

Comparative Analysis of Female Images in Chinese and Korean Horror Films in the New Century

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Abstract: As one of the main types of commercial films, horror films have developed rapidly in recent years, and the female characters in horror films often occupy the main part of the movie narrative. South Korea is very similar to China, as it is a country deeply influenced by Confucian culture. The two countries have more or less connections in shaping female images in horror films. This paper will conduct a comparative analysis of the female image characteristics in horror films between China and South Korea after the year 2000, in order to further investigate the multiple factors that affect film and television creation.

Keywords: Horror Films; China; Korea; Female Images; Confucian Culture.

1. The Characteristics of Female Images in Chinese Horror Films

1.1. The Development Status of Chinese Horror Films

The development of horror films is closely related to the film market. In recent years, with the vigorous development of the Chinese film market, horror film creation has also achieved some good results. However, the development of Chinese horror films is still in an immature early stage, and the quantity and quality of released horror films are far from meeting the needs of the film market. In the current cultural environment of China, horror films are still regarded as outliers and they can't gain recognition and acceptance from mainstream society currently. However, due to the continued market demand for horror films and their development momentum, the development of horror films is still in a positive state.[1]

1.2. Chinese Female Ghost Dressed in Red

When it comes to horror movies, the image of a female ghost born in red and disheveled hair naturally appears in people's minds, and this terrifying image is even more frequent in Chinese horror movies. Why are they all wearing red clothes? This makes it necessary to understand one of the traditional folk taboos in China, that is the "taboo of wearing red clothes".

The "taboo of wearing red clothes" mainly refers to "It is forbidden to wear red clothes during tomb sacrifices and funerals. The deceased is forbidden to wear red clothes. [2]In traditional Chinese culture, red represents joy, vitality, and life, and it is endowed with a positive connotation. However, ghosts are a negative and frightening thing, and the combination of these two forms a chaotic and disorderly product. Since ancient times, China has adhered to the natural order of "following the law of nature", and everything must comply with nature. However, the product of the female ghost in red is contrary to this, therefore it is considered a taboo. The use of misplaced and chaotic objects in the traditional cultural system, as well as the control of adherence to and breaking of taboos, creates a sense of anxiety and fear among the audience, and is also a successful model for horror film

creation.

1.3. The Ghost Image of Revenge Towards Men

In modern Chinese horror films, the portrayal of female ghosts tends to be more inclined towards "resentful ghosts", with the vast majority of them dying in an unnatural way and possessing strong aggression and desire for revenge. Moreover, they died due to male betrayal, turning into ghosts of resentment, and the plot of revenge against them has become mainstream in Chinese horror films.[3]This plot setting is not only intended to create dramatic conflicts, but also reflects the social phenomenon of unequal status between men and women in China under the profound influence of Confucian patriarchal ideology and clan ethics. In ancient China, women were deeply constrained by feudal society under the moral norms of "three obediences" and "four virtues", and they were placed in a disadvantaged position in cultural and social life. In modern times, with the liberation of ideology and culture, the concept of "equal rights and equality between men and women" has long been deeply rooted in people's hearts. However, traditional Confucian clan ethics still have an undeniable impact on Chinese society. Therefore, the revenge female ghost in Chinese horror movies not only portrays a sorrowful woman who takes revenge on a man who betrayed her, but also reflects the backward social phenomenon that still exists in modern times, where the idea of "women should be in a disadvantaged position and become vassals of men" still exists.

2. The Characteristics of Female Images in Korean Horror Films

2.1. The Development Status of Korean Horror Films

Although the development of Korean horror films was relatively late, since the end of the last century, some Korean filmmakers have taken advantage of the booming trend of Korean films to strongly support the development of horror films, combining Eastern and Western cultures, and creating a batch of horror films with local Korean characteristics, sparking a wave of Korean style horror in Asia and even the

world. Like China, South Korea is deeply influenced by Confucianism, and the social status of women is generally lower than that of men. Some horror films with women as the main body, such as "A Tale Of Two Sisters" and "Yeogo goedam" have appeared in the public eye and are widely welcomed. Overall, although Korean horror films started relatively late and have a weak foundation in horror culture, their development prospects are still relatively optimistic. They can leverage their strengths and avoid weaknesses, bravely learn from the beneficial elements of Western horror films, inject horror elements into daily life, and provide audiences with a better and more realistic viewing experience.

2.2. A White Clothed Ghost with a Coexistence of Softness and Strength

As is well known, the essence of Confucian culture is a patriarchal culture, and the portrayal of female images and social status in film and television works originates from South Korean historical and cultural traditions as well as current social realities.[4] In Korean horror films, the weakness of female ghosts is mainly reflected in the unfairness and abuse they suffered during their lifetime, as well as the low status of women in Korean society. The reason why they become terrifying evil ghosts is because they die tragically under the oppression of men, with too much resentment, and gather into female ghosts with a strong desire for revenge. Their strength is reflected in the "superpowers" they possess after becoming female ghosts. Humans are often on the vulnerable side in the face of supernatural things, and at this point, female ghosts have the dominant power to decide the life and death of others. This reflects the contradiction and struggle between the stereotypical ideology of "women should be in a disadvantaged position" in South Korea and the gradually emerging feminist ideology.[5]

2.3. Korean Female Ghosts with a Tragic Past

Ghosts in horror films often remain in the world due to unresolved thoughts or a strong desire for revenge. Korean horror films are particularly adept at using this narrative mode, hiding the tragic past that has happened to female ghosts, giving them rich and tragic stories, allowing them to understand and sympathize with all their unforgivable actions, and further triggering human reflection, in order to elaborate on issues related to family ethics, love and friendship, and social injustice under the surface of terror.

3. Comparison of Female Images in Chinese and Korean Horror Films

3.1. Similarities

In terms of visual aspect, female ghosts in Chinese and Korean horror films are often terrifying images dressed in long skirts, disheveled hair, and colorless faces. "This seemingly uniform image has become one of the most effective ways to create a sense of terror". In terms of aesthetic style, as a typical Eastern Confucian country, South Korea is naturally deeply influenced by Eastern culture. It is more accustomed to using a calm and calm rhythm to lay the plot, slowly emitting fear, and has different approaches but equally satisfactory results to China's freehand brushwork culture.[6,7]

South Korea and China are close neighbors separated by a strip of water, with many similarities in ideology and culture. They are deeply influenced by the Confucian ideology of

male superiority and female inferiority, as well as the ethical and moral values of their clans. Therefore, in most horror films in China and South Korea, women are the targets of oppression and harm, and they all have a tragic past, ending their lives in pain under the betrayal of men. However, since modern times, with the liberation of thought, feminist ideas have gradually emerged in China and South Korea, and they attach greater importance to their sovereignty and have the courage to fight against social issues of gender inequality. In Chinese and Korean horror films, there are scenes where women turn into fierce ghosts after death to seek revenge, reflecting their great transformation from passivity to initiative, from persecution to resistance, and reflecting the awakening of women's thinking.

3.2. Differences

Korean movies have always been good at expressing love, and many Korean horror film creators seize this point and tell horror stories under the cover of love, which has become a major feature of Korean horror films. And Chinese horror films are mixed with various elements, using various types of emotions to drive the development of the plot.

China has a long history of ghost culture, with a variety of mythological and ghost stories. At the same time, various folk taboos are spread among the people, providing an extremely rich source of creation for Chinese horror films. However, South Korean horror culture is relatively weak, and the creation of horror films often focuses on borrowing from Japan or Hollywood and localizing them. [8,9]

4. Multiple Factors Affecting Film and Television Creation

4.1. Cultural Factor

Film and television works belong to a large part of culture, which is not only the externalization of a country's culture, but also an important way to spread its own culture. Film works and culture complement each other, and film works reflect local culture, which determines the creation of film and television works. Taking the creation of horror films as an example, China and South Korea are both Eastern countries deeply influenced by Confucianism, and their cultures share many similarities. Therefore, they both have more or less similarities in the creation of horror films. For example, the South Korean horror film "Whispering Corridors 3: Wishing Stairs" mainly revolves around the fox ladder that can be wished in school, belonging to the theme of fox fairy horror films. The latest Chinese horror film "The Five Immortals of Northeast China" also features fox immortals as the main narrative subject, both of which share the equally themes and reflect the strange fox immortal culture.

4.2. Social Factors

Culture is a unique phenomenon in human society and a product of human social practice. Therefore, social practice is the foundation of film and television creation. Reflecting on human nature, morality, or social and historical issues in the form of horror films has always been a source of inspiration for creators of horror films.[10] In recent years, horror films in China and South Korea have paid more attention to the real society, reflecting the many problems that exist in society under the surface of terror. In virtual reality, horror is used to tell the real social problems, using human evil thoughts and the destruction of moral order as the source of terror,

exploring deeper human evil thoughts, and creating a unique spiritual terror. For example, the Chinese horror film "Cry and Sad" released a few years ago tells the story of a terrifying virus outbreak that ignites the deepest desires and evil thoughts of humanity. The entire society is instantly turbulent, with countless deaths and injuries, like a human purgatory. The violence and bloodshed of this film are extremely high, and the virus is used as a trigger to express the terrifying nature of humanity. For example, the Korean horror film "My Teacher" mainly tells the story of old classmates who have not seen each other for many years suddenly holding a reunion to visit a teacher who has hurt them before, but are subsequently killed by a person wearing a rabbit mask. This film also has extremely bloody plot and exposes the hypocrisy of human nature. These horror plots are based on social reality and use more exaggerated artistic forms to reflect the problems that exist in real society, which promotes people's thinking about human nature and social progress to some extent.

4.3. Political Factors

National policies also have a significant impact on film and television creation, and the state can guide and regulate the development of film and television creation through legal, economic, and cultural means. Mainland China has a strict film and television censorship system, which makes it difficult for horror films dominated by bloody violence to survive. Therefore, they can only take a different approach and choose realistic themes to create a terrifying atmosphere through the hallucinations of characters caused by drugs or mental illnesses. On the one hand, it provides a new approach for the creation of Chinese horror films, and on the other hand, it also limits their development to a certain extent. In short, the impact of national policies on film and television creation is multifaceted.

5. Conclusion

Horror films have been around for a long time, with a loyal audience supporting their development. Chinese horror films

are still in their early stages, and in recent years, their development has been sluggish due to various factors. Meanwhile, in recent years, there have been few excellent Korean horror films that lack innovation and are also on the decline. If horror films from both countries want to further develop, they must always grasp market demand, break away from the fixed pattern of female portrayal in existing horror films, bravely introduce new ideas, and create horror films that win both art and the market.

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