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FILM THERAPEUTICS: A POSSIBILITY OF ASSISTANCE

Terapéutica fílmica: una posibilidad de asistencia

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Abstract:

There is a notable activity of the cinema within the medical training processes promoting the development of multiple inherent skills. In this study, we present a proposal for film therapy in the complementary context of current medical care. We review series of aforetime, broadcast around the 70's, consisting of short chapters (~ 25 minutes). Series like *Candy Candy*, *Marco*, or *Heidi*, have marked differences from modern series, and the potential to be therapeutic instruments in themselves due to: i) presenting specific characters (a boy or a girl in particular, in a specific context), ii) the existence of an argumentative story (which is followed chapter by chapter, which forces the child to recreate a story longitudinally), iii) the approach to existential problems (the lives of the characters force them to live limit situations, usually linked to the historical conditions of their time); and iv) the experience of experiences of a moral nature (involving a discussion of good and bad). These could link the child and the father, since each chapter represents an activity of daily life, exempting them from the mass transmission of series without educational (therapeutic) content.

Keywords: cinema; therapy; series; neurology; parental assistance.

Resumen:

Existe una remarcada actividad del cine dentro de los procesos de formación médica promoviendo el desarrollo de múltiples habilidades inherentes. En este estudio, presentamos una propuesta de terapéutica fílmica en el contexto complementario de la asistencia médica actual. Revisamos series de antaño, emitidas alrededor de los 70's, que constan de capítulos cortos (~25 minutos). Series como *Candy Candy*, *Marco*, o *Heidi*, tienen marcadas diferencias de las series contemporáneas, y el potencial de ser instrumentos terapéuticos en sí mismos debido a: i) presentar

personajes concretos (un niño o una niña en particular, en un contexto específico), ii) la existencia de un relato argumentativo (que se sigue capítulo a capítulo, lo cual obliga a que el niño o niña recree longitudinalmente una historia), iii) el abordaje de problemas existenciales (la vida de los personajes los obligan a vivir situaciones límite, usualmente ligados a las condiciones históricas de su tiempo); y iv) la vivencia de experiencias de orden moral (que suponen una discusión sobre lo bueno y lo malo). Estos podrían vincular al niño y el padre, ya que cada capítulo representa una actividad de la vida diaria, eximiendo a estos de la transmisión masiva de series sin contenidos educativos (terapéuticos).

Palabras Clave: cine; terapia; series; neurología; asistencia parental.

Introduction

It would be useless to highlight the value of the Journal of Medical Movies. Useless because it does not need, from here, to be highlighted: it shines alone. It does not require praise or congratulations. But thanks. For those of us who see in the cinema a great artifact as a constructor of imaginaries, then, having this space specifically linked to medicine represents a place to inhabit without counting time. It is true that film can help medical students, and medical professionals, to improve their critical, clinical and insight skills¹. However, there is one more fact that has not yet been explored: the cinema as a therapeutic tool in itself. Not just the cinema, to learn some aspect of medicine, but the cinema as medicine itself. Cinema as a medical tool in the fight against pain, suffering, and death. Cinema as a therapeutic instrument, in medicine: a filmic therapy.

Here, we present a proposal for film therapy in the complementary context of current medical care, discussing the characteristics of animated programs, how they can impact patients, and discussing their progressive changes up to the current technological age.

Our Field of Work

We are going to specify the field from which we are orienting ourselves. In modern times, one of the great social dilemmas is the one experienced

within families. Especially when there are infants and children; especially when fathers and mothers, subjected to the inclemency of competitive modernity, must spend a lot of time in the workplace, leaving in the background (still regretfully) the formative exercise of fatherhood and motherhood.

For those of us who treat families with infants and children, practical evidence always pops up: many parents live with electronic communication devices (for example: a television, a cell phone, a tablet, etc.). Fathers/mothers sometimes find use of these devices, but mostly: they are subjected to its onslaught. In the particular case: almost everyone, if not: everyone, infants and children, watches television, in some cases they watch movies, but more frequently they watch (one or several hours a day) animated programs.

Children ages 2-5 and 6-8 have previously been reported to consume ~35 and ~28 hours of television per week respectively². And although the negative effects are striking, television has also been attributed arguably positive effects on the development of child users^{3,4}. This cumulative impact of television can be summarized, for example, in the role of advertising so that the intake of fast food has increased in children⁵.

When we see a child eating in a restaurant in front of a cell phone, the first thing we feel is a mistake. But more precisely we should see in this situation the manifestation of a defeat: the electronic communication device has won a battle

in the active execution of paternity / maternity. In other words, technologies, technological devices such as mobile phones, have become an organic extension, a perennial prosthesis, an almost intrinsic structure of our body⁶.

But here we do not want to refer only to restaurants, but above all to homes: where privacy is diversified to unsuspected limits (and that are only glimpsed with the exercise of a clinical practice: seeing, treating patients). Cartoons are described as one of the most interesting and entertaining modes of conveying animated messages.

Repeat Candy

On the other hand, for those of us who have been on earth for a few decades, a singular fact assails us: contemporary animated programs are far from the animated programs of yesteryear. We say «yesteryear» without this bringing us any aftertaste of manners or conservatism. Currently an animated program can be characterized as: a 30- or 60-minute session, peppered with a lot of commercial advertising. Or is it 30 or 60 minutes of propaganda peppered with animated shows?

Whatever: contemporary animated programs enjoy the intensity of the image, the none-historicity of the plot, the extreme fiction of the characters (full tendency towards caricatures), among other things^{7,8}. All this makes an infant or child who watches a contemporary animated program consume blurb, in other hand, and on the other, be seduced by the eroticism of «cartoons». Usually, each program is a program in itself, each session, rather: one session begins and ends, and the next day another session begins and ends. The only thing that survives is the program, but not the plot (the plot is defined in each chapter, in each broadcast, in each session that begins and ends in a sea of propaganda).

The most essential difference from cartoons of yesteryear is that modern characters are essentially abstract (in contrast to ancient characters who sought to be quite concrete: think «Courage, the

Cowardly Dog» and in «Remi» –who has a cow for a companion–, in «Heidy» –who lives with the calves–, in «Angel» –who travels the world with one purpose: to find a seven-colored flower–) . On the other hand, contemporary animated series do not require that the child follow the sequence of the sessions. There is no sequence, there is no series, and the chapters are usually independent chapters: this makes it easier for any viewer to «get hooked» on the animated program at any time during its broadcast, and not need to: «know the story» or «understand the narrative plot.»

Many parents watch these shows with their children, get to know them, even have fun and laugh watching them. However, little or nothing can later talk with their sons or daughters about it. They can spend half an hour being shaken by the same stimulus, but after this «exposition» ends, nothing remains to allow the dialogical relationship of fatherhood / motherhood.

Old Series

As far as possible, current fragmental television has tried, joining efforts with various interests, to demolish what little that progressively diminished on media quality. If the quality imaginary of the series of yesteryear is rescued, we can refer, as we do below, the representations of each series and its substructures, which attributed affection to us (and they still impute us) and an established connection not only with the transmitted series , if not with the group concerned with the plot of each television story: We will describe below, the essential components of each series that constitute its argument and its essence, represented below in images.

Remi

Nobody's Boy: Remi/ Ie Naki Ko (1977), Ozamu Dezaki.

In 1977 Remi, Nobody's Child, was created by TMS Entertainment, I base its argument on the

French novel *Sans Famille* by H. Marlot, which had more than fifty episodes that were 25 minutes long each. This series was broadcast by Nippon Television for Japan (broadcast period: October 2, 1977 - October 1, 1978).



Figure 1. Infogram about Remi, *Nobody's Child*

This anime develops the story of Remi Milligan, an English boy who was kidnapped and later imposed on the Barberin in Chavanon. Stepfather Mr. Vitalis, a busker with a history of opera failure, enables Remi to work as an assistant and musician. During this work, Remi develops a lot of appreciation for the animals they use in their performances, such as Capi (a dog) and Corazón Alegre (a monkey). Winter plays an important role as part of the plot as it causes the death of Mr. Vitalis and *Corazón Alegre* due to the snowstorm and hypothermia, respectively. Another important event is Mattia, an Italian boy, musician and rebel who opposes Remi and who accompanies him on new adventures as musicians. The main one is the search for his mother in England.

Professional development develops towards the end of the anime. This impressionist series highlights European drama and exposes the viewer

to a string of events with human value, which Remi tries to overcome in search of his well-being.

Heidi

Heidi, Girl of the Alps / Arupusu no Shōjo Haiji (1974) / Isao Takahata

The Japanese animation studio «Zuiyo Eizo» (currently Nippon Animation) and, in conjunction with the German channel Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, premiered on January 5, 1974 the children's series: «Heidi, the girl from the Alps». The story is set in the 19th century, long before the First World War (1914) and even before the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871); It is inspired by the homonymous book by Johanna Spyri (1827-1901), a work based on her childhood.



Figure 2. Infogram about Heidi, the girl from the Alps

Anne

Anne of Green Gables / Akage no An (1979) / Isao Takahata

Anne of Green Gables, Anne of Green Gables or Anne of Green Gables is a book written by

Canadian Lucy Maud Montgomery and published for the first time in 1908. The work tells the life of Anne Shirley, an orphan girl who thanks to her imaginative and awakened character manages to dazzle all the inhabitants of Avonlea, the small fictional fishing village on Prince Edward Island where the story takes place at the beginning of the 20th century.

For this reason, as soon as we immerse ourselves in history, we are involved in a context where it is not possible to perceive any industrial technology. And in this way, we approach a fantastic series that, in turn, is so alien to the fantastic, since the protagonists incarnate us as they teach us how one person can influence the life of another so much. Thus, Heidi exposes joy, innocence, freedom. Clara Sesemann represents the effort, the defenseless. The grandfather, Tobias Hessen, loneliness. Throughout this framework of war and union, the characters show different types of coexistence, gratitude, fun, irony and detail; and in contrast, selfishness, the unexpected, sadness, and shocking despair at being deprived of their source or concept of happiness.



Figure 3. Infogram about Ana de las Tejas Verdes

The rest of the book recounts her education in school, where she soon excelled in her studies, her literary ambitions and her friendships with other girls such as Diana Barry (her best friend), Jane Andrew or Ruby Gillis, and her manifest rivalry with Gilbert Blythe, a boy three years older than Ana who dared to make a joke about her hair and acquired the hatred of the redhead in return, although he repeatedly asked her forgiveness. The book also follows Ana's misadventures in peaceful Avonlea. These include her games with her group of friends (Diana, Jane and Ruby), her rivalries with the Pye sisters (Gertie and Josie), and her domestic mistakes, such as dyeing her hair green, among others.

Marco

Marco, from the Apennines to the Andes / Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri (1976)/ Isao Takahata

Marco, from the Apennines to the Andes is a short account of included in the novel *Corazón* by Edmundo de Amicis published in 1886, which describes the inclement vision of Italian emigration to America, between the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

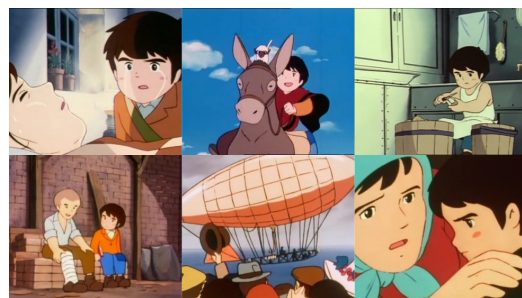


Figure 4. Infogram about Marco, from the Apennines to the Andes

This 52-episode anime was first aired in 1976 in Japan. The series narrates the life of a family from Genoa, Italy, made up of a mother with two children, the youngest and youngest named

Marco. The story begins when the mother is forced to travel to Argentina to get a job and provide financial solvency and a better quality of life for her two children who reside in Genoa. The brothers receive correspondence from the mother, from America, until gradually they have not heard from her in a period of two years.

Because of this, 13-year-old Marco decides to face a long and complicated journey from Italy to Argentina in order to find his mother. Marco, accompanied by Pepino his monkey, begins his journey that includes unique experiences, the discovery of characters with different characteristics demonstrating the differences between customs and realities of each season of the trip. Then in Argentina, he travels through various cities including Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Tucumán to find his mother.



Figure 5. Infogram about Candy Candy.

Candy Candy

Candy Candy/ Hiroshi Shidara (1975)

More than four decades ago, the Japanese study *Toei Animation* premiere *Candy Candy*, broadcast for the first time in October 1976, being one of the main and Cosmopolitan animes that for decades has conquered children with its hundred episodes of 25 minutes each.

This anime tells in 115 chapters the story of an orphan girl named Candy, found on a snowy day at the beginning of the 20th century. It's in the orphanage *Ponys home* near Lake Michigan, where she grows up with her great friend Annie, orphaned and found the same day as her. They become inseparable friends until the day they decide to adopt Candy, who without hesitation and remembering the promise of inseparableness with Annie refuses to be adopted. However, the adoptive parents in this situation decide to adopt Annie, who unlike Candy accepts without hesitation and leaves the orphanage.

At 12 years old, Candy is adopted by the Leagan family to accompany her two children Elisa and Neil, who treated her very badly, even turning her into a servant, they even accused her of robbery and tried to send her to a family farm. She went to Mexico to work, but was saved by William Adley who was Candy's adoptive father. Candy lives with a pet (Klin) who sustains her sadness before the *go and come* that life offers you. Although Candy's life unfolds between misery and the advent of existential problems, at the same time she is surrounded by people who held her in high esteem like Archie, Anthony, or Terry.

The rebel novice

Torappu ikka monogatari/ Kōzō Kusuba, Kōzō Kuzuha (1991)

In 1991 it was issued for the first time in Japanese language *The rebellious novice*. A series created by Nipón Animation. Also known as *Smiles and tears*, this series tells the story of an 18-year-old girl named María who wishes to be a nun and dedicates all her years of life to God, however,

her energetic and fun personality is noticed by the Mother Superior. For this reason, she is taken for a time to the house of Baron Von Trapp as the governess of his children. This widowed man and in that house 25 governesses had been hired, all of whom were rejected by their children; however, María with her joy, poetry and song managed to win the respect and hearts of the family members.

Her attempt to compromise with Baron Von Trapp is threatened by World War II and the control taken by the Nazis causes the family to migrate to Switzerland. The 40 Episodes of this series begin with the chapter *I want to be a nun* and he ends up with the last *Goodbye homeland*.

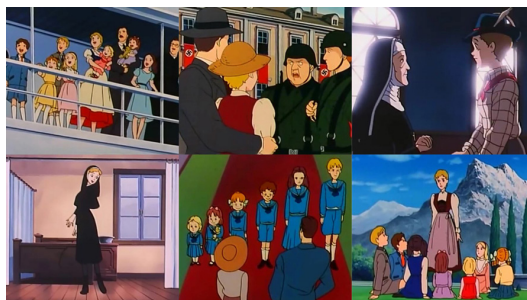


Figure 6. Infogram about the rebel novice

Animated Cinema of Old

In this regard we are going to specify that cinema (in particular the animated series of the 70s and 80s, which we call «of yesteryear», almost unanimously elaborated as first works of those that later (until today) would become in the great representatives of Japanese animated cinema. For example: Isao Takahata, who later became one of the emblems of the *studio Ghibli* (Tokyo, Japan), along with Hayao Miyasaki. What we are saying is that these series (for example: «Heidi, the girl from the Alps», «Marco», «The Rebel Novice», «Candy Candy», «Remi», «Annie, the one from the Green Gables», among others) represent an educational tool (which can more simply facilitate the roles of

fatherhood and motherhood) essentially, because unlike contemporary animated series, they show the following 4 momentous events, without saying that these are the only ones:

- Specific characters (a particular boy or girl, in a specific context);
- There is an argumentative story (there is a plot that must be followed chapter by chapter, which forces the child to longitudinally recreate a story);
- Existential problems are addressed (the lives of the characters - specific - force them to live extreme situations, usually linked to the historical conditions of their time); and
- Usually the character (a boy or girl) lives a series of experiences of a moral nature (which involve a discussion about the good and the bad).

We consider that these elements (without the need to affirm that they are the only ones that exhaust the subject) allow us to clearly differentiate the experience of a boy or girl who watches, for example: «Marco» and that for the same reason he must recreate in his «mind» (we would rather say: in his conscience) a whole story full of momentous vicissitudes, and the experience of the same boy or girl who watches, for example: «The Paw Patrol», «Rick and Morty» or «Gravity Falls». It seems that the evolution of «children's» animated series has followed a course: sacrificing the aspiration to reflect a real problem in order to provide (to the propaganda) a session of «adventure», fun, laughter, mockery, caricature, and superficiality.

Do you really think that a boy or girl watching «Gravity Falls» manages to learn about the «Mysteries in Latin America» (remember that the full title of the series is: «Gravity Falls: A Summer of Mysteries in Latin America»)?

The worst is not here, for those of us who have patients who are specific people: it jumps out that contemporary animated series are essentially a space to be seen by children and that they can also

be seen by parents, but that after seeing them: the construction of paternity / maternity is not promoted at all, although it has been highlighted to be moving and intelligent^{9,10}.

Attention, with this we do not want to be conservative, we do not want to affirm «the old series were better», we do not want to criticize television, we are not even saying that cinema should be utilitarian or that fatherhood / motherhood should be subjected to television now other electronic communication devices (an application or YouTube on any cell phone, for example).

We are only highlighting that when creating fatherhood / motherhood, at least two subjects are required: one in the position of adulthood and the other in the position of childhood, and that the modern time of post-capitalist globalization, or as they say: late capitalism, has subdued the time of people who as adults go through parenthood / motherhood. And when that time finally manages to establish itself: it is parasitized by a television set, or more modernly, by a simple cell phone or Tablet. That it is said everywhere that a boy or girl should not have a Tablet and that this proposal is categorically affirmed does not stop being an aspiration, what in the world there are boys and girls who do not need to have a cell phone or Tablet or a television: if they don't have it, parents do (they make an effort to do so, it is a sign of reputation to have a good cell phone, of competitive success, etc.). We are not going to fall into the rhetoric of repeating: the cell phone and the Tablet are «bad», we are not going to waste time like that, more specifically we want to highlight that in the 70s onwards, animated series were produced, radically different from series contemporary animated. Faced with the excess of visual and auditory stimulation of contemporary animation, there are classic images (inspired by the manga developed by Tezuka), with works of a deep human character (too human), and that can promote conversation and dialogue between parents / mothers e More specifically, we want to

highlight that in the 70s onwards, animated series were produced, radically different from contemporary animated series. Faced with the excess of visual and auditory stimulation of contemporary animation, there are classic images (inspired by the manga developed by Tezuka), with works of a deep human character (too human), and that can promote conversation and dialogue between parents / mothers e More specifically, we want to highlight that in the 70s onwards, animated series were produced, radically different from contemporary animated series. Faced with the excess of visual and auditory stimulation of contemporary animation, there are classic images (inspired by the manga developed by Tezuka), with works of a deep human character (too human), and that can promote conversation and dialogue between parents / mothers e children (boys and girls), especially now that there is a culture of promotion of Japanese culture and anime¹¹.

- However, the current information society is avoiding interpersonal relationships, which are mainly reflected in the family. The permanent extraversion with technology is dramatically breaking into the social environment, and this is promoting that children are more willing towards technological devices, making it difficult to interact with other subjects. Parents must first tackle this contingency with peripheral tools to technology or technology with another focus of use *a priori*. Recently, it has been shown that parents are more likely to interact with their children under 12 years of age through anime¹². So, animes represent a novel strategy of interaction, in a greater sense than just the contemplation of cartoons for the purposes of education of values and society, as previously indicated¹³.
- In this sense, cinema, in particular: animated series are therapeutic instruments in themselves. They not only serve to learn medicine, but they also serve to do with them what medicine, we believe, intends from its deepest bosom: to rework suffering.

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