, 2006, p. 39). Gyorgy Lukacs suggests that “typical” is the device that helps join the particular to the general and thus achieve a kind of representation of reality that is highly aesthetic (Aitken, 1981, p. 75-76). In the narrative, Haik’s character is the reduced version of his prototype, however, both Haik and the prototype are middle-aged Armenian men who have personal issues due to the particular social and cultural environment they are in. Even if my circle of friends and acquaintances, whose opinions I have used in constructing Haik’s character, is small, I am confident that they and I represent more or less the mainstream view.

Going back to the question which aspects of reality in the screenplay make it realistic, I see it significant to make a conclusive statement as to the minimum required for a character to be realistic. In reviewing how I started writing the screenplay, I recognize that my vantage point was the action, not the person. Cinema, in general, is an action-based form of art. When I thought of what X did, it looked like a very good scenario for a film. And now reflecting on why it worked as a good basis for a film, I conclude the following: X’s action is dramatic and suitable for a film; this action is provoking, invites criticism, rebuke and disapproval; also, it is difficult to understand and explain, and may even create misunderstanding. When grouping the qualities of this action the following emerges:

A – criticism / rebuke / disapproval

B – unusual / requires explanation

In A, the prototype’s action is morally challenging, while in B, it is not typical of the particular cultural context. To conclude, for the screenplay to be realistic, one of the characters’ action must cast a doubt on local or common morality and be unusual in a particular cultural environment. However, “action means character” (Field, 2005, p. 47), which validates my

examination of the prototype's identity and persona as a necessary constituent of the basic action underlying the origin of the story. At its core, Haik is a realistic character because his identity, behavior and his own comment on his behavior are facts, his views, character background, traits, manners and manner of speaking are socially and culturally very typical.

3.3 Fundamental and Fictive Levels in the Narrative

Circling back to the initial question of how realistically I depict the cultural moment of Armenian intelligentsia, I pose a more delicate question of how I can self-reflexively measure how realistic my screenplay is (and to what extent audiences could believe the story about Haik actually happened). An examination of the fantastic in the screenplay is necessary for positing a contradistinction between realism and fantasy, which will aid in scaling how realistic my screenplay is. As a vantage point, I will call the fantastic those constituents in the narrative, which are not based on anything actual, whether a story, a person, or a cultural-social phenomenon. If the real in the screenplay is Haik's story in Yerevan that comprises both facts and fabrications, then the fantastic is the journey, which is purely my imagination. However, the story of Haik's journey is not devoid of realism altogether, since it contains signs and codes existing in the real world. Todorov states that the 'pure' fantastic must sustain reader's hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations of apparently supernatural events to the end and that "the reader must adopt a certain attitude toward the text" (Brooke-Rose, 1981, p. 63). In my examination of my screenplay, I find that I have intuitively resolved the aforementioned issue of hesitation and the both plotlines are realistic, but to different degrees. In Hamon's procedure three, called "parallel story", there is a point about a distinction between recognizing references to reality and understanding semes (Brook-Rose, 1981). If I guide the reader towards recognizing instead of understanding references, this may create a stronger sense of truthfulness.

I convince the reader, to use Todorov's idea, "to adopt an attitude" that this story truly happened through inter-textual and historiographical allusions and facts. For space, I use a geographically factual and actual landmarks, locations, locomotion, existing names, sites and places; for time, I use complex plurality with flashbacks and reference to time (it can be implicit) in a systematized manner, which mimes the continuous processes of thinking, judging, remembering, reminiscing that are intermingled in an individual's mind in the real world; in respect to characters, I use narrowly specific cultural and/or subcultural semes and sociolect-based speech, which present them as people who really existed; as for point of view I use close

perspective, or stream of consciousness, which might be considered realistic in depicting a fuller portrait of one character at the expense of the others. In the train plotline, there can hardly be any long-lasting hesitation on the part of the audiences. The train, the journey, the geography are all based on objective reality. What will be incredible is the passage of time, which is definitely non-natural. Also, as the screenplay suggests, there is ambiguity in the train plotline, because part of it is Haik's imagination. Todorov proposes that another requirement for fantasy is that "the reader must adopt a certain attitude towards the text – reject a poetic or allegorical reading" (Brooke-Rose, 1981, p. 68). In the train plotline, at the beginning the big print states that this is going to be Haik's imagination, partially mixed with the real.

I suggest a theory that writing a screenplay equals exploring the nature of reality and fantasy and their boundaries and overlapping areas. In the writer's mind, reality and fantasy have their particular places, however, they imbue each other with their inherent characteristics. To illustrate, the reality of a given sign represented in the screenplay can be absolute and also of low degree; in the former case, the signifier mirrors the signified, in the latter case the represented sign is the product of my assumptions based on moral ethics. Likewise, the fantasy about Haik's desire to find the fossil of a prehistoric man (so that he can study it and try to glean evidence concerning their sexuality) is not absolute. Fantasy can also be mixed with reality, as in Rita's willingness to wait and see how Haik sorts out his feelings for her.

Based on my theory, I characterize the narrative in The Station of Fossil Man by dividing it into reality and fantasy. Because the story set in Yerevan is evidently closer to the reality, I put it on the basis of the screenplay, naming this basis "fundamental level." By the same token, I name the basis of the story of Haik's journey "fictive level." After reviewing my very first steps in creating this screenplay, I come to the conclusion that the Yerevan story by virtue of being based, to a greater extent, on real facts is the foundation of the screenplay; it is the realm where Haik and his issues are culturally and socially contextualized in an existing spatial reality (e.g. Yerevan – capital of Armenia in 2000s, Amiryan Street, Jrvezh suburb, Café Melody, Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts, National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Yerevan State University). The journey is my imagination about a possible subsequence after Haik's failures. Also, spatially and temporally it is highly unlikely.

3.4 Authentic Realism: Armenian Intelligentsia

It is possible to discuss my work in terms of verisimilitude, however I prefer to use the term authentic realism on the basis of the critical and essential piece of information I have accurately inserted in the narrative. Moreover, the factuality of Haik's behavior forms the foundation of the narrative. I have created a character with his morality and behavior that is actual in the real world. My representation of an Armenian middle-aged man is valid in terms of authenticity, because I'm an insider, born and raised in the particular social and cultural environment where the story about Haik is set.

My screenplay implicitly touches upon how upper-middle class Armenians today regard themselves as intelligentsia through a conflict between a university lecturer on the one side and his family and community on the other. Haik's character straddles two worlds – Soviet Armenia and post-Soviet Armenia. His parents represent the old group of intelligentsia of the Soviet period, which according to Yulia Antonyan (2012), struggles to keep their identity refined not to merge with lower classes. The narrative in the screenplay implies that they see themselves as persons of high order culturally and genetically. They believe their son has inherited the same genes, and, in addition, they have instilled in him the cultural coda of the intelligentsia of the Soviet era. Haik tries to meet their expectations, but his deep sensibilities force him to go in the direction of exploring his sexuality, which leads to his internal conflict.

Haik's internal conflict is expressed by the dilemma if he should act according to the conventions or according to his emotions. Monica's status as Haik's "girlfriend" tarnishes his family name, finally leading his parents to threaten that they will turn their backs on him. For him it proves to be impossible to choose. Social class, academic and family background and occupation are deeply rooted in his consciousness and are significant factors for his relationship with a woman to be successful. He keeps asking himself if his relationship with Monica is legitimate. The belief in keeping of the proprieties on the one hand and desire for Monica on the other drive him to opposite actions: one - to discover himself, to come to terms with his sexuality, the other – to back on his commitments. Haik becomes aware of the problems he has with the views held by the older intelligentsia. His thinking about marrying Monica is a serious violation of the values, not only upheld by the older generations, but also his friends and colleagues. In one respect, Haik's behavior offends the proprieties, which dictate that an academic can't have a relationship with a stripper officially and publicly, in another respect, he attacks the stereotype according to which strippers are "immoral" or otherwise "damaged."

Under the pressure from his family and community, Haik breaks up with Monica and continues his relationship with Mary.

Antonyan (2012) states that in the Soviet period, an elitist approach to defining intelligentsia emerged. Quasi intelligentsia was formed drawn on the Soviet principle of ruling political, military and administrative elite. This group was an instrument through which the Soviet government ruled the masses. The Soviet Intelligentsia, in general, were the ideological supporters of the Soviet socialism, and the cultural, ideological, behavioral values were imposed on the society from above through this group. Antonyan's research presents two main perceptions of intelligentsia in Armenia in the Soviet period. First, the official definition established by the Soviet Government described the intelligentsia as "workers in the creative and the intellectual spheres" e.g. education, science, art, medicine. Second, according to the popular view, the intelligentsia was expected to be educated, well-read, informed in arts and literature, demonstrate high standards of everyday culture and taste in clothing and have good speaking skills. The Soviet government's official definition led to the formation of two narrower approaches to identifying the intelligentsia in Soviet Armenia - occupation-based and value-based. Both these definitions caused misconceptions. For example, an accountant was not an intelligent, but the physician, academic, artist, painter and writer were. And the value-based approach, which required exhibiting certain moral, spiritual and behavioral dimensions as well as aristocratic sensibilities in, e.g. home interior, meals, clothes, also brought about confusions due to the unclear standards in morality and spirituality. Antonyan says that the current notions of intelligentsia are in a process of identity search through reconciliation and negotiation of the boundaries between old and new identities, social roles, hierarchies, behavioral codes and value systems.

Antonyan's research further reveals that in today's Armenian society, people have different perceptions of the word "intelligentsia," especially confusing it with the word "intellectual" (2012). This confusion is reflected in my characters' views and behavior. It is impossible to measure the spirituality of a stripper and claim that she has none, for which reason Haik cannot live together with Monica. To Haik categorizing people doesn't make any sense. What his parents consider a vulgar behavior is not so to Haik who is also "an intelligent." In addition, Monica's sexual openness is balanced by Haik's own use of vulgar language, when he communicates with her in private. In the scenes where Haik and Monica are together, Haik is not

a highly-civilized person with refined manners his parents believe he is. Haik's behavior is natural, but what is natural in him is considered vile and unacceptable by his parents.

Haik's character rethinks the boundaries between intelligentsia and lower class. As an intellectual, he questions the validity of the culturally constructed social class etiquette, because it denies him pleasure in private matters. Haik doesn't think it logical to comply with certain rules that are convenient for the older generation at the expense of his happiness. By these rules the old intelligentsia can define themselves and claim their rights to higher positions in the social hierarchy. However, Haik must complete his rite of passage, which he hasn't done due to his academic career and the taboo on pre-marital sex. Haik's actions clearly reveal the dichotomy between the illusions the older generations hold on to and his pragmatic behavior.

4. Conclusion

For the work to be realistic, I choose aspects from reality – a person's identity (social background), behavior that is unusual and provokes a conflict, moral views (person's own comment on their behavior). For the viewer to be convinced, I base these aspects on facts and assumptions that reflect the public opinion at a given place and time within a specific cultural environment. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient, as a certain minimum reference to the actual is critical. In my analysis of my own narrative, I propose that this minimum information is represented by the prototype's identity and social standing, his conflict-provoking and morally challenging behavior and his own moral judgment of that particular behavior. In the application of the minimum, the more facts dominate over the assumptions, the more realistic the work will be. And since the presentation of facts and widely-held public opinion in the screenplay elicits recognition, the audiences find the represented sign realistic.

With reference to the historical moment, my screenplay expresses the existing uncertainties among the new intelligentsia in post-Soviet Armenia as to what should be an acceptable norm of behavior. I approach the examination of how realistic this representation is through analyzing the portrayal of Haik's character. Since I have constructed Haik's character based on a prototype and my observations of young representatives of the Armenian intelligentsia, I claim that Haik's character is a realistic representation of this specific social group despite the many aspects of his character that I have made up.

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