

The Impact of Different Types of Film and Television Violence on The Shaping of Viewers' Values

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Abstract. Acts of violence in film and television refer to behaviors that cause physical or mental harm to people or animals in film and television, which can be classified into acts of violence with cause and padding and simple acts of violence. Movie and television violence has an important significance and role in contemporary society and culture, which can not only reflect and criticize the problems and contradictions of real society but also satisfy and regulate the audience's psychological and emotional needs. Based on Violent Catharsis Theory, this paper takes *Kill Bill*, *Joker*, *Inglourious Basterds*, and *Killing Eve* as the research samples, and compares and analyzes the effects of film and television violence on the audience's value shaping in terms of the two types of violent acts with causes and padding and simple violent acts. The findings of this paper show that different types of movie and television violence have different effects on the audience's value shaping and that violent acts with reasons and padding are more likely to arouse the audience's empathy and understanding, while simple violent acts are more likely to arouse the audience's sense of excitement and entertainment.

Keywords: Graphic violence; Violent Catharsis Theory; violent aesthetics.

1. Introduction

Definition and Classification of Film and Television Violence Film and television violence refers to any form and degree of hostile conflict or aggressive behavior between human beings or between human beings and nature that occurs in film and television works. Film and television violence is a social phenomenon that is both influenced by and in turn affects the social environment and historical context [1]. Film and television violence is diverse and complex, and it can be categorized from different perspectives.

Values refer to the standards and principles by which people evaluate and judge the importance, merits and demerits, goodness and badness of things [2]. Values are the guidance and norms of people's ideology and behavior, which reflect people's worldview, outlook on life, and morality. Film and television work is an important cultural carrier, which not only conveys the author's creative intentions and aesthetic interests but also reflects the social customs and values. Violence in film and television is a special cultural symbol, which has the function of expression as well as shaping. Different types of film and television violence may have different psychological reactions and impacts on the audience, so the classification of film and television violence helps to analyze in-depth the mechanism of the influence of film and television violence on the shaping of the audience's values.

The purpose of this paper is to compare and analyze the impact of violence in film and television on the audience's value-shaping and the pleasure it brings to the audience to explore the potential role of violence on the audience's value-shaping from the two types of violence with reasons and padding and simple violence [3]. This paper intends to delve deeper into how these violent acts affect viewers' values, especially in terms of moral judgment, empathy development, and social norms of behavior.

2. Different Types of Violence in Film and Television

According to the goal and result of film and television violence, it can be divided into the types of targeting individuals or groups, intentional or unintentional, fatal or non-fatal; the motives and reasons of film and television violence can be divided into righteousness or evilness, rationality or

absurdity, and necessity or redundancy. In terms of expression and the means of film and television violence, it can be divided into the ways of direct or indirect, real or fictitious, and bloody or mild.

2.1. Violence with Causes and Paddings

Violence with cause and padding refer to violent acts in film and television works in which the perpetrator's violent acts are caused or supported by certain causes or backgrounds, and in which there is a certain amount of padding or transition before the violent acts take place. This type of violent behavior in film and television usually causes the audience to develop emotions such as empathy, understanding, and sympathy, to identify with or support the abuser's motives and goals, and to consider such violent behavior as just or reasonable. In this paper, two films, *Kill Bill* and *Joker*, are chosen as representative works of reasoned and paved violence and are analyzed separately as follows.

2.1.1 Revenge violence in the name of justice

Take *Kill Bill* as an example, it is an American martial arts film directed and written by Quentin Tarantino, with the first and second parts released in 2003 and 2004 respectively. The movie tells the story of a bride who is put into a coma after being attacked at her wedding by a team of assassins led by her former lover, Bill. Upon awakening four years later, she is determined to get revenge on the killers of her fiance and friends and ultimately kills Bill. The movie is filled with various bloody and brutal scenes of violence, but they are all revenge violence in the name of justice and are also presented artistically and dramatically.

The violence in this movie can make the audience empathize and understand so that they can identify with or support the bride's acts of revenge and think that such acts of violence are righteous or justified. This is because, through memories, flashbacks, and dialogues, the movie shows the injustice and cruelty suffered by the "bride", as well as the hardships and sacrifices she has made, which inspires the audience's sympathy and admiration for her. At the same time, the film creates an exciting, tense, and thrilling atmosphere through music, camera, and colors, thus stimulating the audience's interest and expectation for her.

Using exaggeration, humor, and embellishment, the film presents violence as an art form, thus reducing the realism and cruelty of violence [4]. In addition to bantering and playing with absurd and violent stories, one of Quentin's usual means of expression is to soften and dissolve the violence [5]. Quentin likes to use animation-like methods to express violence and blood plasma is used a lot in his works. Unconventional amounts of blood spurt out from the human body in the shape of a waterfall, and this unrealistic method makes violence less unacceptable [6]. Quentin even adopts an animation style when describing the growth of Ishii O-Ren.

2.1.2 Social violence informed by tragedy

Joker is an American crime thriller film directed and written by Todd Phillips and released in 2019. The movie tells the story of a mentally ill man named Arthur Fleck, who undergoes a series of setbacks and blows in a Gotham City full of injustice and chaos and ultimately goes on the path to become the infamous supervillain, Joker. The movie is filled with all kinds of brutal and dark scenes of violence, but they are presented in a realistic and heavy-handed way as well as the social violence that is the source of the tragedy.

The movie shows the injustice and chaotic social environment suffered by Arthur Fleck and the people of Gotham City, as well as the despair and anger expressed by them, through a meticulous, realistic, and heavy-handed approach [7]. At the same time, the movie creates a sad, depressing, and aggressive atmosphere through music, camera, and colors, thus inspiring the audience to sympathize and understand them. As a result, the audience will be more inclined to stand in the position of Arthur Fleck and the people of Gotham City and feel sad and angry for them when watching the movie; meanwhile, the movie connects the violent acts with some social issues and moral subjects through contrast, metaphor, and symbol, thus increasing the depth and meaning of the violent acts. At the same time, the movie allows the audience to reflect on and criticize their own values and behavioral styles through guidance, prompting, and hinting, to achieve a kind of psychological growth and

transformation. As a result, viewers will be more inclined to stand on a higher or broader standpoint when watching the movie and have a deeper or more diversified understanding and evaluation of violent behavior.

2.2. Mere Violence

Simple acts of violence refer to acts of violence in a film or television production in which the perpetrator's acts of violence do not have any clear or reasonable cause or background, and in which there is no build-up or transition before the acts of violence occur. This type of violent behavior in film and television usually generates emotions such as excitement, entertainment, and euphoria in the viewer, so that he or she can appreciate or follow the abuser's ability and charisma and consider this type of violent behavior to be interesting or cool. In this paper, a movie and a series are chosen as representative works of purely violent behavior for the following analysis.

2.2.1 Historical violence for entertainment purposes

Inglourious Basterds is an American war comedy film directed and written by Quentin Tarantino and released in 2009. The movie tells the story of a special squad of Jewish-American soldiers who carry out a series of brutal and hilarious acts of revenge against Nazi Germany during World War II, and the story of a French Jewish girl who runs a movie theater in Paris and uses a movie premiere to carry out a deadly and brilliant plan of vengeance against high-ranking Nazi officials. The film is filled with various scenes of gore and absurd violence, but they are historical violence presented for entertainment purposes, as well as humorized and parodied.

The violent scenes in the movie are mainly divided into two categories: one is the violent scenes in which the "bastards" takes revenge on Nazi Germany; the other is the violent scenes in which the French Jewish girls take revenge on the Nazi high-ranking officials. These violent scenes have a clear and strong effect. They entertain and enjoy the audience. These effects can be illustrated in the following ways:

Firstly, the violent scenes in the movie are all set in history but are fictionalized. The violent scenes in the movie all have huge discrepancies and conflicts with the real history of the Second World War, for example, Hitler and other high Nazi officials were killed in the movie in an extremely exaggerated and absurd way. This reversal and rewriting of history give the audience a sense of dramatization and irony, thus providing a humorous and playful interpretation of the violent scenes in the movie.

Secondly, the violent scenes are in the form of comedy and full of various gory and brutal details, for example, the bastards cut off or blow out the heads of Nazi soldiers or inscribe words on their scalps. This display and depiction of violence create a sense of terrorization and excitement in the audience, thus providing a thrilling and exciting experience of the violent scenes in the movie.

Finally, acts of violence can be cathartic and stress-relieving for the audience, thus reducing or eliminating their fear and apprehension of real acts of violence, which are perceived as beneficial or amusing. This is because movies present violence as an art form through exaggeration, humor, and embellishment, thus reducing the realism and cruelty of violence. At the same time, movies achieve a kind of psychological balance and satisfaction by allowing viewers to transfer their realistic violent impulses and desires to the abuser or victim through projection and other means. As a result, viewers will be more inclined to enjoy the movie from a more relaxed or pleasant perspective.

2.2.2 Psychological violence for cathartic purposes

Another very popular TV series, *Kill Eve*, tells the story of a chase between Eve, a British Intelligence investigator, and a mysterious female assassin. The violent scenes in this show are not just meant to titillate the viewer but are part of an in-depth plot and character development.

In the show, Eve is a smart but somewhat bored investigator who is curious about criminal psychology. Eve's life becomes full of danger and excitement when she begins to track down a talented hitwoman. The hitwoman, known as "Villanelle", is a professional killer with a strong sense of execution and a versatile style. Her violent behavior is brutal, but it also demonstrates her

intelligence and independence. The violent scenes in the play are usually sudden and unexpected, bringing a strong visual and emotional impact to the audience.

From the perspective of violent catharsis theory, the violent scenes in *Killing Eve* may have helped the audience to release their inner pressure and impulses. Viewers may experience a kind of catharsis by proxy by watching Villanelle's actions, which can be a kind of psychological relief. At the same time, the violence in the play provokes the audience to think about the boundaries of justice, morality, and the law, especially when violence is portrayed as an art form or an act that is necessary for survival. In addition, the violence in the play explores gender roles and power dynamics. Villanelle, as a female character, breaks the stereotype of traditionally male-dominated violence, and her actions challenge the audience's expectations and judgments of women. The relationship between Eve and Villanelle is complex and full of tension, and their interactions are not just about pursuit and escape, but also a mutual fascination and identification, which adds depth and variety to the plot.

Overall, *Killing Eve* provides a unique perspective to analyze the impact of violent acts in film and television on viewers' values through its complex characters and compelling plot. The play is not just a story about the chase and violence, but a profound exploration of human nature, desires, and moral choices.

There are also some commonalities and differences between these two types of violence. The cathartic effect is achieved through the theory of violence catharsis, which means that by watching or participating in violent movies or activities, the audience's desire to attack can be effectively reduced. The point of difference is that they have different directions and degrees of shaping the audience's values. Violent acts with reasons and padding are more inclined to shape the audience's recognition or understanding of the values of justice, heroes, and suffering; simple violent acts are more inclined to shape the values of individuality, talent, and humor.

Both types of violence have positive and negative effects. The positive effect is that they both provide a means of artistic expression and psychological release, allowing the audience to experience emotions and creations that are different from those in real life. The negative effect is that they both may lead to the audience's numbness and habituation to violence, and even trigger their imitation and emulation, thus increasing the phenomenon and problem of violence in society. Therefore, this study has important implications for understanding and dealing with the impact of film and television violence on the audience's value shaping.

3. Suggestions

3.1. Use Violence Responsibly

Film and television makers ought to understand the moral and social responsibilities of their work and refrain from exploiting violence as a quick and low-cost method of sensationalism. To support the theme and style of their work and provide the audience with a positive and relevant message, producers should also take into account the artistic and aesthetic worth of violence and use it sensibly and moderately.

For instance, even if they are graphic and violent, the violent sequences in films like Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* and *Inglourious Basterds* also showcase the director's inventiveness and flair, as well as his commentary and satire on justice and history. These productions use violence not just to titillate and amuse the audience, but also to convey a sense of creative and cultural expression. By doing this, creators of films and television shows can lessen the detrimental effects of violence on viewers while simultaneously elevating the creative and social value of their productions.

3.2. Establish an Effective Grading System for Violent Content

According to Eric Arias's findings, the influence of the media is primarily realized through social rather than individual mechanisms [8]. Within society, authorities ought to design an accurate and thorough grading system for violent movies and TV series that provides viewers—especially kids and other vulnerable groups—with a wealth of information and support. They should also monitor and

regulate the production and distribution of violent films and television series to prevent the dissemination and inappropriate usage of illegal and harmful violent content.

The Motion Picture Association (MPAA) in the United States, for example, has created a system of movie ratings wherein films are categorized as G, PG, PG-13, R, or NC-17 according to the degree of violence, sexual content, or profanity. With the help of this method, viewers may choose movies that are suitable for both them and their families. This classification scheme protects the viewer from objectionable and violent content, particularly for younger audiences, to respect their choice and discernment. This gives the viewers the freedom to select the movies they want to see on their own. Thus, authorities can maintain the appropriate and healthy growth of violence in television and movies while also protecting the rights and welfare of viewers.

What's more, the impact of media violence requires more research and intervention to reduce the risk and harm of violence, especially for children and adolescents. This requires cooperation and education from the scientific, journalistic, educational and entertainment communities [9]. Education departments and social institutions should enhance media literacy education and develop viewers' critical media awareness and media analysis abilities to increase viewers' resistance to and appreciation of film and television violence. Education in media literacy can aid viewers in identifying and comprehending the nature, purpose, impact, and function of media as well as how it creates and transmits meaning and information [10]. With the help of media literacy education, viewers will be better equipped to evaluate the legitimacy and plausibility of violent movies and television shows, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of such content for both society and the individual. This will enable them to make more thoughtful and responsible decisions.

3.3. View Movie and TV Violence Rationally

Viewers should have a critical and analytical mindset regarding violence in films and television shows to prevent being easily influenced or forced by violent visuals and messages. To distinguish between reality and fiction, good and evil, justice and injustice, and right and wrong, viewers should also develop a strong moral compass. In addition, individuals should look for support and guidance from friends, family, and experts if they are worried or disturbed by violence in films and television shows.

Consider the audience for the movie *Joker* as an example. Instead of merely sympathizing with or endorsing the clown's violent actions, viewers ought to investigate and assess the clown's psyche, motivations, and the social and cultural context in which he lives. The aggressive behavior of the clown should not be emulated or imitated by viewers; instead, they should respect society, the law, and other people. Viewers need to be aware of their own emotions and psychology. Instead of resorting to violence as a form of escape or venting, viewers who are disappointed or furious can look for healthy channels to communicate and work through their issues. By doing this, viewers can safeguard their bodily and emotional well-being in addition to developing a better understanding of and assessment of violence in films and television.

In summary, by heeding these suggestions, violence in movies and television shows can be turned from a possible hazard to a useful tool that can positively and constructively influence viewers' morals and social growth.

4. Conclusions

This study explores the impact of violent movies on audience values. In summary, the impact of violent movies on audience values is complex, with both positive and negative aspects, requiring the audience to have the ability to distinguish and choose, as well as the role of social norms and guidance. This paper provides a valuable perspective and method for understanding and coping with film and television violence, as well as some useful suggestions and strategies for improving and optimizing the current situation and problems of film and television violence.

This paper addresses the issue of violence in movies and television and makes the following recommendations. Movie and TV producers should take social and moral responsibility to use violence reasonably and appropriately so that it fits the theme and style of the work and conveys a positive and meaningful message, rather than to attract attention and create a sensation. Scenes of violence should have artistic and aesthetic value, reflecting the creativity and style of the director, as well as reflection and satire on history and justice. Regulators should establish a precise and comprehensive grading system for violent content to provide accurate and comprehensive information and assistance to viewers, especially children and vulnerable groups. At the same time, regulators should also pay attention to and control the production and dissemination of violent films and television programs to prevent the proliferation and misuse of illegal and dangerous violent content. The education sector and social institutions should strengthen education on media literacy, develop viewers' critical media awareness and media analysis skills, and improve their resistance to and appreciation of film and television violence. Viewers should adopt a critical and rational attitude towards violence in movies and television and should not be easily swayed or induced by violent images and messages.

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