

The Construction of Space and Image in the Film “The World of Yang Ming” under the Aesthetics of Dichotomous Structure Opposition

Chunhui Yu, Wenzhong Wang, Ran Gao

Shaanxi University of Science & Technology Xi ‘an, Shaanxi 710016

Abstract: As the Chinese film industry explores the suspense genre, newcomer director Liu Zimou has challenged and innovated with Yang Ming Li Wan, which has been labeled as “black humor”, “script-killing film” and “post-modern film” since its release. Since its release, Yankee Doodle Dandy has been labeled as “black humor”, “script-killer film” and “post-modern film”. Using structuralist dichotomy theory, this paper will analyze three aspects of the film: spatial construction, symbolic collage, and image construction, in order to explore the aesthetics of dichotomies in “The Famous”.

Keywords: Spatial construction; Symbolic collage; Dichotomous theory; The Young and the Restless

1. A suspenseful film full of dark humor

“Black humor” refers to an artistic category that is absurd, morbid, and comic in nature. “As a form of aesthetics, it belongs to the category of comedy, with its “absurdity”, its appropriate use of slapstick, exaggeration, and distortion, and its dramatic interpretation of life’s tragedies. Compared to traditional comedy, black humor is more complex and cold, attempting to represent the themes of social disorders and the workings of power, the “unbearable weight” of life, and intervening in an allegorical manner to criticize absurd social phenomena. In contrast to serious drama or satire, the film noir gives the audience a safe enough distance through comedy, diluting the despair and the dark and horrible reality, so that the audience is not too pessimistic when recognizing the absurdity of the film and reality and the suffering of life, the seriousness is neutralized by the banter and the despair is replaced by hopelessness and humor.

The film combines “comedy” and “suspense” in its genre, using a puzzle narrative strategy to create a suspenseful atmosphere as the plot develops and takes sudden turns, creating a suspenseful atmosphere as the audience continues to solve the mystery.^[1] The story is set in the Republican era, where Lu Zinye gets hold of the case file of the murder of the three giants of Shanghai. The film is an immersive discussion of how to turn the case into a film that will make everyone “famous”. The film’s play within a play, case within a case, and bureau within a bureau are intertwined. The film’s Republican setting, the overlay of suspense and comedy genres, the scripted meetings at the murder scene, the socially significant Three Old Men case, and the relationship between Qi Leshan and the Nightingale all shine through to the audience. In doing so, the director builds suspense and in the process unleashes the theme of the warmth of humanity within each individual.

2. The dichotomous aesthetic style from the extrapolation of the suspense film core

The suspenseful film “A Fame to Live For” combines dark humor with a gripping plot. In “A Fame to Live For”, “a secret room with no way out and a killer who returns to make things more and more bizarre; the insiders are in danger and their fame is at stake.” The script-killing plot is what sets it apart from the usual suspense films.

The aesthetics of dichotomy that emerges from the contradictory dichotomy at the heart of suspense cinema allows the content and style of suspense cinema to coalesce into an organic whole, effectively touching the viewer’s nerves with visual imagery that provokes deep and sustained thought. The best work is that which breaks the mold of our expectations and teaches us new ones at the same time. The juxtaposition of opposing paradoxes makes for a suspenseful film with an unforgettable aesthetic. What follows is an

interpretation of the dichotomous aesthetics of the suspense film *Yankee Doodle Dandy* in terms of spatial constructions, symbolic collages, and character constructions.

2.1 The dichotomous aesthetics of spatial constructions: the role of spatial context setting in driving the plot

The Chamber of Secrets genre of suspense films has always impressed audiences with its intriguing plot suspense. When setting up a suspenseful plot, the time and space element of a secret room is the basis for creating a tense atmosphere. The psychological oppression created by the confined space makes the audience constantly concerned about how the characters will escape from the chamber, which becomes the driving force for speculating on the ending and solving the mystery.

2.1.1 Enclosed spaces: confined room enclosures

The “scene” is a narrative time equal to the story time, mainly through dialogue. For example, the appearances of Lee Ka Fai and others are unexpectedly presented to the audience through conversations with others. Most of the scenes in the film take place in enclosed interiors, with secrets hidden deep inside each character in the play^[2]. A closed environment is set up to highlight the emotional involvement of the characters with each other through the atmosphere of the closed room, bringing out the essence of script killing. The movie “*Yankee Doodle Dandy*” is even more unique in that it tells the real killer straight away and leaves everyone to find the motive for the killing. The audience monitors the development of the plot from an omniscient point of view. Lee Ka Fai passes on this information several times to inform everyone, only to be interrupted repeatedly by Chan Siu Tat. Full of laughs, it also heightens the audience’s tension and highlights the film’s sense of suspense.

In a blocked villa, with no exit, and a murderer with three lives at his door, Lee and his team choose to unravel the real secret of the “Three Lords Case”. In the process of solving the mystery, they discover the truth of the case. In this room with no exit, sensibility, and rationality come together.

2.1.2 Open spaces: stairs

Space is closely related to power, class, etc. in any setting, and the staircase that appears in the film symbolizes such social relations in the same way. When the people in the lead group find themselves at the scene of a murder, everyone does not want to take part in this film anymore. Here the staircase is a metaphor for the path upwards as a search for the truth, a sublimation of humanity, and the path downwards as a way of trying to stay alive in this chaotic world. In this episode, Lee Ka Fai is the only one who does not waver on the staircase, a symbol of humanity, from beginning to end; he is on the high ground of humanity from the very beginning, intent on restoring the truth of the case.

The six main characters’ web-like identity and past entanglements become a sub-suspense in the film, and their personal emotions, character traits, and life dilemmas are fully revealed in the gradual excavation of the truth in order to The film is an empathetic experience that allows the audience to understand the director’s intentions^[3]. The film is a detailed description of the open space of the staircase, in which the director uses Lu Zino’s oral narration to flesh out the plot. All of them, except Li Jiahui, choose to climb the stairs again only after Lu Ziyue’s sarcastic remarks, passively moving toward the truth.

As a director, Liu Zimou cleverly uses Hitchcock’s psychological construction techniques to successfully and subtly hold the audience’s psychology, peeling them away from reality and luring them step by step into the plot of his film. The film evolves from the absurd script reading scene to the horrific murder scene in the secret room. The opposing layouts make the environmental spaces both intricate and orderly, and each scene is exceptionally realistic. The same image presents the most extremely contrasting visual effects to bring out the dichotomous spatial aesthetics of *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

2.2 The dichotomous aesthetics of symbolic collage: the interweaving of Eastern and Western cultures

In recent years, traces of the intertwining of Eastern and Western cultures can be found in both Chinese and Western suspense films.

2.2.1 The Death of Sadanaphelas

A painting appears in the second half of the film that is one of the keys to solving this case, a painting that is, itself, metaphorical. The painting is Eugène Delacroix’s masterpiece *The Death of Sardanapala*. This painting depicts the Assyrian monarch Sardanapala, who, before his country is overrun by rebels and his city is on the verge of death, orders his beloved wife and lover and his favorite steed to be killed, smashes the palace’s treasures and utensils, then sits on the throne and burns himself, along with the palace, to the ground. It is a symbol of the fate that will soon befall the Three Amigos.

There are two motives implied here: one is that after killing the Three Amigos, Qi Leshan, like the main character in the painting, calmly awaits his end; the other motive reveals Qi Leshan’s motive for killing the Three Amigos, who are also Sardanapala. The ending is implied through a Western painting, a collage of symbols that mirrors the interweaving of Eastern and Western cultures.

2.2.2 Architectural culture

The film is shot in a foreign house in the Art Deco style, the most popular architectural style in New York at the time, symbolizing aristocracy, wealth, and endless gold and silver. A statue dressed in a clown costume appears repeatedly throughout the film, holding what appears to be two struggling men in his hands, a statue that Lee and others have called the god of entertainment. The director repeatedly uses panoramic and close-up shots of this god of entertainment throughout the film. The film echoes and metaphorically reveals the dirty games of the mansion where the queen is chosen and the secret rooms are kept. The opening scene takes the statue as a point of reference: "Power is temporary, entertainment is eternal".

2.2.3 Dress Culture

Each person in the play wears a costume that also has a representation of a different character. As one of the few female characters in the play, Su Mengdie's costume is distinctive. Wearing a traditional Chinese cheongsam, Su Mengdie's figure is better outlined, and her status as an actress is better expressed. Chen Xiaoda, an avid actor who promotes Chinese martial arts in the play, wears a brown shirt with blazers. However, in our traditional thinking, those who promote martial arts should be dressed in flowing Taoist robes or Tai Chi suits. Chen Xiaoda's costume breaks this stereotype. From Lu Zino's mouth, we learn that Chen Xiaoda works as a martial arts double in Hollywood, so it is not unreasonable for Chen Xiaoda to favor shirts and suit trousers in his costume. The best example of Eastern and Western cultural symbols entering an Eastern context, the history of the Republic, fragmentation, and scale come together to build a hybrid aesthetic that is both exuberant and highly visceral.

3. Aesthetics of dichotomy in image construction: a group of characters with opposing personalities

In the opening scene, a group of "farcical" characters, who are all here for the sake of profit, just to make a living, are reduced to the unconscionable task of "eating shit". The bickering and bickering is an ironic comment on the fancy and chaotic nature of the world. Almost everyone is well-versed in the art of self-aggrandizement and sucking up to others.

The director's exaggerated approach creates anti-heroic "little people" who grow in their persistent quest, and the story takes on a well-intentioned derivative characterization, drawing out the layers and dimensions of each character. The characterization, with its typical core and complexity, becomes an artistic synthesis.^[4] The dichotomous aesthetics of image construction and the portrayal of group characters enhance the three-dimensionality of the characters.

4. Conclusion

The aesthetics of dichotomy brings the warm and humane thrust of the suspense film "Yang Ming Li Wan" to the screen in a visual form, making "Yang Ming Li Wan" achieve a high degree of unity in form and content, a clever transformation of the medium that constructs for the audience a story of the Republican era rich in metaphorical meaning and full of visual and perceptual tension. The spatial construction of the Republican period, the fragmented collage of Eastern and Western cultural symbols, and the portrayal of group characters bring the form of dichotomous aesthetics into reality, bringing the audience a wonderful feast from visual impact to soulful torture.

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