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THE QUESTION OF GENRE IN THE ANIMATED FILM

Thesis Proposal

Research aim and purpose:

The aim of this research is to analyse the current dilemma on the genre of animated film.

Key words:

genre, animated film, breaking stereotypes, emotional resonance, engaging a diverse audience

Introduction

Many of my favourite movies are animated. Many consider animation to be a genre, but is it really? As someone who watches a lot of animated movies, I felt the need to discuss this matter.

There are storytellers and filmmakers who work in certain genres and say they "make a genre film". This seems simple enough on the surface but being a "genre storyteller" requires a full understanding of what that genre means.

The world of animated films is a vibrant and diverse medium that has captivated people of all ages for decades. However, during the discussion of animated films, an important question arises as to what role and significance the genre has in this artistic field. Animated films span genres from fantasy and adventure to comedy and drama, challenging traditional categorisation and broadening the horizons of storytelling. This work will explore the issue of the animated film genre, delving into its evolution, significance, and impact on the audience experience.

Research design, methods, and schedule

This will be a qualitative research piece working with data collected by other researchers. The data will be further analysed, and this will result into descriptive research discussing the dilemma on the genre of animated film.

The research will include an exclusive interview with Hungarian Director Simon Balázs. He has not only an undeniable technical background in animation and visual effects, but also an innate ability to make everything look fantastic and cinematic on screen.

Literature review and a brief outline of each chapter

For the critical analysis of the study "The Question of the Animation Film Genre", I performed a critical review of several books and articles dealing with the topic. The literature review is included in the brief outline of the chapters below as it best explains why I used the particular source of literature for the particular chapter.

I. THE CONCEPT OF GENRE AND ANIMATED FILM

1. Interpretation and application of the concept of genre in the film

What does the term of genre mean and how can it be understood?

To examine the concept of genre, it is essential to determine how this concept can be interpreted in common language, as well as in art theory, from literary theory to film, visual art, and music. What does genre mean and what can be understood by this?

This expression often occurred in common language as well: as part of expressions such as "not my genre". Genre is used as a term suitable for certain groups and types of certain phenomena or activities. Genre is a collective concept of identical or similar characteristics that enables the categorisation and classification of works of art and texts. In other words, genre category connects the works and separates them from each other - this is the essence of the genre as succinctly as possible.

How can the openness of the concept of genre be explained?

The lack of closure of the concept of genre can be explained by the fact that there is no sharp boundary between the semantics and pragmatics of the concept.

Film genre researcher Tom Gunning emphasises the uncertainty and ambiguity of the genre. This is explained in „*Nagyon finom teveszőr ecsettel rajzolták*” a filmes műfajok eredetei (Gunning, 2000, pp. 273–291).

Torben Grodal emphasises that genres exist in multiple ways, depending on the genre concept enforced by alternative groups (producers, viewers) and how they interact with each other. This is explained in *A fikció műfajtipológiája*, (Grodal, 2004, pp. 327–328).

Due to the multifaceted nature of the genre concept, a certain degree of arbitrariness and connection to the age (historicity) prevails in the genre designation. The real question is not what genre is, but when and what we consider it to be: a given community must know and acknowledge the existence of a genre in order to be able to talk about it meaningfully. According to Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, "genres exist as long as a social group defines and considers as valid the rules that create these genres" (Chandler, 2020).

2. Approach to the animated film

Animation as a technique

In contrast to the concept of film genre, the definition of an animated film faces fewer difficulties, although it cannot be considered problem-free at all. Nichola Dobson draws attention to the fact that there is no uniform, consensual definition of animation, "not even animation researchers have all agreed on a clear definition" (Dobson, 2010, p. 11).

To outline the digital film, I call upon the ideas of Lev Manovich. According to Manovich's line of thought, animated film has always been relegated to a kind of marginalised position compared to photographic-live-action film. *Mi a film?* (Manovich, 2009).

3. The issue of genre in the animated film

In Chapter 1, I outline the general basic problems related to the concept of genre and examine how these phenomena appear in the medium of film.

In Chapter 2, I undertake the definition of the animated film.

I will further examine how animated film can be divided into genres, considering the definitions and findings just mentioned.

II. THE GENRES OF MASS FILM IN THE ANIMATED FILM

1. The group of crime genres in the animated film

In genre typology, the name "adventure" is used for a group of genres as well as an independent genre. The group of adventure genres essentially includes all major mass film genres that cannot be classified in the fantasy genre group. We can mention here crime genres, western, war film, and even romance and melodrama that can be grasped as a spiritual adventure. Common denominator of the adventure genres is that in them - according to Jenő Király - the concept of cultural reality, that is, the system of ideas formed about the events, becomes only partially invalid: rather loose than suspended. *Frivol műzsa*, (KIRÁLY, 1993. pp. 327–331).

One of the most sharply defined, narrower sections of adventure genres is the group of crime genres. Criminal genre group can be divided by the point of view, in what way, and from whose point of view each genre approaches the phenomenon of crime to: 1. detection of the crime; 2. committing the crime; 3. we can distinguish criminal genres whose focus is the suffering of sin. This division is outlined by Charles Derry. *The Suspense Thriller. Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock*, (Derry, 1988, pp. 55–69).

In the following, I will examine the animated versions of three crime genres, focusing on the question of to what extent the typical character types, plot management and dramaturgy, as

well as recurring formal and stylistic components of the discussed genres can be realised in animated films.

2. Genre group of the fantastic in the animated film

Relationship between fantasy genres and animation

Fantastic genres occupy a special place in the relationship between animation and mass film genres. Compared to other genres, fantasy genres are much more closely related to animation. The closest relationship between genre components and animation characteristics is found in fantasy genres. In the following, I will reveal possible reasons for this close relationship and present its characteristics in detail, arguing that the animated appearance of fantastic genres is one of the most justified and typical cases.

Several genres build on the phenomena of the fantastic, so the fantastic creates a group of genres, like crime fiction, for the division and examination of which I follow Vivian Sobchak's train of thought. *A fantasztikus film*, (Sobchak, 1998, pp. 323–331).

"If genres are to be distinguished based on the epistemological implications and narrative energies of thematic relationships, it is safe to say that horror film calls into question and complements all that we consider »natural« law; science fiction extends it, while fantasy suspends it," writes Sobchak. *A fantasztikus film*, (Sobchak, 1988, p. 326).

3. Animation and comedy

Mentioning the close relationship between animated film and comedy is probably the most obvious case when dealing with the issue of genres appearing in animation. The prevalence of the comedy genre in animation is considered by many to be the most typical and the most obvious. Nichola Dobson notes that comedy is "often considered the most dominant genre in animation" and "comedy genres are the most obvious of the genres found in animation". This

is noted in *The A to Z of Animation and Cartoons*, (Dobson, 2010, p. 48). In order to explain this, it is necessary to take into account the mutually supporting or even reinforcing phenomena of animation's toolset and comedy's effect orientation. A specific parallel between animation and comedy should also be mentioned: both can be considered a group made up of extremely heterogeneous elements.

In this chapter, I examine the characteristics of the close intertwining of comedy with animation.

Suppositions and implications

In the following, I summarise what tendencies emerge from the examination of animated versions of live-action film genres, and what conclusion it all points towards.

1. Trends in the adoption of mass film genres

In this chapter, I examine the members of the two genre groups and genre animation realisations that cannot be precisely classified into one genre group: specifically, from the comprehensive and more heterogeneous genre group of adventure, the narrower and more homogeneous group of crime genres, the group of fantastic genres, and the examination results of the comedy.

In addition, in this chapter, I will examine the following topics in search of answers to the questions that arise.

- The role of anthropomorphism in the adoption of genres.
- Limiting the operation of animation tools and/or genre requirements.
- Strengthening the operation of animation tools and/or genre requirements.

2. Outlook - the issue of genre from the aspect of animated film

No matter how closely animated film is connected to fine art phenomena, its mode of operation is primarily characterised and regulated by the peculiarities of moving images.

At the same time, the examined issue can also outline the fact that the motion picture is a genre where concepts of its system must be reconsidered.

In addition, I will examine the following topics in search of answers to the questions that arise.

Genre as a phenomenon independent of technique and reconsideration of the moving image genre typology.

Another possible result of my thought process is that if genre is extended to the animated film, then the historical approaches and models of the genre defined today can inevitably be supplemented with an animated version of a certain genre. If we approach the genre film culture of the given country from this perspective, we can draw significantly different conclusions than if we only focus on the live-action genre versions. Specifically: the history of Hungarian genre films, for example, would look different if items such as the *Mézga család* (sci-fi) were considered.

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Filmography

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Aladdin (John Musker, Ron Clements, 1992)

Alice Csodaországban (*Alice in Wonderland*, Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske, Wilfred Jackson, 1951)

Alkony sugárút (*Sunset Boulevard*, Billy Wilder, 1951)

Alkonyattól pirkadatig (From Dusk till Dawn, Robert Rodriguez, 1996)

Amerikai anizs (Bódy Gábor, 1975)

Andalúziai kutya (Un Chien andalou, Luis Bunuel és Salvador Dalí, 1928)

Az aranygyapjú legendája (Jason and the Argonauts, Don Chaffey, 1963)

Aranyláz (The Gold Rush, Charles Chaplin, 1925)

Avatar (James Cameron, 2009)

Az Álmosvölgy legendája (Sleepy Hollow, Tim Burton, 1999)

Batman (Tim Burton, 1989)

Bambi (David Hand, 1942)

Bambi találkozik Godzillával (Bambi Meets Godzilla, Marv Newland, 1969)

A Birodalom visszavág (The Empire Strikes Back, Irwin Kershner, 1980)

Bogár úr a városba megy (Mr. Bug Goes to Town/Hoppity Goes to Town, Dave Fleischer, 1941)

Csillagok háborúja (Star Wars, George Lucas, 1977)

Csipkerózsika (Sleeping Beauty, Clyde Geronimi, 1959)

Dracula (Dracula, Tod Browning, 1931)

Dumbo (Ben Sharpsteen, 1940)

Az eastwicki boszorkányok (The Witches of Eastwick, George Miller, 1987)

Egyiptom hercege (Prince of Egypt, Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells, 1998)

Az erdő kapitánya (Dargay Attila, 1988)

Fekete Dália (*Black Dahlia*, Brian De Palma, 2006)

Frankenstein (James Whale, 1931)

Frankenstein átká (*The Curse of Frankenstein*, Terence Fisher, 1957)

A gyanú árnyékában (*Shadow of a Doubt*, Alfred Hitchcock, 1943)

Gyilkosság az Orient Expresszen (*Murder on the Orient Express*, Sidney Lumet, 1974)

A Gyűrűk Ura (*The Lord of the Rings*, Ralph Bakshi, 1978)

Hair (Milos Forman, 1979)

Hamupipőke (*Cinderella*, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, 1950)

A hét mesterlövész (*The Magnificent Seven*, John Sturges, 1960)

Hófehérke és a hét törpe (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, David Hand, 1937)

Az ifjú Sherlock Holmes és a félelem piramisa (*Young Sherlock Holmes*, Barry Levinson, 1985)

Az illuzionista (*L'illusionniste*, Sylvain Chomet, 2010)

Jól áll neki a halál (*Death Becomes Her*, Robert Zemeckis, 1992)

A kis hableány (*Malá morská víla*, Karel Kachyna, 1976)

A kis hableány (*The Little Mermaid*, John Musker, Ron Clements, 1989)

A légy (Rófusz Ferenc, 1980)

Macskafogó (Ternovszky Béla, 1986)

A majmok bolygója (*The Planet of the Apes*, Franklin J. Schaffner, 1968)

A máltai sólyom (*The Maltese Falcon*, John Huston, 1941)

A Mészga család különös kalandjai (Nepp József, tv-sorozat, 1968–1969)

Micimackó (*The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, John Lounsbery, Wolfgang Reitherman, 1977)

Mindörökké Batman (*Batman Forever*, Joel Schumacher, 1995)

Némó nyomában (*Finding Nemo*, Andrew Stanton, 2003)

Óz, a csodák csodája (*The Wizard of Oz*, Victor Fleming, 1939)

Az öreg halász és a tenger (*The Old Man and the Sea*, Alekszander Petrov, 1999)

Pán Péter (*Peter Pan*, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Clyde Geronimi, 1953)

Péntek 13 (*Friday the 13th*, Sean Cunningham, 1980)

Piroska és a farkas (*Red Hot Riding Hood*, Tex Avery, 1943)

Pókember (*Spider-Man*, Sam Raimi, 2002)

Pókember 2 (*Spider-Man 2*, Sam Raimi, 2004)

Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)

Ragyogás (*The Shining*, Stanley Kubrick, 1980)

Roger nyúl a pácban (*Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, Robert Zemeckis, 1988)

Sárkányok repülése (*Flight of Dragons*, Arthur Rankin Jr. és Jules Bass, 1982)

Sárkányvadászok (*Chasseurs de dragons*, Guillaume Ivanel, Arthur Qwak, 2008)

A sellő (*Rusalka*, Alekszander Petrov, 1997)

Sherlock Holmes (Guy Ritchie, 2009)

Shrek (Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jenson, 2001)

A Szépség és a Szörnyeteg (*The Beauty and the Beast*, Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise, 1991)

Tarzan (Kevin Lima, Chris Buck, 1999)

Titánok háborúja (*Clash of the Titans*, Desmond Davis, 1981)

Tűz és jég (*Fire and Ice*, Ralph Bakshi, 1983)

Vámpír (*Vampyr*, Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1932)

Vissza a jövőbe (*Back to the Future*, Robert Zemeckis, 1985)