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Psychology of subculture: Phenomenology and Contemporary Tendencies of Development

POST-WAR SYNDROME AS EXPRESSED IN CINEMA-FIXED PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

Vladimir Kolotaev (a), Alexander Markov (b)*, Elena Ulybina (c)
*Corresponding author

(a) Russian State University for the Humanities, Miusskaya sq. 6, Moscow, GSP-3, 125993, Moscow, Russia,
vakolotaev@gmail.com
(b) Russian State University for the Humanities, Miusskaya sq. 6, Moscow, GSP-3, 125993, Moscow, Russia,
markovius@gmail.com
(c) Russian Academy of National Economics and Public Administration, Prospekt Vernadskogo, 84, 119571,
Moscow, Russia, evulbn@gmail.com

Abstract

Contemporary Russian cinema focuses on the correlation of the hero's various self-identifications with both traumatic experiences and projections of the hero trying to fit himself into a new life. If the hero fails on this path, then this failure reveals the mechanisms of subcultural experience, in which his or her life turned out to be inevitably embedded. The film by V. Todorovsky "My Stepbrother Frankenstein" shows mechanisms of desires associated with lack of normative cultural communication and failures in the search for identity. The tragic development of the plot is explained not through the character of the hero, but through peculiarities of his communicative experience and mental projections. The article reveals the archetypical source of such tragic conflict: the plot "bear on the lime foot", revenge, which is determined not by the structure of the conflict, but of desire and projection. The functional analysis of this plot allows to point to the film as tool for analyzing subcultural attitudes at the level of the individual psyche after suffering trauma. The conflict was analyzed at various levels, involving aesthetic and psychoanalytic contexts, as well as advances in the psychoanalysis of the tale, and results were obtained to state in which cases the post-traumatic transfer threatens hallucinations and new conflict development. Thus, it is proved that a work of art can be a source of psychological analysis of subcultures, provided that it is compared with other archaic and formative works.

Keywords: Identity, archetype, mythological patterns, projection, mirroring, film as case-study.

1. Introduction

In 21 c. Russian cinema, both psychological conflicts of various generations and hidden mechanisms of these conflicts are most fully documented. Significant images open a simple fixation of everyday life and show the action of more general subjects, dating back to folklore and old literature. At the same time, the value of cinema is not reduced to illustrative: on the contrary, many Russian films are built as a psychological experiment, finding out conditions of disturbance of usual state of consciousness, discussing what provokes a violation. Unlike literature, in which such violation can be a metaphor, recovering the nature of the character, but not the most psychological situation, the film, even about conventional situations, allows us to trace psychological conflict that dramatically changes the mental state of today person when confronted with complex circumstances (Baudry, 1986).

Today Russian cinema can be characterized as a subculture (Gomez et al., 2011) that has all the properties, as a set of shared myths and attitudes, the inheritance of a great tradition, a high degree of internal coherence of the created works and a criticism of social life for its insufficient comprehension (Hogg, 2014). Although the political positions of Russian cinema could be different, its cultural program is clear. This idea that the crisis of identity of a person can be long, and to overcome this crisis it is not enough to take on any role, but it is necessary to understand the limits of one's own identity (Bertellini, 2003). This understanding often goes through crises itself and requires crises and extreme situations to build it (Fredman et al., 2015).

It is obvious that Russian cinema is interested in the life of subcultures, and many prominent Russian directors dedicated at least one film to the subculture of the present or the past. At the same time, films that explore the position of a man who has lost his subculture sharply are of the better interest (Martin-Jones, 2006). Such films are often about consequences of the Afghan and the Chechen wars, in which the study of the trauma of participation in the war is inseparable from the study of a specific subculture formed by participants of the war formed. This former military personnel formes their own subculture based on military partnership and a strange combination of the dream of a peaceful life and pacifism with the awareness of today war as total and replicable at all levels of social organization (Kolotaev & Ulybina, 2017). Therefore, some of the representatives of this subculture fit into a new life, engaging in tough business or security services, while others who have lost proper physical and moral qualities have become victims of the vicissitudes of their own psyche. Cinema, as we prove, is an introspection tool that allows to uncover these peripetias, which at a glance look as unmotivated or traumatic in conventional sense (Kolotaev & Ulybina, 2011).

2. Problem Statement

Like any art, cinema is full of conventions. This also applies to Russian cinema, in which there are often no rigid boundaries between mass cinema and art cinema. At the same time, these conventions often reveal not the character of the heroes, but the specifics of the psychological state, the "demons" of the hero (Markov, 2011). In this article, using the example of this movie, it is shown how the study of a subculture by the methods of cinema can also become a psychological study. The subject of further

analysis will be the film directed by Valery Todorovsky "My Stepbrother Frankenstein" (2004), devoted to the psychological consequences of any prolonged participation in the war for the self-identification.

We assume that the plot of the film is based on the classic feature set of a fairy tale plot. There is a sacred space of prohibition, once broken by a hero. There are terrible consequences of this act. But there are different scenarios for eliminating the consequences of breaking the taboo. On the one hand, it comes rebalancing (neutralizing the fairy-tale shortage) by acknowledging guilt and paying strange tribute, on the other hand, giving up the deal and physically eliminating the bearer. The situation in the film develops on the second, least productive and most archaic, and therefore bloodthirsty, scenario. It is this development that determines the specifics of the hero's identification (Markov & Martianova, 2017), and therefore, reveals the mechanisms of a specific identity that is not confined to the post-traumatic syndrome (Marcia, 1966).

3. Research Questions

The problem of the research is how far the fairy-tale plot in the cinema could be the reason for the unfolding of psychological introspection. In the film in question, the plot goes back to the most ancient motive of the fairy tale "A bear on a linden foot", or "A bear linden foot". This is a story about how a hero, experiencing hunger, set a trap in the forest for the beast. It gets a bear. The old man cut off his paw, brought it home, to a hungry old woman who began to roast meat. However, the old man and the old woman were prevented from enjoying the food eaten. A crippled animal appears at the hut and makes a terrible roar make it clear that it will not leave offenders alone.

The most ancient and cruel version of this tale says that the offended king of the forest finally dealt with the old man who cut off his paw and the old woman who spun yarn from bear wool and fried bear meat. Less terrible and, respectively, later versions of this tale tell that people managed to get along with their totem ancestor, to neutralize the damage done to the species life. The old man made a prosthesis for the forest king, cutting a part of the body taken from a linden from a lime tree.

The oldest versions of the tale testify to the uncompromising nature of the relationship between desire and prohibition. The bear prevents the hungry characters from enjoying food and peace. The fact is that the satisfaction of desire to bypass the rules (so: wanted to eat and killed the beast), as well as unregulated by strict order of violence, leads to irreversible transformations of the soul. Having eaten the bear flesh, the man turns into beast. He becomes the one with whom he unconsciously identifies and against whom he directs aggression.

The actions of the film are developing according to archaic, most harsh scenario: the bearer is killed, transferring his complexes to him. Eliminating physically source of anxiety, society not only pushes the problem under the bushel, but also creates the prerequisites for a new appearance of the next Creation, but in an even more terrible appearance.

4. Purpose of the Study

The film under question is the story of the tragic fate of Paul. The source of his mental state, mental illness, was the stress experienced in the war. Paul experienced fear and humiliation in a situation

in which he was nearly captured by the enemy. This shock caused the commission of a war crime. Wanting revenge on the enemy, Paul and his friend killed innocent people. Under the tracks of their car, women and children died. After that, he began to see a threat in everything. The hero lives in a state of total fear and, moreover, infects with this feeling his relatives, those with whom he communicates. Obviously, contact with the enemy and his murder provoked Paul to be identified with the one who insulted him. He became a killed enemy. Identification with a negative, denied (dead) object launched in turn an aggressive desire to violate the ban. We study the archaic and subcultural patterns of this identification.

5. Research Methods

The model of communication, in which the active participant in the dialogue gives the listener its own characteristics, was considered by Bakhtin (1979). Studying different forms of dialogue, within the framework of the novel discourse, Bakhtin explained a certain type of relationship, when the speaker, either in the process of speaking, or in response to the listener's question, unconsciously creates or recreates the image of the person to whom his speech is addressed. With such communication, the listener is endowed with the qualities of the speaker, which he (silently perceiving the speaker's speech) does not possess in reality, but which are extremely relevant to the speaker. The object is, as it were, completed by the subject of speech in accordance with its internal states and complexes, the actualization of which occurred as a result of dialogic contact. The listener, passive participant of the dialogue, getting into a situation of this kind, turned out to be the object of the speaker's unconscious projections. The speaker's complexes are now transferred to the listening communication partner.

The situation is somewhat different from the position of Lotman (1992). In his theory of auto-communication, a model of dialogue is described, where the speaker, the sender of the message, and the listener, the addressee, are one person. The "I - I" system is represented by Lotman as a highly productive form of dialogue, qualitatively changing the structure of personality. However, the nature of material being analyzed, although it can be described in terms of an auto-communicative model of dialogue, referring to Klein (Alford, 1990), still requires a more relevant approach (Akerlof & Kranton, 2010).

6. Findings

The social and psychological issues of the film are primarily determined by the fact that it explores the nature of fear. The film starts with a strange episode: the head of the family, Yuli Aleksandrovich Krymov, in the film everyone calls him Yulik, finds his illegitimate son. The measured life of a prosperous Moscow family is disturbed by a letter informing about the imminent arrival of a young man named Pavel Zakharov, who is, as the hero himself thinks, the son of Julik. In Moscow, he needs to undergo a medical examination for prosthetics of an eye lost in a war. Later it turns out that, apart from physical disability, Pavel has a serious mental disorder.

It is completely obvious that Paul, who suffered mental trauma, cannot adapt to a peaceful life. Moreover, those whom he considers his family and whom he is trying to protect, for obvious reasons, do not want to let him into their lives. The son of Krymov, the fifteen-year-old Yegor, exercises special

feeling of hostility towards Pavel. He even orders the beating of his half-brother, so that he, frightened, will quickly disappear. True, the beaten Paul does not believe in the recognition of the hooligan, who claims to be sent by his brother. He believes that he wanted to quarrel with his family.

Paul, or rather, the one he has now become, does what he did not normally do. For him, now there are neither children nor women. The beating innocents triggers the defense mechanism, for the unbearable guilt for the crime committed to be repressed. Paul finds salvation from the agony of conscience in the unconscious identification with the now positive object, the ideal image of himself. Paul sees that which is not obvious to others, his projective identification.

The theme of vision, the eye lost in the war, and then the obsessive desire to get a diamond eye prosthesis, has an important symbolic meaning in the overall structure of the film. The image of the eye is associated with a fatherly figure. The absence of an eye (read: the father) deprives Paul of the opportunity to integrate into the social order. Since the beginning of his life, the hero has dealt not with the real, but with the virtual, actually absent father, invented by his mother. The father is a figment of the imagination of a seduced and abandoned woman who waited all her life to return her lover. Appeal to the father for help has a psychoanalytic motivation: it is necessary to prostheticize the lost organ of vision, as symbol of subjectivity. A father cannot return a lost eye, but he can give his son, along with a diamond prosthesis, such recognition, confirming that he is a person and his life is valuable. It is subcultural substitute of shared communication.

However, Yulik cannot and does not want to satisfy Paul's whim. In general, an unscheduled operation seems too expensive to the family. Although at the end of the film, Yulik promises to sell the apartment and buy a diamond prosthesis, diminishing Pavel to leave with him from the surrounded house. Why is it so important to decide on an unequal exchange, to satisfy the whim of an obsessive guest, to sell an apartment and buy an eye? Why is it necessary, by all means, to bring Paul out and to save his life? Pavel is needed alive so that his dead image or, even worse, various monstrous manifestations, do not even persecute the children of Krymov. Dead it is much more dangerous, more terrible and obsessive than alive. The murdered Paul, as a source of fear, does not just settle in the souls of those who consider themselves guilty of his death. He, as if infecting with himself, changes the psyche of others, turns an infected person into the archetypical Creation.

7. Conclusion

The plot of the bear on the linden foot is reproduced in the plot of the film, but also in the conflict mechanisms themselves and the value system of the film. Thus, the objectives of the film are not limited to building character, but help to develop a psychological analysis of subcultural behavior. A mentally unstable hero tends to be an individual, but he does not find his true identity, so that the features of the revaluation of values that occur in subcultures are reflected in him. The film is tragic experiment in the correlation of the psyche and values, which means, with the interpretation presented in the article, an instrument of psychological analysis of the subculture as the problematization of everyday life. Although the hero of the film is a special case, his desires and fabulous scenarios in which he is involved, allow to research more ordinary cases of the relationship between the dominant culture and any subculture.

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