



МРПТИ 18.67.10

R. Neykova¹¹Institute of Arts Studies, BAC,
Bulgaria

MODERN CHILDREN CINEMA – COMMUNI- CATION AND PSYCHOLOGY OF CHILDREN’S PERCEPTION OF THE SCREEN

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Abstract

The article reviews modern films and television series for children from the point of view of their relevance to upbringing, follow the literary traditions as the history of the people, the interpretation of fantasy stories and through new topics and ideas. Because, a movie for children with its fairytale elements and repetition of valuable concepts continues to attract the attention of all family members – spectators of different ages. Each generation comes with its own interpretation of what they see, read, hear, and move on to their successors for the further transfer of their experience. In this sense, fantasy elements are an important component of children’s cinema, for the development of the imagination of children. It brings children closer to the historical and cultural heritage in the context of different examples, develops their spatial symbolic thinking. The author compares old and new ways of understanding films for children to the conclusion that it is interesting at present that children do not consider television something new and exciting, but for them it is an obligatory and important component of perception of reality.

Keywords: films for children, modern cinema for children, perception of films, new and modern.

Introduction

In children cinema all elements of the individualization process or at least some consequences apparently parallel with the observed in the individualization process in people can be observed. The movies with their nature kind mostly reflect

the moments related to certain action’s performance, to the narration of a certain story via a chain of actions. That how the movies show key moments of the way which has been or is about to be traveled by human consciousness.

In his writings Vivian Pramataroff states

that group work with children is extremely enriching. *“Children always keep the door to their world hospitably opened. This is a valuable gift, which we accept. They let us in and through their view and interpretation we understand the movie that we have watched together with them while taking into account our experience and security, which we have given them. Maybe they will have more faith in themselves as persons because if cinema is an illusion then in reality there has to be place also for the good.”*

Nowadays children literature offers different guidelines for fantasy, language, style, and even specific interpretation of the specific piece of work as a whole, when it comes to developing a story. While advertising the traditional works, children literature starts to be directed toward periodically changing modern topics and ideas which are systematically repeated as very new and very interesting. Unfortunately in its essence in most cases it stays only very sellable (or if we look objectively it is just more launched and more advertised) part of nowadays works. On the background of the colorful, rich, and diverse children literature there is a very small number of good works among the new writings that will stay and be rereleased and preserved in the future.

Tove Jansson says that *“there is a period in life which is not necessary to be ruined by concern and responsibility. The way we wake up is important because we have to get through each long day. Our childhood is our morning”*.

Exposure

Cinema continue to follow the traditions of the literature and in it as well as in the written works as a result of the desire to enrich the current treasury for literature works for children retold folk stories, interpretations of fantasy stories, new

topics and ideas come up. The cinema for children with its elements of a fairy tale and recurrence of prized concepts used to attract the attention of all the family members – audiences of different ages. Every generation comes with own interpretation of what they have seen, read and heard and pass to their successors for further development. The fantastic elements in the fairy tales additionally encourage and develop the imagination which is a fundamental part of children’s development. The fantastic elements introduce the children to the historical and cultural legacy in the context of different examples, develop their spatially symbolic thought. *“Nevertheless children’s direction of thought stays concrete in its essence. But anyway it has to be taken into account that their concrete is still unaffected. This is a bit more abstract than the direct interpretation. The strong egocentrism which deforms children’s personality starts to fail to the touch of reality, with the education and the social communication”*. Also the first logic processes start to take the place of the intuition from the former step.

Methods

Going back to the field of the children’s fantastic stories in the studios of “The role of imagination in the study of the future” one of the famous west futurologists from the recent past Robert Jungk puts his hope not in the critical and the logical but rather in the creative imagination. *“It features the era and in most cases leads the mind beyond the margins of the controversies which were featuring the past and were looked unsolvable”*.

In the researches of the children psychology an interesting occurrence has been observed. Little children do not understand different moments or

elements from the screen art and exactly this is one of the key incentives for their development. Children actively perceive and try to understand the images shown to them. The things that are not clear to them provoke them to co-create and cook up in order to make clarify it. This is one of the most important processes for the audience. Often the very “unclear” is what triggers the imagination and makes people to imagine and to come up with own theories and explanations. Often this is beneficial for children’s development.

As the literature and the cinema are overflowing with new stories finding an interesting and moving plot is a problem that becomes more and more actual. Still interesting and intriguing works are the adventurous movies in which the protagonist is clashing with different fantastic creatures, leads battles, save princesses etc. The authors of such plots are not worried about failing because when there is a dump in the plot it can be easily compensated with the actual and banal but attractive vision. Another way of modernizing the plot is it to be based on a story known to the children but narrated in a different, funny way. This happens when the roles of the characters are changed and the whole action becomes more of a comedy or even parody.

Results

Such examples are the screen interpretations of well-known literature works as “The war of the Buttons” written by Louis Pergo and “Les innocents de Paris” written by Gilbert Cesbron. These examples are giving us a very clear overview of the situation. This stories do not only exist in the memory of the nowadays children but also in their parents’ and grandparents’ but difference is that in children’s consciousness they

the plots are jacked in a bit more modern screen versions. Such versions often include investigations, epic battles, looting, expeditions, many exploits, games of musketeers and trappers, team games, building activities and... at most or at least more than we think there are endless proceedings, creating traditions and rule sets, also hierarchies, creation of projects which will never be realized...

Some of the most popular plots are based on some kind of competition between the characters who are united in teams and gangs. Pokémon and Yu-Gi-Oh can serve as good examples of such plots because they easily jump off the screen in the form of a game among the children. The formula is very easy but scores. An animated character is created – a kid that is on the targeted age. He or she has the ability to call fantasy creatures to fight on his side and the only guideline in the whole plot is “who of the characters or which of the teams is going to win”. The children get infatuated not because of the story but more likely because of his or her interest towards the new creatures and rules of the game.

Looking back into the problem, nowadays children seems to lack concentration in order to read longer texts and prefer to watch what is written instead of reading or to read a briefer version and if available – illustrated. Even though the children writer Jasminka Petrovic’s opinion on that matter to not be that pessimistic: *“Today the atmosphere and space of art for children just changed... Important is simply good idea. Good idea gives liberty may change space in the room. Good idea usually causes smiles, applause, rejoicing ...”*.

Another factor that has to be taken into account is that in the movies for children as well as in the books for children the

plots “lives” in one generation to the next for a very long period of time. Children got introduced to their parents’ dearest childhood movies and books. Of course every new generation quickly changes their priorities which change themselves but the classic works for children always survives. “The favorite” movies from the childhood later on become part of people's “emotional autobiography” transfer associations and memories.

Interesting facts about the children writings can be found in the article “Children's books are never just for kids”. The authors of different children books write with the clear idea that their book would be reread in different periods of the man’s development – not only as children but also as grown-ups. Neil Gaiman says that whenever he writes a story about children he takes into consideration that if the story gets to be liked it will be re-read as a new. That is why he concentrates more and tries to get into the story even more than when he is writing about adults. His book “Coraline” (later on the screen interpretation of the book will be considered) most of the words seems to be much more sense fully and emotionally meaningful to the story as a whole. Some parents seem to be worried about a repetitive reading of a certain book (in our case repetitive watching of a movie) but that is not bad at all. Every time a book is read a new or a movie is being watched a new that gives the reader or the spectator a new point of view over the already known story. Re-reading or re-watching gives a deeper understanding of the plot’s topics, ideas and images. These certain phenomenon obligates the writers or the directors to work on many levels burdening the story with far deeper vision and emotion. That is exactly how the books and movies for children can be handed

over to the next generations by the former generations and to be transformed into “classics”. Usually the books and movies from childhood determine the choice of books and movies when people are adults.

Discussion

In the research of narrative and visual aspects of the childhood cinema a significant problem is the choice of technology used in order to be established communication with the kids. Now quotes that lay in the bases of esthetic meatiness in relation of level communication author – spectator and screen – imagination and it’s reproducing for children auditory.

Exactly the author and the spectator are the ones who create the whole mystery about what is happening on screen. The children are a very appropriate audience. Astrid Lindgren has said once in an interview that children are not that boring and not that critic as the adults. With their imagination they take what is on screen and transform it into various fantastic things in their minds. All children can embrace every story no matter if it is on paper or on screen “*near the heart and their characters become real people and real friends*”. With the big progress of digital technology the possibilities for indirect communication are coming closer and closer to direct. From the point of view of researchers in the field of media psychology fairy tales has a lot in common with some of the principles of “virtual identification” and the principle of repetition which is becoming more and more popular in the narration in order to remodel the modern space into something “modernly brief” on the screen with which children have gotten used to from very early.

Marie-Louise von Franzin her research

about the archetypical motives in the magical fairy tale states that only those things that reflect human structures manage to preserve in the memory of the people and to pass along while those that are influenced by individual problems are being told around only among people with similar problems. In children cinema the contrivance from the horror movies is used – looking for fear, horror and mystery for the spectator. Children close their eyes and turn their heads around horrified on the “scary” scenes but passionately following the movie. The analysis of well-known characters from myths, fairy tales, horror movies, science-fiction and historical epos is directed towards a search

of an attractive in its own way but still it often appears as monstrous image. So constant comparison over the elements which represent a certain image from the literature in the cinema support analyze of the specifics and interpreted in a special way on symbolic and even characteristic level. In a similar way children become fans of productions such as Bakugan, Harry Potter and the Wizards of Waverly Place and many others. Stories as Harry Potter give the children the unconscious feeling for metaphysical freedom in social situations such as the school, the boarding house and in many cases the family (see fig. 1).



Figure 1. The still from the movie “Harry Potter”

Nowadays children do not interpret the digital boom as something fantastic and new but rather normal and usual or even mandatory for the screen productions. The perceptual way of interpretation is changed. They expect the key of the movie to not be in the good narration but in the good vision. Children understand the fabulosity of a story not only through direct “fairy-fantastic” vision but also through switching between different pictures of the same story. Something facilitates easiness to use this has appeared with

the linear editing. That way a new idea of time and space is created. This “imaginary continuum” is a concrete imaginary thing in every aspect of the real time and space, which is caused by a constant conceptualization of the different moments in the story. For children “the fantastic” which is on screen equivalents magical. In a similar way in the beginning of the cinema industry, when the cinema was not using real ideas but the physically visible aspects of reality it manages to catch the phenomenology of perception reality. That

is how the cinema manages to change the old romantic idea for “art” – “in contrast to all former arts it is the only which preserves its starting material more or less intact”

Conclusion

Still nowadays children continue to expect the usual plot structure and the usual images from the TV screen. In order one qualitative art to be properly valued and wanted, the customers should have an exact mindset and to value and look for art in this direction. Sometimes in the literature for children the elitism takes the lead so the “intellectual” and totally understandable for the kids filled with snobbery literature is being praised by certain esthetes but rejected by the children. But modern vampires, wolverines, fairies and magicians are still on the cinema screens.

Excellent example is one of the latest Serbian children movies “The fifth butterfly” (directed by: Milorad Milinkovic, 2014) based on the book of one of nowadays most famous Serbian children writer Uros Petrovic. It is a story about the adventurous life of the 13 years old orphan Alex and his

friends from the boarding house Gordan, Maia and Vlada. Only the little Alex has the ability to see the medieval knights Zlodoci who are the guardians of the silver secret that protects and heal the orphan and even to resurrect the death which can change the course of history. The Antagonist – the old and greedy Yovica Wuk is trying to abuse the powers of the silver secret and to become immortal. In the End after a sequel of countless adventures Alex and his friends manage to defeat the powerful evil. Based on adventures the plot is constantly connected to the social motives of the characters and shows the nowadays children, who want to get to know the world, as free in their imagination – something usual and expected from a children directed plot. The movie is distinguished as the first Serbian 3D movie. It is not animated but a feature with elements of computer animation, special effects and digital work over the shots. One of the most interesting visual characters is the white hedgehog which goes through the whole story as a live little spark (see fig. 2).



Figure 2. The still from Serbian children movie “The fifth butterfly” (directed by: Milorad Milinkovic, 2014)

The key word about many of the movies is “nowadays” or “new”. The question is then why the audience is not looking for new plots and actions but is relying on the classics and if not classical, at least old literature. Maybe this is because the choice is mostly based on the memory of the parents, or the recommended literature

in school, or on many other little things on the cinema screen. It is very rare for a parent to look for a new story for him or for his children. Maybe it remains a matter of fear, insecurity and distrust towards the nowadays new works or insufficient advertisement and awareness in this sphere.

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СОВРЕМЕННОЕ ДЕТСКОЕ КИНО И ПСИХОЛОГИЯ ДЕТСКОГО ВОСПРИЯТИЯ ЭКРАНА

Р. Нейкова

Институт искусствоведения (БАН), София, Болгария

Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются современные фильмы и телевизионные сериалы для детей с точки зрения их актуальности в процессе воспитания, следования литературным традициям, истории народа, а также интерпретация фантастических рассказов через новые темы и идеи. Кино для детей со своими элементами сказки и повторением ценных концепций продолжает привлекать внимание всех членов семьи – зрителей разного возраста. Однако каждое поколение приходит с собственной интерпретацией того, что они видели, читали и слышали, и передает ее своим преемникам для дальнейшей передачи опыта. Фантастические элементы являются важной составляющей детского кино, способствующей развитию воображения детей. Кино приобщает к историческому и культурному наследию в контексте разных примеров, развивает их пространственно-символическое мышление. Автор, сравнивая старые и новые способы понимания кино для детей, приходит к выводу, что в настоящее время дети не считают телевидение чем-то новым и захватывающим, но для них это обязательный и важный компонент восприятия реальности.

Ключевые слова: фильмы для детей, современное кино для детей, восприятие фильмов, новое и современное.

ЗАМАНАУИ БАЛАЛАР КИНОСЫ МЕН БАЛАЛАРДЫҢ ЭКРАНДЫ ҚАБЫЛДАУ ПСИХОЛОГИЯСЫ

Р.Нейкова

Өнертану Институты (БФА), София, Болгария

Аңдатпа

Мақалада заманауи балалар фильмі мен телевизиялық сериалдардағы тәрбиелік мәні бар өзекті болып табылатын халықтың тарихы, фантастикалық әңгімелер мен жаңа тақырыптар, идеялар пайымдамасы ретіндегі әдеби дәстүрлерді ұстану қарастырылады. Өйткені, балаларға арналған кино өзінің ертегілік элементтерімен және пайдалы тұжырымдарды қайталауымен отбасының барлық өкілдерін, олардың әртүрлі жаста екеніне қарамай назарын өзіне аударуда. Әрбір ұрпақ өздерінің көргені, оқығаны мен жеке пайымдауларымен тәжірибені келесі ізбасарларына жеткізу үшін келеді. Бұл мағынада, фантастикалық элементтер жас өркендердің елестету қабілетін дамыту үшін балалар киносының маңызды құрамы болып табылады. Ол жеткіншектерді тарихи және мәдени мұраға әртүрлі мысалдар контекстінде жақындатып, олардың кеңістіктік-рәміздік ойлау жүйелерін дамытады. Мақалада автор балаларға арналған киноны түсінудің ескі және жаңа тәсілдерін салыстыра отырып мынадай тұжырым жасайды: бір қызығы, қазіргі уақытта балалар телевизияны қандай да бір жаңа, баурап алушы деп санамайды, бірақ бұл олар үшіншындықты қабылдаудың міндетті әрі маңызды құрамы екен.

Тірек сөздер: балаларға арналған фильмдер, заманауи балалар киносы, фильмдерді қабылдау, жаңа мен заманауи.

Автор туралы мәлімет: Радостина Нейкова — Қауымдастырылған профессор (доцент), PhD докторы, Өнертану Институты (ВАС), София қ., Болгария.

e-mail:radostneykova@gmail.com

Сведения об авторе: Радостина Нейкова — ассоциированный профессор (доцент), доктор PhD, Институт Искусствоведения (ВАС), София, Болгария.

e-mail:radostneykova@gmail.com

Author's data: Radostina Neykova — Associate Professor, PhD, Institute of Arts Studies (ВАС), Sofia, Bulgaria.

e-mail: radostneykova@gmail.com