SOCIAL HERO EVOLUTION IN MASS UNIVERSAL CINEMA XX-XXI CENTURIES

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Abstract

Cinema hero is a special conglomeration of images of the human, both real and historical; archetype which lies in the human mind and the image that cinema has imposed himself in the process of evolution. One successful hero can bring the film to world leaders at the box office, but no star cast can save the film from financial ruin if there is no good-described character with his prehistory and psychology. In order to become a truly iconic movie character, it is not enough just to come up with the name and adventure. Hero is a complex image, similar to the real person, and many of its features must also be as close to reality as possible.

Keywords Sociology of film, film hero, mass film, evolution of character, social features.

1. Introduction

Cinematography on the present stage of development is a fine example of multi developed complex of services and ideas. On the one hand, the cinema is a mirror of the modern era, its development and decline. Everything that happens in the world and in society sooner or later is reflected in the film, and the way in which event is showed may also serve as the subject of a separate study. On the other hand, the cinema itself creates some abstract values and ideas that are rapidly taken up by the masses and become fashion trends dictating the very essence of life strategy. Thus, the cinema is a unique phenomenon - it creates and distributes ideas itself, it can be called a self-replicating system.

Under the influence of cinema is situated not only the conscious life of a person but also its unconscious part which is often elusive. The process of thinking itself is changing. Scientists can only state a fact: people begin to think with visual images; thinking has become more standard, on a pre-specified patterns. The reason is the general expansion of cinematography. Cinema is one of the few forms of culture which is available to all segments of the population. In a relatively short period of time cinema penetrated into human consciousness so tightly that today it is difficult to imagine life without movies. Today, everyone can find a film to his own taste; choose a movie that satisfies its internal needs. If formerly "to watch a film" meant event – going into cinema meant equally going into theatre or restaurant, today with the development of the Internet and virtual piracy, cinema became a leisure activity, and in some cases – way of it.

Cinema has its own language, its form, its structure. Whatever the differences are between the mass cinema and art-house, between Hollywood European and world cinema, between film and TV series, there are some forms that are impossible to break. One of these forms is a film hero which is the main character of this work.

Hero is a special conglomeration of images of the human, both real and historical; archetype which lies in the human mind and the image that cinema has imposed himself in the process of evolution. Hero is an integral part of film narration, and the development of relations with the outside world and hero himself is the main theme of most of the films. One successful hero can bring the film to world leaders at the box office, but no star cast can save the film from financial ruin if there is no good-described hero. In order to become a truly iconic movie character, it is not enough just to come up with the name and adventure. Hero is a complex image, similar to the real person, and many of its features must also be as close to reality as possible. Hero has its own motivation, hierarchy of values, its mental peculiarity and social needs. Hero is the print of a real person on the digital media.

2. Interdisciplinary definition of hero

"Who are the heroes and are they remained in the world?" journalists ask the reading public. Today we use the word "hero" in a variety of different meanings that are very far from the original. This concept,
though it has changed, has not become out of date. Hero focuses his best and most valuable features on what we aspire to be. We can judge on the most important and prevailed features of the society on the base of a typical film where hero has the typical collection of features and manners. On the internet there are often found discussion about who is still considered a hero and what are its features. There are many definitions, and this gives rise to an abundance of misunderstanding.

The hero is a complex multi-functional concept, which is characterized by multi-layered interpretations in various disciplines. It is interesting that the concept of the hero is used in many humanities, but its value varies. We try to define the concept in terms of different disciplines and to understand what caused this difference.

Etymology of the word comes from the Greek ἥρως “hero, knight, demigod”. English version of the hero comes from the Latin hērōs, related to servo – “save the whole” and Avestan verb “haurvati” – “to be on duty, to stay awake”. It is believed that the ancient Greek version of the word goes back to Proto-Indo-European “ser” – “to guard, to protect”. English language researcher Eric Partridge believes that the primary meaning of the word "hero" – “the defender”. Russian "hero" is borrowed probably via the French word “héros”, as the heroine - from the French “heroine” (in Russian suffix is used by analogy with the word goddess).

In specialized dictionaries several character definitions usually distinguish. We list them below with comments.

- Hero - a collective image of the brave, noble, selfless warrior to perform the feat, who is the essence of twofold origin – of human and divine nature. The first mention of such heroes should be looked for in ancient myths, legends and epic stories (works such as "The Song of Roland", "Beowulf", "Gilgamesh", etc.). Sometimes there are used synonyms as "knight", "hero", "demigod." His actions are dictated by conscience, honor and nobility – which are most important criteria for evaluating others. Such a hero gets the special task and executes it. After his death, he rises (in Olympus, Valhalla), which is a sign of the lawfulness of his actions.

Some researchers use another definition, which is a logical continuation of the previous one:

- A person who is subject to any worship, admiration, a role model.

In fairy tales, the hero is slightly changed. Hero of fairy tales is a direct descendant of the mythological hero in the first place; he performs the same function – archetypalation of the image.

E. Meletinsky identifies three types of fairy tale characters – ruler (Prince), a poor cousin (orphan), the younger brother. Ruler is continuity from the mythological hero – he is kind and gracious. Two other categories are different from previous ones. The hero is poor but honest. He helps even when he is not in the best of circumstances. Such a hero is faced with challenges that were rigged (by relatives or neighbors), successfully overcomes them with his wit, tricks or magical creatures. Poor cousin and younger brother are collective image of a man who through his wit, courage and nobleness may rise towards weaker: become rich, marry the princess and become ruler.

V. Propp who is known as classifier of fairy stories describes the hero of tales in other way. Hero is a character whose fate is concerned by the tale at this moment. He also marked out seven main heroes of a fairy tale: antagonist wrecker, helper, princess, the sender, the hero, the false hero. This division can also be seen in modern movies.

Mythical hero crushed in his social characteristics and becomes a hero of a fairy tale, where he becomes closer to the people but with the same features.

- Hero is a person who commits feats of courage, valor and selflessness. Social characteristics are the same, but it is a real person now. This character has a reward for his deeds. He is ready for anything "for the sake of the country and God." It is a synonym for "warrior", "military man".

- A person which dustings in any way and attracts attention.

This character does not differ by nobility and honor. This is an ordinary person, under certain circumstances in a specific time becomes a hero, in other words, his behavior distinguishes and he attaches attention. This definition most closely reflects the essence of the modern mass film hero.

- A person who embodies the characteristic and typical features of his era, environment. He generalizes the image, reveals the essence of social change in the society. Typical respondent.

- The main character in the novel, play, film. This character is given a greater amount of time compared with other characters or on behalf of the narrator. The protagonist.
3. Typology of hero images in modern mass films

Information for the study was taken from the movie website kinopoisk.ru (Russian) and social network vkontakte.ru. We took a list of the most famous and popular films in the history of cinema - film search was made through the site kinopoisk.ru, where it is possible to rank the movies by the number of ratings and the assessment itself. There are different values for different years for film to hit the category. For example, for films of the 20s and 30s years of XX century was enough general mark not less than 7.0 and more than a thousand reviews. For the modern film it was required 7.5 mark and more than 50 thousand reviews. In order to select the most popular contemporary heroes, we used the social network vkontakte.ru. The study shows only the heroes who had over 100 groups of fans.

The original definition of the term "hero" as a "warrior, brave man, brave, positive character" is used in modern cinema extremely rare in the case when it comes to the male character. "Pure" image of such a hero is found only once, in contrast to the heroine. In fact, the film where the heroine fights evil overcomes injustice or saves lives is the only where the woman is the main protagonist. In other cases, the female form only emphasizes the courage of men; it serves as an additional element: she should be saved, she needs help, she needs admiration. Character which could be called main female heroine in the main popular contemporary films and television series is found in 13%. Physical parameters of the hero has not changed, but supplemented. If superior quality of a heroine – sexuality - has remained unchanged and is unlikely ever to disappear, the male character now has two rather contradictory characteristics. On the one hand, the hero still remains the attractive, sexy, muscular man which he was throughout cinematic period (46%), on the other hand - there is another type, thin, with underdeveloped musculature, asexual man (36%). This type of hero by popularity presently prevails over the first type, given its novelty.

Image of a courageous, strong, masculine hero in modern cinema is manifested only in the film shot on comics and based on books and screenplays with the military plot. However, it should be noted that the image of a hero has changed. In the 70 - 80s of the 20th century, when the genre of war films was at its peak, a hero was the archetype of a strong warrior, defender; he was a positive character. In modern cinema even a warrior hero has abnormalities associated most often with the mental state of the character.

In 36% of cases, the main character is an antihero with concomitant disorders, which certainly is very significant for the analysis, as to the world of cinema and society in general. Popularity of characters is often achieved through the acquisition of oddities or quirks, and for the past three years in the film there is a tendency to give even minor characters unusual hobbies or habits.

The main reason due to which the main characters are not heroes but anti-heroes is that they have to be more like a real human, with its weaknesses and negative traits. Antihero drinks, swears and he is free in a relationship - in 32%, and 54% of it has various disabilities in the psyche, beginning from unsociability to the whole psychopathic characteristics. Any kind of nervous disorders, hysteria caused by the use of narcotics or the mental state, are both in features of anti-hero and villain. Often the love of the public to such a rough character is making movie so popular; and the plot, the acting or special effects which are believed to be paying attention to the audience do not play a special role.

This extraordinary popularity of sharp, unsympathetic, frankly crazy characters can be explained from several positions. From the perspective of commerce, a hero is the source of everything comic in the film where every good joke raises popularity (59% heroes sting or show black humor). From a psychological perspective the hero who "carries all vicious characteristics" demonstrating their behavior can, on the one hand, reassure the audience - on this background normal human sins of an ordinary man do not seem so scary, on the other - to provoke the viewer to a bright, aggressive behavior. Perhaps people need such a hero - one that would direct the energy to improve such object other that would show that he can be such a person himself.

Antihero is the classic "bad guy". He makes forbidden, often illegal things, he fascinates and wins friends and women due to the wit and charisma, there is nothing surprising in the fact that it is such a popular hero.

It should be noted that both the hero - positive and negative - do not neglect to use illegal means to achieve the goal, the only difference is that the hero gets away with it, but the villain responds for his actions.

One of the characteristics of modern cinema character is his high intelligence. 23% are engaged in inventing characters, another 36 % immodestly call themselves geniuses in a particular area. Often ingenious abilities have a kind of mental abnormalities. One of the most common techniques in the movie is the showdown between good and evil,
represented as a struggle between two geniuses (33%).

Unlike the hero of the film of the last century, in particular the 80 -90th, where the hero is an ordinary soldier who does not think and does what is needed – because of the orders of his commander or his conscience, modern character prefers to invent his own circuit and multistage plans that often are the main intrigue of the film for the audience. Intellectual dominance makes the image of the hero almost inaccessible to the ordinary viewer who seeks to emulate something from movie character.

Both positive and negative character often stands on the head of corporation center or the army. He has good strategic skills and leadership qualities (36%). However, it is interesting that in a decisive battle he prefers to act on their own, without relying on the support team, which, in certain cases, more a hindrance than a help. Striving for a single leadership is partly due to the intellectual dominance, this is partly a demonstration of the thesis “Man is an enemy to the other man”. Hero, in fact, does not trust anyone, except the inner circle, is often abandoned and betrayed in extreme situations. In our view, this represents the best the current situation in the public consciousness where every man no matter in what social group enters and what social roles performs rarely feels a support for other people.

In modern mass films there are represented a relatively small range of social roles: the protagonist, usually the middle class, the manager at the firm, or middle manager at the company, special agent, detective or student, depending on the genre of the film. Role conflict is probably the only topic that does not rise in a massive cinema. Social role of the hero fit perfectly in his life. The only genre of film where the role conflict is possible is thriller in which the hero is not in who he is claimed to be. But in this case, it is more about plot twists and turns associated with the change of the leader than about the real role conflict.

The main value that is embedded into the subconscious through mass cinema is family. The main hero, depending on age, is sure to have a girlfriend or a wife, make a wedding offer to his mistress or finds his one and only. Heroine in such cases serves as a symbol of the family hearth. Love is the main line for just a third of today's movies, but is always present as a side plot.

However, it should be noted some interesting facts. Despite the fact that family values to some extent demonstrated in 54 % of cases, the relationship husband / wife of the most popular movies is showed only in 9 % of cases. Roles brother / sister is shown in 23 %, and the most popular relationship is parents/children - 36%.

Social relationships between friends demonstrated in 56 % of cases, which makes the role of the “friend” the most popular among the topics that are raised by the cinema.

Confrontation line provided by villain also has changed. Modern villain can be described by the term “ambiguous”, since neither his appearance nor his character does not correspond to the standard expression of villainy. Today he is exquisitely elegant sexy man more attractive in physical way than a positive character. He is confident in himself. Three most popular modern cinema villains (Jim Moriarty, Loki, Bane) in their films or TV series completely overshadow by popularity the main heroes. Although the exterior of the villain has changed, however, there is one feature that is characteristic of the villain throughout the cinematic time: he wears black and green colors.

Villain is almost always a stranger. He is usually of mixed blood, and his origin is often difficult and even mysterious. In general, of course, the negative characters are always more interesting than positive, but lately they have become not just popular, they have become the main characters of the film, where the characteristics of a positive character goes to the background.

The villain is a leader of the army or a corporation, which he holds by force or cunning. The only significant difference from the positive character of villain is in cruelty – he kills easier, both his opponents and fellows.

Two main motives that are inherent by villain in the past century - the lust for power / money and revenge – in modern cinema cedes to knowledge. The villain does not really want to achieve his goal but wants to know how people would react to his actions; he is a researcher, a scientist who experiments often over the entire world. Villain does not lose. Even his own death is often included in the plan and does not violate its structure. His serenity, his dismissive watching the suffering of others also point to some psychological problems.

4. Social evolution of specific hero features

Lumiere brothers invented the mechanism of moving pictures in the late 19th century - the invention was first demonstrated to the world at December 28, 1895. That day five films lasting several minutes was demonstrated. Today, these films would be called shortcuts and probably would not arise such ecstasy, while in the late 19th century it was tantamount to
scientific discovery. Wave of cinema swept the world. In a short time it was filmed over a thousand shorts.

First movies late 1890th - early 1900th still had no clear hero. Cinema has become a business, directors sought to remove as many of the pictures, preferring comic - erotic content. Many films of that time have not survived to our time, and we can only judge them according to eyewitnesses.

Cinema became a true piece of art and culture only in the mid- 1910th, when the first star of silent films arises - Charlie Chaplin. His Little Tramp image can be considered the first appearance of the hero in the film. Tramp turned out pretty versatile and controversial - despite the name of the image that corresponds to his social status, his refined manners, clothes, and dignity of a gentleman. This image began to take lyrical and tragic features. Chaplin wrote in his autobiography about his character:

"... He is very versatile - Tramp is a gentleman, a poet and a dreamer, but in general he is a solitary creature, who dreams of a beautiful love and adventures. He wants you to guess who he is, whether he is a scientist, or a musician, or a duke, or a polo player. And at the same time he is ready to pick up a cigarette butt from the sidewalk or take away a sweet from baby."

The image that created Charlie Chaplin was extremely popular largely because it was the first "real" character in the film. He possessed the specific features that characterize the hero - the nobility, the craving for justice, and the physical humor and tragedy of his character closer to his audience, who began to perceive Charlie Chaplin not as one of many but as a hero, a symbol of cinema, stretched out for decades. Thus, the cinematography of 1920th and 1930th was mostly influenced by this Chaplin hero. His works such as "The Kid", "The Circus", "City Lights" are still popular. Film hero retains his positive social features - compassion for others and a willingness to help.

In 20th tendency to make films in the genre of fantasy and horror grows. At this time the films "Nosferatu, Symphony of Horror" and "Metropolis" are rolling out and they largely determine the nature of the further development of cinema. We cannot say that these were the first two films in the genre but of all varieties of the time only these two films have received a sufficient number of ratings.

In "Metropolis" character is a young man, originally a carefree playboy who later becomes a fighter for freedom and justice. The main feature of the hero is that he is chosen, that he alone can prevent the inevitable. Villain is a mad scientist, genius and inventor. Over time this villain resulted in the image of one of the basic type of evil man in the film.

"Nosferatu" is a film with the villain protagonist. It is in this movie that we can see for the first time the image of “the villain freak” which has been preserved as an archetype for over half a century. Also this villain is distinguished by his isolation and cruelty. Positive character is stereotypical: he is a fighter for justice, willing to sacrifice himself for others. Hero is shown as daredevil, willing for risk and brave man.

In the 30th the image of the hero-lover appears for the first time and immediately catches attention. He is a handsome rich man who uses his attraction to implement his plans (Rhett Butler, "Gone with the Wind"). Another type is a poor but clever, cunning and calculating character, conquering a woman due to his intelligence and charisma. Hero changes cease to be entirely positive, a fighter for justice, equality and fraternity. At the forefront there are personal interests and benefits (Peter, "It Happened One Night").

Villain image takes shape, becomes more prominent. In the movie "The Wizard of Oz" the dialogue was uttered which characterizes completely the image of a negative character which has been preserved in world cinema to the 2000th.

"Glinda: And so, what the Munchkins want to know is, are you a Good Witch or a Bad Witch? Dorothy: But I've already told you, I'm not a witch at all. Witches are old and ugly. (She hears giggling behind her in the flower beds.) What was that? Glinda: The Munchkins. They're laughing because I am a Witch. I'm Glinda, the Witch of the North. Dorothy: You are? Oh, I beg your pardon. But I've never heard of a beautiful witch before. Glinda: Only bad witches are ugly."

The dialogue above is best feature of a negative character in the film. He is easy to find: he is ugly, he does not show emotion, and he is closed on himself. His actions are motivated by anger and a desire to gain power. The villain often wears black or green. Such villain is quite sketchy and can be easily guessed, even if his true identity remains a mystery to the viewer at the beginning of the film.

Women in movies 30th only begin to be drawn. There are some films where the main role is played by a woman, but it's basically the film adaptation of literary works (such as "The Wizard of Oz" and "Gone with the Wind"). Self- image of a female character is not present; there is a mother - wife - mistress, rather sketchy and with no distinct features.

Cinema of 40th is distinctive because of the military situation. Good hero appears again. He is a military who protects the honor to his country, patriot, fair,
good to his friends and ruthless to his enemies. This character stays closest to the primary definition of a hero as warrior committing courageous and heroic deeds. He is physically attractive. (Roy Cronin, "Waterloo Bridge")

At the same time film noir genre begins to develop, and it creates its own particular type of character. This is an anti-hero, involved in crime with this or that reasons. He is cynical, pessimist, greedy for his own benefits and he can commit murder.

Female image is worth special mention. The image of independent, extroverted, uninhibited, with free manners woman comes on the first plan. The heroine becomes equal to a hero by the amount of time on the screen and its popularity. (Gilda, "Gilda")

The image of the villain in this time period is identified with the war and Germany: as such, there is no villain. Method of Alfred Hitchcock appears: villain is hiding in the hero, he may not know himself what he is able to do. (De Winter, "Rebecca")

50th are characterized by films with socially relevant themes. Heroes of these films are juvenile delinquents, prostitutes, murderers - clearly show the problems of society in the postwar period. (Caribbean, "Midnight caribou", Antoine Doinel, "Four strokes") Despite the social exclusion of such heroes who often become outcasts in films, they keep faith in goodness, justice, and the magic, staying childishly naive.

Another bright character appears: the lonely, nervous, irritable, mentally unstable man, but he also wants to achieve justice for himself or his loved one. (Zampano, "The Road")

This time masculine type of hero appears for the first, a harbinger of the coming action hero. In some ways he is a continuation of the military hero, but more emphasis is placed on physical qualities. By the way, exactly in the context of this particular type of hero manifested homosexuality, although this is an isolated case of all types of this hero. (Ben Hur, the eponymous film)

Female image is divided into two opposing sides: on the one hand, bright, sexy, charismatic heroine, bitch (Sylvia, "Sweet Life"), on the other - kind, naive girl with romantic view of the world ("Sabrina"). The type of platinum blond that combines two of the above image is on its peak of popularity. (Sugar Kowalski, "Some Like It Hot")

In the 60th for the first time anti-hero becomes more popular than the usual hero. He is adventurer, introvert, he has bad contact with the outside world and mental problems (Shooter Joe, "A Fistful of Dollars"). His opponent, in fact, has no differences from the anti-hero and his characteristics are the same. Another type of hero is socialite, conceited snob and rich man (Henry Higgins, "My Fair Lady ", director, "8½").

In the 70th there is the first appearance of the heroine with all the qualities of a fighter, a warrior, who is able to replace the hero (Ripley, "Alien"). Also this period is characterized by a slew of action films built on the same template. Hero in such films is rather homogeneous: he is physically developed, soldier, sometimes - a former police officer. He is quite self-sufficient; he does not require the support of others. Introvert. A victim of circumstances, he never attacks first. Faced with difficulties, the hero succeeds in winning at any cost, even by illegal means.

Villain also evolves. First of all, the criminal genius appears who is capable of any crime for the sake of a whim. Such a negative character is often surrounded by a big team or "support group" but he does not trust them. Although he participates in public life, the most important decisions he makes alone. He overestimates his strength, and thereby loses. (Col. Kurtz, "Apocalypse Now")

Secondly, "super villain" appears in the whole branch of fantastic films. His features characterizes the entire era that successfully continues to this day. Cunning and cruel leader, he wants power and wants to destroy all dissidents (Darth Vader, "Star Wars") It is worth noting that he is opposed by ordinary hero who does not have some kind of superhuman, the common man. (Luke Skywalker, "Star Wars")

80th continues the tradition of early cinema. The type of adventurer returns who is funny and extraverted person (Doc, “Back to the Future”). The fight-type still flourishes. Despite the seemingly cruelty, this type of character more than ever plays the social role of a guard of a family. (John McClain, "Die Hard")

Hero in the 90th becomes a murderer (Leon, "Leon - killer"), or a person who becomes him to achieve the goal. (Tyler, "Fight Club")

In the 00th the type of character with superpowers appears. The appearance of such a hero connects with the popularity of graphic novels and comic books that are started to be filmed. Comic culture has created its hero as man of pronounced masculine type who is handsome and sexy. He endures all the hardships and tests for "the common good". He is the protector of mankind or a certain city. He is often subjected to harassment or is not appreciated (Peter Parker, "Spider-Man"). Unlike the hero heroine does not have any special powers or super weapon. Many female characters in comic book movies have been created to meet the romantic needs of "real" heroes,
men. Thus such girls are beautiful but the audience can hardly find any character development. (Natasha Romanova "Iron Man", "The Avengers", Storm, "X-Men")

Another type of comic book hero is the avenger whose image is far away from positive. He is a fighter against injustice, but he is also a murderer, emotionally unstable, psychologically vicious, immoral, even a psychopath, and vigilante misanthrope. (Characters in "Sin City")

The line between hero, villain and anti-hero finally is erased. The film shows the villain motives, explaining why he does these things. Villain becomes just a victim whose story has not been told and that makes him innocent and attractive to the viewers.

The protagonist of mass cinema of the 00th attracts largely because of his comic side but with some negative traits such as the inability to understand the consequences of actions, selfishness (Jack Sparrow, "Pirates of the Caribbean") A sociopath is on the peak of popularity (Gregory House, "House"), a genius (Sheldon Cooper, "The Big Bang Theory"). Such heroes are becoming popular due to the black humor and sarcasm; he ridicules the world and people.

10th continues this trend with an even grander scale. Asexual heroes become the most popular (Sherlock Holmes, "Sherlock", Doctor, "Doctor Who"). Villain becomes a more popular than a whole range of positive heroes (Loki, "The Avengers", Bane, "The Dark Knight Rises"). Simultaneously romantic comedies provide its own type of hero - who has the ideal "glamorous" appearance, but his mental and social characteristics do not play a large role in the film. A non-human hero arises: vampire, werewolf, zombie (Edward Cullen, "The Twilight Saga"). Some researchers believe that the attractiveness of such heroes lies in sexuality that is brought by suffering and inability of happiness.


References