

The Secret Life of Objects.

Topography of a children's room in the fantastic cinema of the 1980s

The aim of the dissertation is to determine the topography of a children's room – a space regularly depicted in the fantastic cinema of the 1980s. The bedrooms of protagonists in the American horror, fantasy and science fiction in the era of Reaganism serve as spheres of paranormal and miraculous phenomena. The author demonstrates that the interior spaces in which children confront otherness, experience transgression, dream nightmares and imagine daydreams should be understood as the manifestations of children's gaze in the popular cinema. The particular, non-adult way of seeing finds its counterpart in the heterogenous construction of the domestic space, whose ontological status is unclear and which is full of gaps and cracks. The special emphasis is placed on children's bedrooms (interiors strongly related to the internal life of their tenants). The attempt to analyze the fantastic cinema of the 1980s in terms of child's gaze is a novel one. So far, the dominant interpretations in film studies and public debate tended to see in the popular cinema of Ronald Reagan's era a reflection of the neoconservative ideology.

The first part of the work is devoted to the conceptualization of the most important categories for the rest of the dissertation, such as: children's cinema, children's room, "weak resistance", children's daydream, topography, children's gaze (in other words: children's perspective, children's point of view). In addition, the first part invokes the category of fantasy and revises the category of New Adventure Cinema. Two other chapters of the first part are focused on the contexts related to children's bedrooms of the 1980s: they contain an outline of the European children's cinema of the decade and a sociological draft on the issue of the pre-adult consumerism in America under Reagan presidency. The next three parts focus on the analysis of concrete film exemplifications. In the second part, the author outlines the topography in Steven Spielberg's "Suburban Trilogy". In the third part, she explores those spaces of children's room which are manifested in films dealing with sleepy wanderings and night anxieties. The fourth part is devoted to the analysis of the role that toys and other objects play in unusual practices by children in the films of the 1980s. In the conclusion of the dissertation, the author indicates which areas of the contemporary cinema of the last decade could be regarded as an extension of the 1980s children's fantastic film.