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VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF WORLD CINEMA HISTORY

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history**Abstract**

The purpose of the study is to consider the phenomenon of violence on the screen in its historical development. Also, outline the dominant views in modern film discourse on the problems of violence and the peculiarities of its perception by a wide audience. **Research methodology.** To achieve this goal, the following methods were used: analysis and synthesis – to identify certain parts of the overall problem, their study, and construction of a complete picture of the subject of research; historical method – to characterize the development of understanding of each category at different stages of development of science. **Scientific novelty** arises as a result of comprehensive coverage of issues in the dynamics of violence in the context of the historical development of cinema. Knowledge of the discussion on the impact of violence on the audience is developing. The study's practical significance lies in its openness for use in practice by theorists, historians, directors, screenwriters, and other professionals in the field of cinema. In addition, the study's results should be used in the training of specialists in various fields related to film and cultural studies. **Conclusions.** In the course of the article, we analyzed the coverage of the topic on the screen, which proves that until the 1920s, cruelty did not become part of the mainstream and was used in individual works of art to strengthen universal values. It is significant that these films are not commercially successful and shock the public. After the two world wars, violence no longer makes such an impression on the public. It returns to the screens, gradually increasing its intensity. When violence illustrated real situations in the post-war years, in the 1960`s it became a powerful means of expression and gradually came to self-parody in the slashers of the 1980s, when directors themselves did not perceive it otherwise than as a means of entertaining the public.

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Problem statement

In modern culture, there is a continuous process of destruction of traditional aesthetics in art, which has developed over the centuries. Culture, by absorbing the media, turns death and murder into ordinary spectacles. Cinema has an extremely strong emotional impact on the audience and therefore becomes an extremely dangerous art in conditions of total aggression. The depiction of violence in the visual arts is not a constant majesty. Turning to different periods in the development of film culture, we can trace certain dynamics. There is an increase in the sensual, formal, and pictorial aspects in everything related to bringing cruelty to the screen, as well as a decrease in empathy and evaluation in terms of moral values. In the study of the evolution of on-screen violence, special attention should be paid to Western and American cinema in particular, which led to the emergence of thriller and horror as a genre, as well as the formation of so-called “devilish” movies, disaster films and films on apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic themes.

Recent research and publications analysis

In the article, the author refers to the fundamental philosophical work of E. Fromm “Anatomy of human destructiveness” and its analysis in the study of I. Sidorenko (Violence as the destruction of human nature in the philosophy of E. Fromm) to establish a fundamental understanding of philosophical concepts of violence and cruelty. Materials by P. Alexandrov and V. Sobchak are also used, which study the problems of the present, violence, and death in the context of cinema and modern myth-making. J. Sadul’s work “World

History of Cinema” also became a valuable basis for research.

The purpose of the study is to consider the phenomenon of violence on the screen in its historical development. The author of the article also outlines the dominant points of view in modern film discourse on the problems of violence and the peculiarities of its perception by a wide audience.

Main research material

In the discussion about the role of the image of violence on the screen, the researchers did not come to a single conclusion. Beginning with Freud, some believe that spectacles with elements of cruelty perform a therapeutic function, releasing ghosts of the subconscious without harm to the individual and others. Others believe that films where cruelty is a constructive element of drama, including horror films, are a modern analogue of a “scary tale” that similarly prepares a person to meet the real world with all its possible dangers.

German scientist Erich Fromm did not see anything positive in cruelty not intended for self-defence. He believed that violence is destructive and dulls empathy. “Specifically, I distinguish human passion for absolute domination over another living being and the desire to destroy (malignant aggression) in a special group and call it the words” destructiveness “and” cruelty” (Fromm, 1999, p.13). Analyzing E. Fromm’s concept, researcher I. Sidorenko (2015, p.111) emphasizes a rather interesting connection between destruction and rationality: “society becomes destructive because guided by the systemic interests of the whole, ignoring the individual interests of the individual.” The essence of the paradox is that what

is productive for the whole, in one way or another turns destructive for the individual. Thus, the researcher concludes that destruction is a kind of socialization of man, which, in turn, feeds the social destruction of society as a whole. "The problem of social destruction is that in the social dynamics it is manifested in various processes of imposing pseudo-values, and thus destroys the awareness of the value of life, and as a result, there is an orientation to destructive forms of self-realization, as vital interest is to preserve its coordinate system, on which depends the awareness of oneself as a person" (Sidorenko, 2015, p.112).

Successive to this position is the assumption that the display of crime on the screen causes a certain category of people to repeat what they saw. Several statistical studies by competent specialists confirm this view. However, there are no clear evidence that it is violence on the screen, and not other social, psychological, or even genetic factors, that pushes the audience, including adolescents, the audience to transfer what they see to real life.

However, the continuous repetition of bloody plots in film and on television makes the viewer accustomed to them.

On the one hand, it allows you to feel calmer in the face of real horrors and avoid panic. V. Sobchak (2006) suggests that today's cinema seeks to teach us to live in reality: "Death that comes to an individual makes him a kind of chosen destiny, and the attention of film cameras gives him majesty. Cinema reproduces our fears, and at the same time weakens their".

On the other hand, the threshold of sensitivity of the spectator decreases. And so, over time, the aesthetic appetite for more refined and bloody bloodshed is increasingly inflamed. The most horrible death takes the form of a pathetic melodrama.

The brutal killer can be the main character and cause admiration (a striking example is Dr Hannibal Lecter from *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) brilliantly performed by Anthony Hopkins). And less than a century ago, censorship excluded from Todd Browning's *Dracula* (1931) a scene in which a vampire's hand slowly rises from a coffin as one that could injure the viewer.

It would be hypocritical to say that this is a new milestone in the history of mass culture in general and mass spectacles in particular. The desire to contemplate scenes of violence accompanies humanity throughout its existence. Here we can mention the trials of witches and heretics; the experience of public executions is a phenomenon that is usually associated with the Dark Ages, but it is also widespread in the practice of modern prisons; dog fights, and the like.

Violence on the screen has been present since the very beginning of cinema and remains there to this day in various forms and invariably in large portions. Consider the historical chronology and unfolding of the growing outspokenness of the demonstration of cruelty in front of the frame.

Avant-garde experimenters, such as L. Bunuel in his *Andalusian Dog* (1929) or S. Eisenstein in his films resort to physiological detail in the depiction of violence. However, in this case, pictures of cruelty are the strongest means of artistic influence and make the viewer tremble with compassion and pain, and are used to express the humanistic idea, while in modern cinema, the image of cruelty is gradually becoming an end in itself.

The first film to unfold a scene of violence before the audience is considered to be the historical miniature *The Execution of Mary of Scotland* (1895), shot by Edison. The film shows the story of the execution of Queen Mary of Scotland. It

was shot in one shot with a still image. In this few-second video, a woman approaches the executioner surrounded by guards, gets on her knees, and has her head cut off. Of course, the still shot was to replace the man in the frame before the beheading. However, the film shocked viewers. Just as viewers saw close-ups of “severed heads” at that ancient stage in the development of cinema, they believed that someone had indeed been executed for the shot.

D. Griffith’s *Intolerance* (1916) became a landmark picture of the next decade in the context of depictions of violence. Although the main idea of the picture is the deprivation of suffering by the sacrifice of Christ, violence is depicted here quite intensely and emphatically. The film consists of four episodes, each of which tells its own story – “The Fall of Babylon”, “Mother and Law”, “Bartholomew’s Night” and “Life and Suffering of Christ”. Viewers will be able to see murders of various kinds, war atrocities, and crucifixions. The picture amazed the audience with the closeness and ease of death caught in the lens.

Shortly after Griffith, bloody scenes flooded the screen. The main culprit was the First World War. Before that, the camera bypassed the scene of excessive rigidity. However, during this period, bloody scenes come to the fore thanks to chronicles and reports from the front.

The beginning of the 1920s was marked by a demonstration of torture and various injuries. Danish director Benjamin Christensen was particularly persistent in conveying visual information of this kind to the audience. The 1922 film *Witches*, combining elements of feature and documentary films, showed in detail what happened to women during the Inquisition. Historian J. Sadoul (1982, p. 195) quotes Jean Be-

ranger, writing about this film as follows: a kind of film outside certain audiences, with a strict ban on children under 16. Following this, the historian writes about how art rethinks horror and repulsive: “Christensen was able to call to the shadows of Bosch, Bruegel, Callo, and Goya. Masterful lighting made me believe in the reality of fantastic makeup and cardboard masks. In the Inquisitors’ discussion, where fantasy is replaced by direct realism, footage taken by Johann Anckarstern envisages “Passions of Jeanne d’Arc” not only in costume but also in editing.

The years did not blunt the poisonous contagion of this amazing masterpiece, the “miracles” of which inspired the Surrealists and led Ado Cyrus to write: “The most brutal accusation of the crimes of the church, the Inquisition and its instruments of torture. This documentary should be shown in all schools of the world” (Sadul, 1982, p.195).

Thus, we can see that until the 1920s, cruelty did not become part of the mainstream and was used in individual works of art to strengthen universal values. It is significant that these films are not commercially successful and shock the public.

From the 1920s, gangster ribbons began to gain popularity. They were based on criminal “disputes” of various kinds – shootings, beatings, murders. The degree of violence in cinema has gradually increased, without being regulated. It was natural to expect a reaction to the dominance of such films, but its rigidity was difficult to predict. In 1930, the so-called “Hayes Code” came into force – a canon that took control of all Hollywood production until the Second World War. The violence, which had been lurking in the dark for decades, was pouring in again.

After the Second World War, shots of cruelty and violence are gradually moved into

the field of feature films. There is the phenomenon of greenhouses – cinemas for films, which are prohibited by the above Hayes Code. Usually, there were shown either openly brutal films or naked bodies.

It should be noted that at a time when Hollywood was trying to reduce violence, the East was much more tolerant. Samurai films did not embarrass to depict various scenes of injuries.

The turning point for open violence on the screen for the Western world was the appearance of the film *Psycho* (1960) by A. Hitchcock. The scene with the murder in the soul became a textbook, it was repeated in various interpretations by many filmmakers.

On the wave of popularity of *Psycho*, there is a subgenre of horror, which is called splatter (from the English. Splatter – spraying), which impressed the viewer with the dominance of bloody scenes. The first swallow of the genre was the trilogy *Bloody Feast* (1963) by Gordon Herschel. In the plotter, the main role is not played by the plot, the emphasis is shifted to camera work, light, style, and visuals. This is a performance, realism is not a priority for him, he is obsessed with form. The main structural element and fetish of the genre is blood.

The influence of Herschel's platters makes possible the manifestation of the famous subgenre of Giallo in Italy. This modification skillfully combined elements of thriller, eroticism, and love for long bloody scenes. It is worth emphasizing the peculiarities of the on-screen interpretation of murders. The detail of their reproduction is determined by the "demonstration" from the first person. The camera in the long murder scenes becomes quite subjective; there is a certain admiration for the brilliance of knives (usually a cold weapon), and the wounds on the

victim's body are more abstract than real. This manner of shooting makes the viewer an accomplice rather than an observer, regardless of his inclination to such identification, immerses him in the monstrous world of the criminal.

The term itself has literary roots – in Italy in the 50s was a very popular American mystical detective, who came out in a series of books with a yellow cover (Italian Giallo – yellow). It is from this cheap literature that the plot scheme of the direction is borrowed, according to which the killer is determined at the last minute of the tape, while the mood and atmosphere are more typical of Gothic horror than detective, reigns in the initial episodes. The first Giallo were adaptations of this type of literature. However, the main difference from the sources is that in films the detective line is secondary, it does not play a decisive role in the development of the plot and is gradually nullified, serving only as a "cover" for a crazy game between the protagonist's interest and death.

The seventies and eighties are marked by the total dominance of films that brought to the fore the image of violence. The seventies prefer the realism of situations (*The Last House on the Left*, 1972 by Wes Craven) and tapes in the spirit of the "found chronicle" (*Hell of Cannibals*, 1979, R. Deodato).

But the eighties are already the homeland of slashers. No realism, often – fantastic plots, the main goal – the tension of constant killings. For all the differences in scripts and directorial decisions, the following youth slashers, based mainly on the achievements of Carpenter's *Halloween*, are built on the principle of "terrible tale". The motivation for this is largely because, in modern society, horror films take over the functions previously inherent in fairy tales, which helped in educating and

shaping the pattern of behaviour. But for films of this type, elements of mysticism and fiction are not necessary: the murder (i.e., punishment) of the hero is caused by disregard for the norms of public morality or ignoring some limit or prohibition, equivalent to “taboo” archaic cultures. Sometimes a maniac or other similar character (equivalent to fairy-tale villains) is introduced, who begins a “hunt” and whose actions as an isolated, self-alienated from society or otherworldly creature are always explained, mental disorders, cruel upbringing or genetic mutations, or infernal). Slasher is focused mainly on adolescents and builds certain canons of behaviour for this group of viewers, even sinning moralism. Yes, chaste girls live to see the finale.

This is the period when on-screen violence reaches its apogee. Significantly, at this time the directors do not take their films seriously.

Another thing – the 2000’s. Here violence and its image go to another level. The films try to add seriousness, subtext, after all, mysticism. The viewer is already accustomed to everything and just not scared. At this point, the tendency to reproduce reality on the screen and the desire for naturalism begins to actively develop.

According to the concept of “reconstruction of reality”, the creators of the film try to convince the viewer that the case of the characters on the screen is not unique, unlike the isolated cases of “found films” that took place in the 70s. The manipulation of the recipient’s consciousness with the imposition of the idea of the authenticity of the horror embodied on the screens begins in the headlines, where statistics of the missing are often given or it is claimed that the tape was shot based on real events. This is facilitated

by the naturalism of the depicted suffering of the victim. The findings of classic examples of thrillers have also been reconsidered. The rejection of stereotypes is “blurring” the type of killers against the background of the usual crowd: “sadistic maniacs are no different from ordinary people (this technique is very reminiscent of documentaries about serial killers, where the authors traditionally emphasize that a real maniac human)” (Aleksandrov, 2010). The depressing effect is not only the impunity of the torturers but also the hopelessness of the victims, who do not show heroism and unexpected skills in fighting techniques or weapons. Thus, the study of this film genre has naturally led scientists to the conclusion that “realistic” thrillers (which in most cases are essential “body horrors” with a strong psychological basis. – HB) quite severely exploit the fears of modern man, portraying the victim’s helplessness in the face of violence. They destroy the myths of the classic youth thriller about the invulnerability of the exemplary behaviour of the “righteous”, as well as the inevitability of punishing the murderer. They seem to be trying to prove that it is cruel realism that has the right to be a model of a thriller of the 21st century (Aleksandrov, 2010).

Therefore, it seems natural that the signs of a “terrible tale” are found in the films, which are dominated by almost authentic naturalism of the cinematic embodiment of the behaviour of the Terrible Child. A typical example is the directorial debut of British screenwriter James Watkins’s *Paradise Lake* (2008), which synthesizes features of horror and hyperrealism (although without its inherent excessive detail and certainly present in the classic examples of the impression of illusion), and thriller. Already in the binary combination of unusual shots in the

screen saver and the first, as it turns out later, prophetic scene of teaching kids to play hide and seek, a clear appeal to the “proverb”. This is how the incomprehensible combination of fragmentary shots of an ordinary landscape with a close-up of a young woman’s face (by the way, in a strange, negative reddish light and exhausted-suffering scream or groan), distanced by the next announcement of the name from the sun scenes in kindergarten. The departure of the couple out of the city is read as going beyond the ordered space into the unknown world, as hinted at by a few seconds of footage of the camera on the bridges; in addition, the characters “move” from day to night and night. A metaphor for caution is an excerpt from a radio program about the need to punish uncontrolled children. The heroes do not accept other “signs of fate” – causing instant fright behaviour of a group of cyclists who suddenly cross the road, parking another car in a chosen place, aggressive behaviour of locals with their children and each other, and even a closed fence at the entrance to the lake (quite a visible border of the “forbidden land”) and the alarming message of the GPS-navigator about the need for urgent return. As in the “terrible tale”, they ignore the repeatedly manifested and once clearly stated prohibition. Yes, as well as the tempting charms of hidden evil in fairy tales, the couple opens truly eye-catching enchanting landscapes shot from different positions of the camera panorama of a huge forest and lake.

The idyllic picture of “Paradise Corner” immediately disappears when several teenagers appear on the shore, who begin to mock the third. But the direct conflict begins with the attempt of a man from the upper position of an adult to calm down teenagers: in the limited

space of the beach, he crosses the border of their territory. And although the first clash seems to end peacefully, it is a turning point in the plot: the expressive space of positive characters is broken by the actions of Steve himself, who above all seeks to realize his dream in an unequal confrontation. But because he already realizes that this “evil” cannot be negotiated, he makes a few more fatal mistakes. They follow the simulation of the genre of “terrible tale”, the meaning of which is to defeat the “dark forces”, in horror: he decides to ignore the teenage “gang” and, the next morning after a bad breakfast and no “adventure” in town, return to the lake and try to still relax.

With the help of elements of suspense (listening to mysterious night sounds, scaring the girl to Steve’s bad joke, trouble with a punctured tire, a sudden camera shot from the perspective of an unknown observer) and a specific genre chronotype (twilight and night) hut to the island of salvation, the road “not there” – in the same “wild”, scary space) the situation is brought to the brink of safe reality. The excessive cruelty of children is unbelievable to an ordinary person. Moreover, the behaviour of Steve, who is confident in his physical and moral superiority, in such a situation is not only ineffective but even destructive. From a certain point – the beginning of a real “hunt” for adults after the death of a dog – the director achieves the highest effect: numbness of fear does not let go of the viewer until the end of the film. In this phase, the characteristic elements of the “terrible tale” are used very successfully: a tree branch, piercing the car body, wounds and immobilizing the hero and preventing him from escaping; On the morning of the fatal third day, Jenny wakes up among the roots of a tree and returns to the place of torture in Steve’s

bloody footsteps; an attempt to escape from the abyss of horror after wandering leads the heroine to the place of “reference” and finally – in another closed space, whose law is proclaimed by the leader’s father (“We only care about their own”), resulting in a maze effect. Thus, the film traces the synthesizing modelling of the factors of the domestic variety of fairy tales about wedding trials and fairy tales about characters devoted to forest demons and psychological thrillers. Each of the characters of the young couple embodies a modernized version of the typical “scary tale” type of hero, which type is modernized and goes far beyond the “impossibility of killing a child”, and instinct is overcome not by men but by women. There is no internal struggle in the aspect of ethical choice between self-elimination and protection of one’s ambitions, and later – the choice between one’s own life and the life of a child. At the same time, meetings with other characters who are removed in favour of realizing their interests also play an important role in creating emotional dominants.

Similarly, the leader of a group of teenagers is demonized not in terms of his approach to the mystical afterlife, but the embodiment of the features of the archetype of the Terrible Child. In his “dimension” he is omnipotent, confident in the power of his deforming and mentally debilitating other members of his own “team” of influence. Moreover, the communicative and physical violence perpetrated under his leadership is identified with the “real situation” image of a demonic villain who assumes the role of the perpetrator of human destinies (and his role model, as it turns out, is his own father’s behaviour, which he is mortally afraid). The ruthless torture of his approach – a typical detective’s way of irrevocably joining a criminal

group – in horror is nothing more than a variant of showing the comprehension of the “true way” through his own or someone else’s pain. The spectator shock in this emotionally dominant atmosphere of extreme tension is exacerbated by naturalistic footage of such tortures on the verge of hyperrealism (although the only manifestations of “pure” hyperrealism are close-ups of Steve’s wounds when trying to bandage them). This shock is not diminished even by the fact that the director refuses to go through dynamic dynamics, solving the dramaturgy of the film as a series of compositional repetitions with a return with some differences to previous plot moves and emotional levels, its dynamics, and its fragments. And so the murder of the girl by the teenagers’ parents is not even shown to the audience (again, in a closed space with several barriers – the door of the bathroom, the house itself, wider – the town itself), although it does not live up to the audience’s hopes for a “fabulous” happy release. Fully corresponds to the aesthetics of horror and is perceived as the expected solution in continuous tension.

Thus, the persuasiveness of showing such a concept of the consequences of permissiveness is not so much a consequence of indifference and inattention of parents, but of excessive self-confidence of adults and their rejection of children as sources of fatal threats in this film is unquestionable. The question raised in it about the disadvantages of an authority-oriented upbringing force and a distorted understanding of family values finds numerous interpretations during the 2000s.

The tendency to romanticize maniacs can be singled out. When Dr Lecter mentioned at the beginning of the article is no longer a single pseudo-positive character. Although he did not claim the title of

hero or pillar of society, he was more attracted to dark romance and remained an outsider. But the characters of the 2000s movies are already claiming outright audience sympathy. These are the protagonists of *The House That Jack Built* (2018, L. Von Trier), *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* (2018, Ju Berlinger), *Dexter* (2006–2013) – they are serial killers, who want us to understand their worldview, to admire the same dark aesthetics, to accept them as an integral part of society, an inevitable evil, paramedics. Inscribing in the picture of everyday life.

Conclusions

Thus, we can see that until the 1920s, cruelty did not become part of the mainstream and was used in individual works of art to strengthen universal values. It is significant that these films are not commercially successful and shock the public. After the two world wars, violence no

longer makes such an impression on the public. It returns to the screens, gradually increasing its intensity. When violence illustrated real situations in the post-war years, in the 1960s it became a powerful means of expression and gradually came to self-parody in the slashers of the 1980s, when directors themselves did not perceive it otherwise than as a means of entertaining the public.

Reaching a crisis point (actually a comedic reflection), violence as a means of expression begins to develop in another direction. Combined with new trends in realistic horror, it is once again becoming a powerful means of expression and tool in creating the structure of the film.

Until now, researchers have differing views on what is roughly equal: what is on-screen violence – therapy or fatal provocation. In the context of the discussion, a worrying point is the appearance of several movies that present serial killers in a frankly positive way.

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НАСИЛЬСТВО В КОНТЕКСТІ ІСТОРІЇ СВІТОВОГО КІНО

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Анотація

Мета дослідження – розглянути феномен насильства на екрані в його історичному розвитку; окреслити панівні у сучасному кінодискурсі погляди на проблеми насильства та особливості його сприйняття широкою аудиторією. **Методологія дослідження.** Для виконання поставленої мети було застосовано методи аналізу і синтезу – для виокремлення певних частин загальної проблеми, їх вивчення та конструювання повного уявлення про предмет дослідження; історичний метод – для характеристики розуміння кожної категорії на різних етапах розвитку науки. **Наукова новизна** полягає у комплексному висвітленні проблематики в динаміці розвитку насилля в контексті історичного розквіту кінематографу. Набуло подальшого розвитку знання про дискусію щодо впливу насильства на аудиторію. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у його відкритості для використання в діяльності теоретиків, істориків, режисерів, сценаристів та інших фахівців з питань кіномистецтва. Окрім цього, результати дослідження доцільно використовувати у процесі навчання спеціалістів різних галузей, пов'язаних з кіномистецтвом та культурологією. **Висновки.** У статті проаналізовано висвітлення теми на екрані, яка доводить, що до 1920-х рр. жорстокість не стає частиною мейнстріму і використовується в поодиноких мистецьких творах з метою укріплення загальнолюдських цінностей. Показово, що ці стрічки не мають комерційного успіху і шокують публіку. Після двох світових воєн насильство уже не справляє такого враження на публіку. Воно повертається на екрани, поступово нарощуючи свою інтенсивність. Тоді, коли у повоєнні роки насильство ілюструвало реальні ситуації, у 60-ті воно стає потужним виразним засобом і помалу доходить до самопародіювання у слешерах 80-х, коли самі режисери не сприймають його інакше, ніж засіб для розваги публіки.

Ключові слова: насильство на екрані; жорстокість в мистецьких творах; сучасний кінодискурс; кінематограф; історія

