Perspektiv på historiefilmslitteracitet

En didaktisk studie av gymnasieelevers historiska och emotionella meningsskapande i mötet med spelfilm

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Akademisk avhandling

som med vederbörligt tillstånd av Rektor vid Umeå universitet för avläggande av filosofi doktorsexamen framläggs till offentligt försvar i hörsal F, Humanisthuset, fredagen den 29 september, kl. 13:00. Avhandlingen kommer att försvaras på svenska.

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The present study addresses what happens when historical feature film is used in history education. The purpose of this thesis is to develop new knowledge of historical film literacy through a study of the feature film’s didactical potential in an educational context. This is carried out through an analysis of the historical meaning making among upper secondary students when viewing historical feature films, and special attention is paid to the importance of emotions in the students’ meaning making through historical feature film. A focus of the study is the didactical dilemma, previously addressed in historical film research, that arises in the use of feature film in history or social studies education, in relation to educational context, film experience, and historical understanding.

The present thesis is an independent continuation of my licentiate thesis History as Fiction (2014). The empirical material consists of interviews with students and teachers from two upper secondary schools in Sweden, as well as documentation from students’ assessments and selected scenes from feature films experienced by the students as they were used in history class.

The theoretical framework for the study takes an interdisciplinary approach. It is based on Jörn Rüsens understanding of historical meaning and historical culture, as well as on transaction theory described by John Dewey and Louise M. Rosenblatt. Film reception theory is equally important, represented by theories from David Bordwell and Carl Plantinga.

The main research question focused on how the concept of historical film literacy could be developed theoretically. Historical film literacy is understood in this thesis as an advanced consciousness of how historical meaning making is created through the individual’s transaction with film’s narration in a specific context, and how meaning making ideally links historical disciplinary thinking with practical orientation in life. The core of theoretically developed historical film literacy is an understanding of the individual’s emotional and aesthetic experience of historical feature film, and elaborated theoretical knowledge about the close relationship between the affective response and the more distanced cognitive activity during and after watching a film. Also crucial for historical film literacy is an understanding of the historical film’s representation of the past as a conflation of facts and fiction. The knowledge of history that students’ gain from historical feature film should be constructed in a synthesis of an aesthetic and an efferent stance in the transaction process. This is because the feature film has the capacity to stimulate both a feeling of empathy and of nearness in the viewer as well as a movement of the viewer away from the narration and towards more distanced cognition. This movement helps the viewer to analyze and interpret the historical meaning making from a critical perspective, when the experience of the feature film is transformed to a reflected experience.

**Keywords:** Historical film literacy, History education, History didactics, Feature film, Historical meaning making, Historical culture, Aesthetic experience, Transaction, Upper secondary school.