

The horror image analysis of the movie *The Cry*

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Abstract: The 2016 film *The Cry* directed by Hong-jin Na did not directly show ghost characters, but added other horror elements, cleverly showing the horror image and arousing a deep sense of fear. Therefore, in this paper, the horror images in the movie are studied to understand how the movie *The Cry* conveys fear to the audience without the horror ghost characters.

Key words: horror movies; characters; metaphor and symbols

1 Introduction

Compared to other horror films that focus on visual horror, *The Cry* combines psychological horror and visual horror through its character features and stage installations. Instead of trying to present visual horror, *The Cry* focuses more on subtly and indirectly conveying psychological and spiritual fear. This psychological fear may not be very strong at first, but even at the end of the film, the audience constantly recalls and thinks about the scenes of events in the film. When this psychological and spiritual fear stays for a long time, the impact on the audience is greater than imagined.

2 The definition of a horror movie

"Among the many genres, horror is one of the more complex genres. But no matter how complicated the theme is, it is stained with the word dark". ".....Horror can obsess and entertain audience, as well as edify and purify audience, effectively focusing on the human life dark, taboo, strange and panic events, involving the most important fear in our life: our nightmare, our vulnerability, our alienation, fear of death and the unknown, the loss of self nature and sexual fears, etc [1]." Horror films got vigorous development during the industrial period. The definition of horror film can be summarized for the use of ghosts, monsters and other supernatural quantity to create horror atmosphere. The goal of horror film is to evoke fear in the audience and leave a lasting impression through the use of audio-visual language. Therefore, in horror movies, we can often see zombies, ghosts, werewolves, vampires, psychopathy and other characters. From early *North* to Hitchcock *Psychiatric* and now to the present numerous horror movies, horror film has developed into a mature genre, that is recognized and welcomed by audiences. In addition to arousing fear of the audience, horror film can also satisfy the curiosity of the audience. The existence of the unknown is full of curiosity, but also full of fear, therefore, the horror film has become a medium for humans to glimpse the unknown. By watching horror movies, the audience can complete a virtual psychological experience of horror, and complete the challenge of fear. In the process of watching horror movies, the audience completes the challenge of scary things and overcome the horrible things, obtains psychological satisfaction. When people watch horror movies, their reaction is also in this state, presenting a state of high tension and overly excited

state, and their psychological pressure is fully relieved [2].

The core of the horror film is to shape the heinous horror images, but due to the social and cultural differences, there are many differences in the choice of monster shaping between the East and the West. Most of the Western monsters are of different shapes, scary and frightening shapes. However, most of the Eastern horror images have no concrete form, but are the soul and ghosts of abstract existence. Different from the concrete visual horror of the Western horror images, the Eastern horror images mostly give the audience psychological fear.

The charm of the horror film lies in allowing the audience to sit safely in the cinema, experiencing horror and fear beyond the life. Even if they feel threatened during the viewing process, it will not affect the safety of their life. Therefore, audience will feel the charm of different movies. Horror film can not only provide psychological stimulation and visual impact, but also can let the audience reflect on real life, vent life pressure. In a word, the horror films not only bring fear to the audience, but also reflect human thinking on society and life, conveying the philosophical thinking of humanity and society.

3 An overview of the film *The Cry*

The film is directed by the famous Korean director Hong-jin Na. As a famous Korean suspense film director, he won many awards in his early years in *The Pursuit* and *The Yellow Sea*. In 2016, he won the Best Director award at the Blue Dragon Film Festival for his role in *The Cry*. South Korean veteran director Lam Kwon-taek highly praised the film: "I'm happy to spend \$13 to have my eyes and ears enjoy the gorgeous scene [3]." Hong-jin Na once said in an interview that he made the film *The Cry* because as a devout Christian, after experiencing the shock and pain of the death of his best friend, he found that Christianity could not explain and relieve his pain and confusion, so he turned his eyes to Buddhism and other religions and tried to find the answer he wanted. In this context, *The Cry* was created.

The Cry tells the story of a mysterious stranger in a small town that local residents describe as "Japs". After the mysterious person settled down in the forest not far from the small town, serial poisoning and murder incident happened in the small town, and Zhong Jiu, who served as small town police, was also involved. While searching for clues, Zhong Jiu discovered that the spearhead of the event pointed to the mysterious outsider. After dealing with a series of cases, Zhong Jiu discovered the hiding place of outsiders, also discovered that his daughter was implicated at the same time. So he had no clue and found the famous shaman--Sunlight Mage, and tried to relieve his daughter's pain through the practice of shaman mages. But in the end, the power of evil covered the whole town, and no one could escape the devil.

4 Analysis of the *The Cry*

Most horror will choose to portray a frightening and scary image to convey fear, but *The Cry*, instead of portraying a scary ghost image in the movie, pays more attention to the horror atmosphere and characters, and through the development of the plot, the scary atmosphere spreads and enters into the hearts of the viewers, causing them to feel fear.

4.1 The coexistence of human and demon character images

The character design in horror films can be divided into two kinds, one is different from ordinary people, the other is no different from ordinary people. In horror films, we can often see characters different from human beings, such as vampires, werewolves, demons, etc. They bring visual horror stimulation and psychological fear to the audience through their terrible appearance and extraordinary ability. The second kind of characters are mostly hidden fear carriers. Their appearance is ordinary, but they can create a horror atmosphere through the development of the plot or the plot of the play, and bring a different horror experience to the audience. The characters in *The Cry* combine the above two images to create the biggest horror characters in the film -- the Japanese. When the Japanese first came to the town, his appearance was the same as ordinary people, and he looked like a stranger with a little mystery. People's curiosity about him was more focused

on his origin and identity. But in fact, this foreigner is not a simple human. With the development of the film, some villagers witnessed the Japanese eating raw venison in the forest. In this scene, the Japanese are naked, with red eyes and blood eating raw meat. In the *Bible*, when Adam and Eve stole the apple, they developed a sense of shame, unable to accept their naked bodies, so they produced clothes, which became a symbol of human civilization. That day he took off his clothes, naked standing in the forest. In fact, he also took off the human coat, revealing the nature of non-human, which has the same metaphorical function as raw meat. One of the signs of human farewell to primitive life is the use of fire. Through the use of fire, human beings began to eat cooked food and ended the life of eating raw meat and drinking blood. Similarly, in the film, the Japanese chose to eat raw venison, which not only brought a bloody visual impact to the audience, but also implied the barbaric and primitive character image of the Japanese. The inhuman image of the Japanese was completed, leaving the impression of horror on the audience. It is in the second half of the film that the Japanese really shows the demon image when he manipulated the villagers and dueled with the shaman, and his true face is shown, which is particularly unique compared to the traditional horror film. *The Cry* gives the audience an indirect sense of horror through the shaping of characters. The film pays more attention to the rendering of the horror atmosphere and shapes the image of people extreme fear through details.

4.2 Character costumes and horror atmosphere

The costume in the film plays an important role in telling the film, shaping the characters and promoting the development of the plot. Through the clothing, we can see the characteristics of the characters, and the clothing plays a role in the shaping of the characters. Sometimes the costume can not only shape the characters, but also convey the background of the film and render the atmosphere of the story [3].

4.2.1 Unknown woman

The appearance of the unknown woman in the film is always haunted, wearing a white dress, which is very in line with the traditional concept of the image of Eastern ghosts. Although the woman in white appears in the camera as a human image, she often holds the belongings of the dead, and it is difficult for the audience not to connect her with the serial murder cases, so at the beginning of the film, many audiences think that the woman in white is the initiator of everything, and the horror image of the woman in white gradually enters the hearts of the audience. The director's design of the white woman is actually driven by ulterior motives. South Korea claims to be the white nation, using white to symbolize nobility, elegance. Therefore, the woman in white in the film is the representative of South Korea. In the later plot, we can see the woman in white wearing a military uniform appearing in front of the camera. Combined with the history of Korean aggression and colonization, it is not difficult for us to understand the director's intention.

4.2.2 The Japanese and the shaman

The Japanese wears only a pair of underwear, which is a traditional Japanese underwear, and the choice is full of metaphors. South Korea was previously invaded and colonized by Japan, and the Japanese in the film also caused a bloody storm in the town, killing the villagers wantonly. Through this metaphor, the director expressed his anger at history, exposed the scars left by the Japanese army in Korean history, and criticized the actions of the Japanese invaders.

The shaman in the film has the same costume as the Japanese. In the film, Sunlight is a shaman invited by Zhong Jiu to exorcise demons. The shaman religion is a local religion in South Korea and is one of the representative religions in South Korean. Taking the Japanese and shaman as an example, they all take a camera and react very much the same when they go fishing. The most similar thing is the clothes. When Sunlight took off his pants in the room, he was wearing the same Japanese underwear, implying that he and the Japanese are actually together. In the back of the plot we can also find that although Sunlight is the helper invited by Zhong Jiu, but he and the Japanese formed a cooperative relationship, jointly

set off the killing of the town. It can also be analyzed from a historical perspective. As we have said before, the Japanese symbolizes the history of the invasion of Korea, and Sunlight, who cooperates with the Japanese, is like the traitor during the war. Although Sunlight is ostensibly Korean and represents the local religion in South Korea. But in his clothes, he wears Japanese underwear, expressing the director's anger at the traitors in history [4].

4.3 Props with horror color

In addition to the role of horror setting, horror also often sets some metaphor things, bringing psychological suggestion to the audience in their process of watching the movie, subtle influencing the audience's mood and psychology, which set off film atmosphere, increase the depth of the film, and enrich the connotation of the film. Therefore, horror setting cannot be ignored.

4.3.1 Snapdragon

Snapdragon was originally a plant, but when it withered, its brown petals looked like a skeleton, echoing the film's killing and blood, thus becoming an important prop in the film. Snapdragon appears twice in the movie, the first time by hanging on a post in the victim's home, and the second time by appearing in front of Zhong Jiu's house. From the plot, we can see that the snapdragon is a ghost hunting trap. When Zhong Jiu crosses the gold rope and falls into the trap to destroy the ghost hunting ceremony, the fresh snapdragon will wither and become a dry skeleton, killing and blood will be staged again. Therefore, the setting of snapdragon brings the threat and fear of death to the audience, and plays an important role in creating the horror atmosphere of the film.

4.3.2 Crows

Crows have long been regarded as an unlucky symbol due to their color and the habit of eating carrion in East Asian culture, and disasters can occur if they fly into the house. In Korean culture, the crow also represents darkness and doom, and is a symbol of death. Crow also appears in *The Cry*, and the meaning of crow in the movie is similar to the traditional meaning, and also represents the arrival of death. In the movie, Zhong Jiu finds a dead crow in his own sauce jar, which indicates the imminent death and disaster of Zhong Jiu family, creating an evil atmosphere and indirectly conveying the message of terror. It is also reminiscent of the relationship between the dead crow found in the hero's home and the crow that appeared in the home of outsiders before, so that the audience naturally connects outsiders with the dead crow. It can be confirmed that outsiders use the crow to confuse the soul of the villagers, and use the soul of the crow to do evil. The dead crow is an ominous omen, which is already known to most audiences, so after seeing the symbol in the movie, the audience will feel the curse of the dead crow more truly, just as they have experienced, and their fear of the evil character will increase.

4.3.3 Camera

When the camera was first introduced to the East Asian countries, people did not accept this new thing. The culture of East Asian countries divides people into body and soul. At that time, people believed that the camera can absorb the human soul and imprison the spirit. In the later period, people believed that the camera can reflect the essence through the body, with the similar function of a magic mirror, and the camera in *The Cry* also has the same meaning and function. In the movie, the Christian believers hold a camera and see the process of demonization of the Japanese in the cave. The camera here reflects the essence of his demons. During the Japanese demonization process, the director also deliberately created tension and terror. In this process, the director did not allow the devil directly appear in the camera, but instead had the Christian believers raise the camera again and again, showing the whole process of demonizing the Japanese in the flash lens again and again, which fully mobilized the tension of the audience.

5 Conclusion

Horror movies do not only use the psychological horror, but combine psychological horror with visual horror. For visual horror, it can be directly used to express the horror scenes, but it can also indirectly convey the psychological horror information. In *The Cry*, these two techniques of horror are used together to bring the terror to the extreme. To this end, this paper analyzes the characters in the Korean horror film. The characteristics of the horror images in *The Cry* are summarized below. *The Cry* is not a traditional horror movie. Different from traditional horror films, which usually bring fear to the audience through ghost characters and bloody horror scenes or sound effects, in addition to the visual horror scenes, *The Cry* also indirectly conveys the dark atmosphere and psychological fear to the audience through the appearance of various characters, film sets and stage devices. From the previous analysis, we can see that *The Cry* uses a very different way from the existing horror films. Unlike other horror films that directly shock the audience through visual horror scenes, *The Cry* tries to convey to the audience more spiritual horror than visual horror. Even long after the film ends, they will be immersed in the story of the film and cannot easily get rid of this psychological fear.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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