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Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives

DIDACTIC AND HEURISTIC POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN HORROR CINEMA

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Abstract

The article is dedicated to the role of American horror films in the formation of the modern education institute. They make possible visualizing the significant meanings of culture by creating and visualizing a system of argumentation based on destructive artistic images. Emotional immaturity and information saturation of the educational process are the causes of the formation of the youth inferiority complex, which American horror film tries to compensate for. The formalization of educational communication provokes emotional instability of the young generation, striving for maximum freedom while achieving a high position in the group hierarchy. First of all, school teachers are symbols of mature social communication, which is sharply denied by young people, which leads to the complete displacement of the experience of the older generation from the youth picture of the world. The American horror film visualizes this contradiction by introducing images of monsters into the film space, eliminating all representatives of the older generation. The genre of horror films reanimates archaic lower mythology and appeals to the sacred potential of cosmogonical myths and heroic images. Hollywood horror films directly correspond to the archaic myth-scenarios of the youth individuation, which indicates the fundamental nature of these archetypal and interrelated processes. Over time, they turn into stereotypes, assessments and behavior patterns. Hollywood creates and broadcasts ideological schemes that restore the archaic connection of man with the world, which gives American horror films a special didactic and heuristic value.

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Keywords: American horror film, ideology, the lower mythology, education, cinema, socialization.



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1. Introduction

Pedagogy from the moment of its appearance set global tasks in attempts to develop a universal mechanism of adaptation, accumulation and translation of the experience of previous eras in order to form on this basis the current generation, able to adequately apply the knowledge transferred to it. In solving this problem, pedagogy has been very successful, offering a range of time-tested theories and practices that allow for professional and specialized continuity of generations. Thus, the prerequisites for the strict preservation of pedagogical knowledge and its tools were created, a complex of insensitivity to new trends in the development of civilization and culture was formed. At the same time, the modern era demonstrates the critical level of the gap between historically established forms of socialization and new socio-cultural and technological trends. Such innovations include the emergence of cinema and the spectrum of its various genres, which formed a new sensory-emotional dominant, based on the synthesis of sensations, related sensory complexes and behavioral reactions. Embodying the idea of a harmonious combination of species and genre diversity of arts, cinema becomes a symbol of civilization, and its mass popularity indicates the effective mechanism of complex impact on the audience of all ages. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has not become the subject of any fundamental, interdisciplinary, or pedagogical research, although it is cinema that is an example of a fundamentally new technology of socialization. In the space of modern visual culture, its educational mission is of particular value, and the variety of film genres allows us to determine the nature of film socialization and its trends. Only the humanistic ideals of traditional pedagogy, represented by the cult of intelligent, sensually-developed and active man, cannot fully represent civilization and be considered the only examples of education and upbringing. Unusually popular genre American the film horrors of in the early XXI century became effective lever mass socialization, forming installations, directly opposite models high culture. Hollywood motives of death, suffering and violence were much more convincing than the classical ideals of freedom, love, friendship, mutual assistance. The propagandistic experience of American horror films, containing fundamentally “changing the tastes of artistic ideas viewers” (Fortuna, 2018), clearly demonstrated that destructive patterns do not always lead to the formation of similar behaviors. Cinematic “horror” stories, despite their deadly and tragic setting, tell about individuals who are able to overcome their own fears and ignorance and form socially significant behaviors. Therefore, the inclusion of socialization technologies, developed and visualized in the American tradition of horror films, in the pedagogical and cultural turnover should be one of the promising areas of development of these branches of knowledge.

2. Problem Statement

The process of socialization can be built on both positive and negative ideals, which are formed in the bosom of modern culture and have at least one-order social and cultural value. While classical models of socialization focus on the positive ideals and traditional humanistic values of the enlightenment, American horror films promote the need to preserve the key meanings of culture, proving their effectiveness through a spectrum of destructive images.

3. Research Questions

The article will consistently present the following questions:

- consideration of the American horror films didactic role in the formation of actual ideals of the younger generation;
- identifying the heuristic value of the socialization model visualized and promoted by American horror films;
- analysis of the ideological orientation of the socialization model in American horror films;
- identify the main tools for the formation and promotion of lower mythology in American horror films.

4. Purpose of the Study

The article is dedicated to the analysis of didactic and heuristic potential of artistic images visualized within the tradition of American horror films.

5. Research Methods

American horror film is an integral part of modern visual culture and has a comprehensive impact on the younger generation. Therefore, the study of this brightest mass culture phenomenon has become one of the trends of Western social science. The foreign tradition of studying horror films is quite diverse, but the most striking authors should be considered (Carroll, 1990; Freeland, 1995; Marriott, 2004; Scal, 2009; Schneider, 2003). In their works, these authors, based on the tradition of semiotic analysis of cinema and horror films, establish the figurative and symbolic correspondence of the works of this genre to the actual socio-cultural meanings of a particular era. Such studies are dedicated to establishing the socializing role of American horror films in the area of modern consumer society. These authors successfully continue the tradition of socio-critical study of the mass culture phenomena started by representatives of the Frankfurt school and neo-Marxism representatives. This is how the paradigm of cinema interpretation, as a special ideological form of youth socialization, is formed. Particularly important for understanding this problem are the studies of Jameson (1991), who directly connects the ideological strategies of American horror films with the functioning of the political unconscious. Jameson develops a way of formation of sociocultural codes and sign systems in modern mass culture and establishes ideological character of their interpretation. The principle of "historicization" of cultural texts allows us to qualify the tradition of American horror films as a special cultural and ideological scenario of representation and promotion of social totality.

In this semiotic tradition there are also Anglo-American "Cultural Studies", also interpreting the horror film as a special kind of cultural text. In the same vein, articles (Andrew, 2016; Fortuna, 2018; Jancovich, 2015; Kawin, 2012; Staiger, 2015) are presented, which consider various socio-cultural, political, feminist aspects of the study of this genre and ways of interpreting them.

At the same time, interest in this genre is manifested not only by humanitarians, but also is the subject of research by scientists and teachers who are trying to analyze its versatile influence on the formation of the younger generation. It should be noted that the analysis of this Hollywood trend should

not be approached from the standpoint of social stereotypes that evaluate it exclusively destructive. Since the steady popularity of this film production among adolescents and young people indicates the presence of serious didactic and heuristic value in it, which allows us to speak about its significant socializing role. This is the reason for the interest in the methods of analysis of socialization in the socio-cultural space in the works of Herskovits (1955), who offered to consider enculturation as a priority socialization scenario of American horror films, allowing to include in the context of the formation of adequate behavior of youth cultural factors presented in conscious and unconscious forms.

The steady interest of pedagogy in cinema causes the emergence of a fundamentally new, interdisciplinary direction in this area of scientific knowledge. Pedagogy of cinema sets itself complex tasks related to the definition of the role and place of the visual and emotional potential of cinema in the training and education of the younger generation, as well as develops specific methods of analysis. Texts (Cole & Bradley, 2016; Walker, 2016), considering various aspects of the cinema influence on modern educational processes, focus on the application of semiotic principles to the analysis of the impact of cinema and horror films, the formation of a critical attitude to reality, as well as the identification of non-dominant and non-ideological factors of personal formation of the younger generation. It should be noted that the initially leisure origin of the American horror film largely prevents its scientific study and determination of the cultural and pedagogical value of this genre. However, in Western science there are already studies that are directly devoted to the identification of didactic and heuristic meanings of these works of media culture. Among such exceptions are the works (Grunzke, 2015; Lawrence, 2016), which analyze various aspects of the use of horror films in the pedagogical socialization of youth. Widespread exploitation in the tradition of American horror films complex biotic motifs predetermines the unprecedented intensity of the experiences of the younger generation. Extreme emotions are purposefully evoked by the creators of such films for the purpose of shock therapy, which largely replaces the traditional means of pedagogical influence on the fragile minds and hearts of the audience. However, the American tradition of horror films and still undeservedly bypassed the attention of researchers-humanitarians, while the craze of youth works of this genre, sooner or later, will still turn this phenomenon of mass culture into a serious educational and educational problem.

6. Findings

The emotional attitude of the young generation to the learning material is one of the most effective educational tools for the formation of professional knowledge, skills and abilities. The connection of education with reality is traditionally based on positive emotional experiences that allow forming the cognitive interest of the child. However, the negative emotions that accompany it throughout life are actively displaced from educational and upbringing spaces. The intermediate result of such socialization is the conflict between informative saturation and emotional immaturity of youth, which generates fears, inferiority complex in cases of its collision with the part of social reality that does not correspond to the pedagogical model. American horror film compensates for these gaps and through the visualization of adolescent and youth fears, draws attention to the need to understand the causes of the conflict between youth and reality and the relevance of “reincarnation and preservation of the basic, archaic meanings of human existence and civilization” (Malenko & Nekita, 2018).

Schools, colleges, and universities in American horror films are the places of traditional conflicts between students and educators, so they are filled to overflowing with “mad scientists, school bullies, dysfunctional families, and creepy school corridors, student dormitories, and summer camps – a mirror through which Americans reveal their social fears of youth, knowledge, and education” (Grunzke, 2015, p. 89). Rigid formalization of educational communication deprives youth of the rights and skills for realization of own interests, generates continuous and cruel school wars for the right of possession of inviolable personal and generational space. The extreme formalization of educational spaces naturally and inevitably “forms the phenomenon of alienated knowledge” (Lobok, 1997, p. 645), causes a flurry of negative emotions of young people associated with the desire to preserve the maximum degree of freedom while achieving high levels in all possible group hierarchies. The position of teachers provides for the removal of any intra-group contradictions and the approval of an exclusively formal model of communication as an ideal of future interaction of young people with social institutions. For an American horror film, this theme becomes a propaganda dominant, visually rooting the ideology of the conflict of singular generations.

The formal pressure of the older generation in the educational spaces of American horror films dictatorially translates the ideal of social communication mature models. Such education is completely “not related to adolescents and cannot help them solve their most pressing problems, presenting teachers as at best inept, and at worst dangerous” (Lawrence, 2016, p. 169). The escalation of disciplinary pressure of teachers on young people dramatically increases the degree of denial of the experience of adults and alienation from it. Its ultimate form is the installation on the complete displacement of the older generation from the youth picture of the world. The consequence of this conflict is the aggressive disregard of youth for the experience of previous generations, the formation of a socialization model, which fundamentally denies the possibility of broadcasting generational experience. Such discrediting of classical culture levels age-old traditions, provokes the collapse of society to pre-cultural models of communication. In the context of generational erosion, only fear as a basic biotic mechanism of communication creates an effective illusion of consolidation of atomized individuals. It is this idea that becomes the ideological attitude universally visualized by American horror films.

In Hollywood's horror film stories, educators are insensitive to the continuous generational conflicts formed by educational spaces, and young people, due to less experience of socialization, are unable and unprepared to solve them. Visualization of such contradictions introduces bloodthirsty monsters into the space of formal intergenerational communication, brutally punishing all its participants, dramatically “experiencing a crisis of subjectivity” (Jancovich, 2015). Representing the lower mythologies, ancient shocking legends and tales, terrible monsters severely punish “teachers” and “students” for the formal deconstruction of the historically established type of human hostel and traditional generational communication. The purifying mission of filmmakers always begins with the elimination of the older generation as symbols of undivided and brutal power. While among young people, only people who are not indifferent to the achievements of the past, have a significant potential for self-knowledge, individual and social activities, firmly convinced that the victory of the characters in the terrible tale will allow them to “progress safely in the surrounding violence” (Staiger, 2015).

7. Conclusion

American horror film directly forms the current ideals of the younger generation and therefore has an exceptional didactic value. Consumption of terrible film production teaches young people to adapt to the natural and social environment. Hollywood consistently proves the ideological role of biotic threats and fear for the effective motivation of young people to socially significant actions. Without forming professional and specialized knowledge, horror films teach young people to overcome fears about themselves, the social environment, the possibility of productive communication and socialization. Against the background of civilization comfort and minimization of world development rational forms, it is fear that plays a constructive role in the formation of a person whose personal history is no longer “just a pseudo-individual temporal scheme of dates and external events” (Holl, 1996).

The tradition of American horror film confirms the relevance of interpersonal, intergenerational and intercultural experience for the formation of an effective dialogue model of social communication and extremely brutally positions the dominant educational environment “as a special buffer between the child and sociality” (Malenko, & Nekita, 2008). Young people have the opportunity to rethink individually the experience of death and suffering, freed from Eurocentric political, religious and cultural stereotypes. Overcoming the indiscriminate denial and repression of these phenomena is aimed at propaedeutics of individual neuroses and mass destructive phenomena, the return of death and suffering consolidating socio-cultural meanings. This effect cannot be achieved arbitrarily, but it is formed only when the original goal-setting authors and horror films producers of their socializing mission.

American horror film performs not only an entertaining function, but carries deep socializing meanings that form and promote the national ideal of civil society, aggressively broadcast in the spaces of competing cultural traditions. Fear, which is continuously sublimated and “revived for subsequent generations of viewers” (Andrew, 2016) is precisely the unconscious biotic mechanism that forms the profile of the social hierarchy with the appropriate type of political superstructure, ideological strategies for its justification and promotion. Hollywood horror cinema consistently visualizes a special type of discipline, actively lobbied by public, commercial and state institutions to form an adequate and predictable consumer environment.

The main strategy of visual socialization in the tradition of American horror films – this popular, but at the same time, “deep fable of human nature” (Kawin, 2012) – is the reconstruction of lower mythologies as the main storyline of the generations conflict development. Hollywood horror stories ideologically exploit the sacred potential of cosmogonic myths and heroic images of repressed archaic cultures. The mass interest in terrible film histories is due to the unconscious identity of cosmogonic dramaturgy with the scenarios of individuation of the younger generation, reproducing the most ancient initiation rituals. In the space of mass culture, the ideological schemes of American horror films reconstruct the connection of Man, Nature, God and Society, which has exceptional didactic and heuristic value.

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