

Artículo de investigación

Study the role of imagination and its evaluation principles in cinema from Jacques Lacan's perspective

Estudio del papel de la imaginación y sus principios de evaluación en el cine desde la perspectiva de Jacques Lacan

Estudar o papel da imaginação e seus princípios de avaliação no cinema a partir da perspectiva de Jacques Lacan

Recibido: 2 de enero de 2019. Aceptado: 14 de enero de 2019

Written by:
Hamid Kakasoltani^{26*}
Hossein Ardalani²⁷

Abstract

Jacques Lacan, the well-known French psychoanalyst, believes that human psyche is formed according to triple pattern which there is a possibility of understanding unconscious as well as actions and reactions of human-being through analysis. Lacan considers that human mind consists of three imaginary, symbolic and real orders that act both simultaneously and connectedly. The research methodology is analytical – descriptive method. In this paper using Lacanian psychoanalysis and imaginary order, we would study the role of imagination and its evaluation in cinema from the perspective of Jacques Lacan.

Keywords: Imaginary order, symbolic order, real order, cinema, Jacques Lacan.

Resumen

Jacques Lacan, el conocido psicoanalista francés, cree que la psique humana se forma de acuerdo con el triple patrón que existe la posibilidad de comprender el inconsciente, así como las acciones y reacciones del ser humano a través del análisis. Lacan considera que la mente humana consiste en tres órdenes imaginarios, simbólicos y reales que actúan simultáneamente y en conexión. La metodología de investigación es analítica-descriptiva. En este artículo, utilizando el psicoanálisis lacaniano y el orden imaginario, estudiaríamos el papel de la imaginación y su evaluación en el cine desde la perspectiva de Jacques Lacan.

Palabras clave: Orden imaginario, orden simbólico, orden real, cine, Jacques Lacan.

Resumo

Jacques Lacan, o conhecido psicanalista francês, acredita que a psique humana é formada de acordo com o padrão triplo, que existe a possibilidade de se compreender o inconsciente, bem como as ações e reações do ser humano por meio da análise. Lacan considera que a mente humana consiste em três ordens imaginárias, simbólicas e reais que agem simultaneamente e de forma conectada. A metodologia de pesquisa é analítica - método descritivo. Neste artigo, utilizando a psicanálise lacaniana e a ordem imaginária, estudaríamos o papel da imaginação e sua avaliação no cinema a partir da perspectiva de Jacques Lacan.

Palavras-chave: ordem imaginária, ordem simbólica, ordem real, cinema, Jacques Lacan

²⁶ Faculty Member of Art Department, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran; E-mail: hamid.kakasoltani98@gmail.com

²⁷ Assistant professor, Department of Art and Architecture, Hamedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Hamedan, Iran

Introduction

One of the famous psychologists whose complex and well-known theories are applied on famous works of world literature is Jacques Lacan. He has had great influence on cinema, literature, philosophy and art through his seminars, because in these seminars many intellectuals took part that the trace of Lacan works were observed in their later theories. Jacques Marie Emile Lacan (1901-1981) is a famous French philosopher and psychiatrist. Although Lacan is influenced by Sigmund Freud theories, he observes the man psyche from his own point of view. Lacan considers mind as combination of three imaginary, symbolic and real orders which its development starts from imaginary order and continues to real order (Zamiran, 2006). The present article studies the role of imagination in cinema art from the perspective of Jacques Lacan.

Jacques Marie Lacan is the most influential psychologist after Freud that by using Freud theories in the field of psychoanalysis and combining them with linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure creates tremendous evolution in the field of postmodern critique, literary and film studies, Feminist Marxist and social studies. His beliefs have been used in different areas such as education, legal studies and international relations so much that we can say that study in the field of anthropology and social sciences is difficult without using Lacan theories. Constructivists call him constructivist and post-structuralists call him post structuralist but generally we can observe the movement from constructivism to post structuralism in his intellectual developments. Lacan believes that human psyche is formed according to a triple pattern: in the first place imaginary order is formed, in the second place symbolic order is formed and in the third place real order is formed that description of these three orders are among main discussions of Lacan psychoanalysis.

Three Fundamental Orders of Jacques Lacan

Imaginary Order

Lacan for the first time introduces the term imaginary order in one of his lectures in 1936. Habib writes in the book 'The history of literary criticism' regarding this: imaginary order is formed in a period in which the child is not exposed to language learning yet. In this period

the baby does not feel any differentiation between herself or himself and mother and due to connection with mother and the fact that mother provides all his basic needs and he/she does not know his/her existence separated from mother and mother as a whole unity is the governor of this order. Children up to six month old imagine themselves in unity with mother and they do not distinguish any difference between themselves and mother. But between 6 to 18 month old the first stage of child imaginations destruction occurs. Therefore in this stage which is called mirror stage the child for the first time finds himself/herself a creature separate from mother and the world, here the first sense of alienation, split and dichotomy is created in him/her. On one hand the baby is happy that he /she is existing independently from surrounding environment but on the other hand the baby is always seeking and longing for the mother. Another important point is the conclusion that Lacan made of this stage. He explains that in this stage identification is formed in which the baby in perpetual illusion and dream knows himself/herself as one in the mirror image and deceives himself/ herself that there is an ideal me (Owens, 2008).

Formation of 'small object' is the second sign of child separation from mother which Lacan talks about it in discussions regarding mirror stage. According to Lacan passing from imaginary order and following language and socialization shake the sense of perfection of imaginary order and create a sense of eternal loss and desire in the subject that is not in compliance with any object. He defines small object as desire object, any object that drives the desire. According to Lacan the basis of human existence is loss and vacancy that creates a desire which is not satisfied, therefore, the subject is always looking for objects to fill its existing vacuum while small object is never achieved. In Lacan's opinion the formation of imaginary order is one of the most important stages of mental development and the subject always longed to return to childhood and experience the sense of oneness with mother again.

Another issue that happens in this stage is narcissism. Lacan. Lacan borrowed this word from the myth of Narcissus in which a young man is fascinated by his image in the water. Lacan believes that if this identification goes out of its normal boundaries, it could be deadly; because it

causes that human is always longing for an ideal and perfection. Always for different reasons it is possible that the subject wants to return to imaginary order to find ideals such as oneness with mother or ideal me. Therefore the effects of imaginary order and mirror stage remain forever and it is important that how these are formed in subject's mind (Ahmadzade, 2012).

Symbolic Order

According to Lacan symbolic order which is the second mental discipline is the basis of human world because the child learns language in its formation period which plays fundamental role in shaping the identity and the child becomes familiar with the rules through language (Habib, 2005). On the contrary to imaginary order, in symbolic order the father instead of mother is in the position of power and plays the role of obstacle between child and mother and becomes the symbol of rules and norms. Lacan in the analysis of symbolic order combines psychological and linguistic points of view and states that unconscious is structured like language and reviews Freud's Oedipus complex from linguistic perspective. In his opinion during formation of symbolic order the child becomes familiar with the concept of 'the other'. And through concept of 'the other' he/she understands sexual differences between male and female, therefore 'the other' determines child gender through language, for example a girl learns to play with dolls and the boy learns to play with gun.

Real Order

The final part of Lacanian discussion is related to real order which is one of the most complex ideas of Lacan. Also the definition of this theory changes frequently during Lacan's life and eventually Lacan does not state a specific and final definition for it. Real order is the order that is placed in the boundary between imaginary order and symbolic order but its function is beyond the performance of these two orders. The point that should be considered here is that Lacan does not mean reality by real. Real order is something that is our fate and it is the most inevitable part of us. The issue that is important in real order and establishes the relationship between three orders is the issue of returning all denied desires in this stage. All losses of imaginary and symbolic orders which create desire in the subject return to him in real order. As a result the presence of vacancy is inevitable in real order and always teases the subject.

Therefore if these disturbing emotions such as alienation, schism and disappointment increases in subject or if the problems and failures put pressure on the subject the result could be a subject who prefers to live far from reality and he/she resorts to a combined world of illusion and reality to escape from these failures (Homer, 2009).

According to Lacan in every existence there is something strange and out of mind that human always ask himself or herself about its unreality, this unreality is the excess that there is in everything and as a result the thing enters symbolic area.

Psychoanalysis and Cinema

Christian Metz writing the book psychoanalysis and cinema states that he believes in spectator's identification with silver screen but does not accept its comparison with mirror stage because on the contrary to mirror movie pictures do not reflect the subject image and moreover we could not consider cinema an imaginary thing as mirror stage and on the contrary and undoubtedly semiotic symbolic elements play significant role in spectator perception of it. Being imaginary for Metz is due to this feature of cinema that movie pictures are representative of absent things and their unity are based on imagery and imagination and cinema is dependent on the unconscious affairs. Metz in the mentioned book beside absence / presence issue studies the necessity of high cognitive activity for understanding cinematic imaginary pictures and more importantly in reference to Lacanian concept of imaginary issue he describes constructing ego or self before facing Oedipus complex. From Metz opinion this condition create a fetishistic mechanism in cinema that persuade the audience like fetishistic person to deny his knowledge regarding loss and absence hidden behind cinematic pictures and enjoy the presented things. According to this cinema is a voyeuristic driver that advances the spectators from ogle provided by cinema to sadism and the desire to hurt others (Alen, 2011).

Imaginary Order of Lacan in the Play Long Journey of the Day in Night

The baby and the mother are interwoven in imaginary order and the baby does not differentiate between mother and herself/himself and everything is the manifestation of mother for him/her. The first loss is experienced

when the baby finds the difference between herself/himself and mother and since then the baby always wishes to return to that period and feel oneness with mother which is impossible. The desire to feel oneness with mother is pictured in different forms in the play 'long journey of day in night' and the audience feel it in characterization of each character. In act I of the play when Edmund talks about his illness with his mother it is obvious that he needs mother affection and he needs to feel oneness with mother again.

Edmund: I feel very bad.

Mary: I'm sure that you aren't as bad as you say. You are like children, you like to upset us.... sit to make your place comfortable.

(Edmund sits on a chair and Mary puts a pillow behind him). Well, how is it?

Edmund: it's great, thank you mom.

Mary: (kisses him kindly) what you need is that your mother takes care of you. You know even though you are grown up you are the little baby of the family in my opinion.

Since mother love is the first object of love for Edmund, it seems that he is looking for something missing which never gains it again. Yet the sense of oneness with mother in imaginary order of mind does not leave him and his imagery of mother as a first support does not conform to a mother addicted to morphine. This causes personality disorders in him and he resorts to alcohol and literature which are another desire objects in order to escape from unpleasant and bitter realities. The feeling of loss and vacancy is seen in Jimmy's behavior in another way and his anxiety is seen in successive disputes with mother. The main reason of his hatred and jealousy to Edmund is his love to mother and he considers Edmund as an obstacle to feeling oneness with mother. Mary is aware of Jimmy's jealousy and even she considers Jimmy as a cause of death of her second child Eugene.

Mary: I am sure that Jimmy did this deliberately. He was jealous to the child. He hates him.(and as Tiron wants to protest)oh I know that Jimmy was seven years old but he was not stupid. His measles was not cured, it was said to him that if he goes to child room the child will die. I could never forgive him for this.

Jimmy was always involved with the feeling of loss and insufficient attention of the family and he resorts to alcohol, gambling and brothels to escape from this devastating feeling. The feeling of hatred and jealousy to younger brother Edmund does not leave him because Edmund was his rival to snatch the former emotional status. His jealousy to Edmund is combined with a type of complex. As Lacan opines regarding this: this psychological complex is created when a child finds for the first time that she/he has sisters and brothers and the subjects that are similar to him share the family structure with him.

Jimmy: I was a corrupt model for you. Worst of all I did it deliberately.

Edmund: Shut up, I do not want to hear.

Jimmy: No you should listen, I did it deliberately to make you idle and worthless person.

Jimmy: But do not make a mistake chick, I love you more than I hate you. The fact that I say these things to you proves it.

Jimmy on one hand loves his brother but on the other hand he hates him as he considers him a partner in mother's love. And this combination of love and hatred to family members makes him harsh and unpopular person that always blames and humiliates others. This is a kind of projection in psychoanalysis that the person defends himself by accusing and misrepresenting others.

Imaginary Order of Lacan in the Play "From Behind the Glasses"

The play 'from behind the glass' pictures features of the characters which remind Lacanian subject to the audience. For instance Maryam demonstrates her thirst for returning to mirror stage and finding her ideal several times. In the first sentences of the play she talks about her unattainable dreams and she expresses that I wish I had a piece of land we build a building in our style in 200 meters of it. The building is full of windows (Radi, 2008). The word 'window' shows Maryam's enthusiasm to return to the stage that Lacan called it mirror stage because the glass reminds reflected ideal image of the subject in the mirror. In another place Maryam is described as this: she puts her forehead on the glass and with a far and fantastic tune. The words such as far and fantastic express Maryam's impossible desires of imaginary order which has

its effects on subject life forever. Therefore as Lacan states there is nostalgia for a lost paradise and Maryam as a subject hopes to achieve it in the future. Moreover along the sentences of this play we faced with items that remind us small objects:

Bamdad: Everyone has his own entertainment.

Maryam: ?

Bamdad: Some with book.

Maryam: what does the book grant man?

Bamdad: Some with child.

Maryam: You think I do not want.

Bamdad: some with collection.

Maryam: Collection? (with a vague delight). It is not a bad idea, yeah (staring at the flower pot) flower is alright. I would collect flowers of the world.

Petunias are one of the small objects that Maryam believes she can satisfy the constant desire in herself with them. But spending time for them is a useless effort that reminds her loss. Vahidnia writes in his article that flowers are nostalgia of Maryam's past (Vahidnia, 2012).

For this reason, Maryam complains of the intruder mice which there are no evidence for their presence. These mice are symbols of bitter realities of life that makes it impossible to satisfy the desire and the other wishes of the subject. From this point of view we can consider the mice as symbols of destruction.

Maryam: Mice are constantly increasing; they are chewing my whole life. Give me a mouse trap; I intend to find them alive. They chewed two of my flowers today.

On the other hand Bamdad is involved in narcissistic character of imaginary order which could be destructive for the subject. He is always criticizing social identity and family status of the others and considers himself apart from the others and the exception and the only good person (Hasanli and Haghghi, 2011). He is always longs for an ideal and desirable perfection as a result he never feels satisfied and joyful. For this reason Bamdad keeps himself away from social relationships while he is busy with reading and writing books. But he destroys himself as

well as his life and has changed into a philosophical martyr.

The Imaginary Order of Lacan in the Picture "Dudseka-den" By Kurosawa

Dudsekaden is adventure of a shanty town and a slow paced person named Rukuchan is the narrator of the story. He who repeats the word 'dudsekaden' from the train's sound like train and its driver, moves from his house and goes into shanty town and tells the story for the spectators and finally returns to his house. In this adventure the director shows the events that happen for the suffered of the society in a simple form and shows shanty town spaces, imaginary spaces and mind spaces in persons unconscious with deep point of view. This point of view is close to Lacan's theories which present imaginary order and mirror stage, symbolic and real orders in the early days of his thoughts.

Lacan in his theory of mirror stage considers cognitive habit of organism from environment as imitation of animals from environment and describes child psychology and social theory as imagination of external image of a child who sees himself in the mirror. This internal conflict and identification with the other side is evolved and flourished. Acceptance of child external image from himself and self -concept give a feeling to the person that he is able to do things which he wasn't able to do previously (Richey, 2000).

Rukuchan is a child that accepts the image of the world around by imitation and becomes narrator of the story. He lives with his mother and tries to be something that mother does not have it (Darian, 2008). It isn't desire or lust and this causes the child to pray along with mother in imaginary world. Rukuchan in this symbolic network which is beyond imagination finds the relationship between himself and the mother and the father's role is omitted and grandfather is as a guide. According to Lacan the foundation of child captivation in the trap of image is identification which is called imagination (Mafakher, 2012).

Kurosawa designs the structure of the movie according to Japan technology, tradition, language and accurate psychoanalysis of speech; people who rely on dreams to tolerate hard conditions of life. They are in the trap of images that lead to alienation which originally are alienated and outside of them. Kurosawa believes according to Lacan's comments that illusion and imagination for giving meaning to

world is threatening; the world that can be given order. But its fundamental implications are absent and hidden. The spirit of shanty town residents is a sample of big society of Japan which is pictured with all problems and traditional and modern cultural features of Japan in a small society and addresses the weaknesses and adversity of traditional and modern cultural exchange. In this movie on the contrary of other films of Kurosawa is about a symbolic network of the people who live in their imagination. The characters can leave the other world and have a place in the bigger symbolic world.

According to Lacan in psycho mind an exact and obsessive hierarchy of logic is shaped which we see its manifestation in a crazy spirit which his body is dying. In psycho the same sounds and speech is heard through imagination therefore subconscious thoughts in different forms in the film characters express what the people decide about. And Lacan believes that because language is designed and heard from media structures and the others it does not determine real identity of the person because the words do not belong to his/her inner self.

Conclusion

The Conclusion of the Play “Long Journey of the Day in the Night”

Studying the play “long journey of the day in the night” on the basis of psychoanalytic theories of Lacan and considering theatrical characters as our human subjects we conclude that the roots of behavioral abnormalities of these characters and their reaction to the world around are the way of the formation of unconscious triple orders and the conflict of these orders with each other especially imaginary and symbolic orders. Their unconscious which is shaped under the influence of the other who directs their desires become the place of eternal loss of desires which the other never allows satisfying them. Lacanian reading of this play depicts that theatrical characters resort to different object desires which show their thirst to escape from being the other and symbolic order impurity and the wish to achieve the unity of imaginary order and its enjoyment.

The Conclusion of the Play “From Behind the Glasses”

Since Akbar Radi has created his characters with mental layers, we can analyze them considering psychological ideas and opinions.

Studying the play ‘from behind the glasses according to Lacan psychoanalytic theories shows that the characters behave like subjects who are involved in the whirlpool of triple orders and they cannot escape from its dreadful results. Because the sense of loss and alienation accompany them from early stages of shaping psyche and continue forever. On the other hand resorting to small objects not only subside their desires but always reminds them loss and deficit because according to Lacan desire and loss is interwoven. The problems of Bamdad and Maryam make the situation more difficult for them, for this reason they resort to life far from reality. Akbar Radi in his work creates a world combined of imagination and reality for the characters that can be considered as Lacanian world, the world in which disappointed subjects escape from life reality and watch the brutal course of time from behind the glass.

The Conclusion of the Movie “Dudeska-Den” By Kurosawa

Kurosawa always pictures imagination and illusion in realities, pains and pleasures. He shows the imageries of different characters in real life and small society. He shows the expression of covert and overt effects of the movie in the contrast of fantasy and reality in all spaces of the movie.

References

- Ahmadzade, SH. (2012). Three orders of the life of human beings. *Shahre ketab*, Tehran, lecture.
- Allen miller, J. (2011). A and a in clinical structures, translated by Vaghfipoor, SH. In the hill of broken images: articles about psychoanalysis, Tehran: Cheshme publication
- Evans, D. (2003). *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, New York: Routledge.
- Habib, R. (2005). *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. London: Blackwell.
- Hasanli, K. and Haghghi, SH. (2011). Symbolism of Akbar Radin in the contrast of two women in play ‘ from behind the glass ’, *literary criticism*, 16, 55-84
- Homer, SH. (2009). Jacques Lacan, translated by Jafari, A & Mousavi, S, Tehran: Ghoghnoos

Lider, D. (1999). Step by step with modern philosophy of Lacan, translated by Parhizgar, M. Nazar publication: Tehran

Mafakher, F. (2012). Architecture principles and standards with the approach of behavioral pattern of slow paced children and adolescents, Architecture PHD thesis, Islamic Azad university Science and research branch, College of Arts and Architecture, Tehran

Owens, D. (2008). Preliminary dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalytic terms, translated by Rafi, M & Parsa, M, second edition, Tehran: Gameno.

Radi, A. (2008). From behind the glass. Fourth edition. Tehran : ghatre publication

Richie, D (2000). Akira Kurosawa films, translated by Islami, M & Montazeri, H, Ney publication, Tehran

Vahidnia, A. (2012). Studying the language of 'from behind the glasses'. Angha , H: knowing Radi , Tehran: Ghatre publication

Zamiran, M. (2006). Dynasty scholarship of philosophy, philosophical thoughts at the end of second millennium. Tehran: Hermes