

A Comparative Study of Chinese and American Films from the Perspective of Horror Story Themes

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ABSTRACT

Film is a symbol and product of culture, and the two influence and promote each other. The unique cultural traditions of different countries give the themes of movies a strong regional cultural flavor. This article compares the similarities and differences between Chinese and American films from the perspective of terrorism themes, and deeply understands the cultural and value differences between the two countries, in order to better promote the exchange of Chinese and American film cultures.

Keywords: Horror stories, Theme, Chinese and American films.

1. INTRODUCTION

Movies carry the fate and cultural spirit of a country. Understanding a movie can help us gain a deeper understanding of the history of a country at different times, the lives of a generation, and the culture of that period. Therefore, film appreciation is one of the most important ways for people to understand a country's social culture. Due to the fact that movies are adaptations of past history, culture, and real life, made from various materials, to some extent, movies can better reflect a country's culture and spirit than other ways.

Every country's culture in the world has some commonalities, as each culture reflects the thoughts and customs of the people in that culture, and the unique parts of each culture inject different elements into movies. Therefore, there is a close connection between movies and culture. Culture is presented to people through movies. And the theme of a movie should be the core part of film culture. At present, horror themed movies in China and the United States have been enduring for a long time.

2. HORROR STORIES - AN ETERNAL THEME IN CHINESE AND AMERICAN FILMS

The Britannia Encyclopedia defines horror movie themes as follows: horror movie themes

revolve around a gloomy atmosphere, often filled with a series of violent events that can scare the audience to death. Almost all successful horror movies, regardless of which country they are produced in, have one thing in common, which is that they are adaptations of traditional horror legends known to generations in history, so classic horror movies have profound cultural significance. Horror movies have a history of over a hundred years, with diverse genres such as science fiction horror movies, funny horror movies, and adventure horror movies. The reason why horror movies are popular can be explained by the fact that everyone lives in a sense of insecurity, and there is always something terrifying and terrifying deep inside them.

In China, mysterious themes have also become a major genre in movies. In the early days of Hong Kong, horror movies were mainly humorous, but later they became even more bloody and developed their own creative methods with the continuous influence of Western culture, such as "Xenomorph". In addition, many Chinese believe in the existence of ghosts, so they are also very interested in mysterious things. However, there are many different types of horror movies in the United States, such as religious genres, bloody massacre genres, science fiction genres, legendary story genres, and supernatural genres. But there are also many sub horror movies that revolve around

specific monsters: zombies, werewolves, and these special monsters are considered expressions of fear and threat.

3. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHINESE AND AMERICAN HORROR MOVIES

Regardless of when they were created, they share a common feature: authoritarianism, gloom, and promotion of using the same terrifying methods to defeat evil. The most basic principle of horror movies is designed to make the audience afraid. Audiences prefer to feel uneasy and fearful from other violent genres such as war, disaster, and crime movies, often forcing them to confront their own fragile morality and fear of death.

The similarity in the sources of terror lies in the use of similar methods to create a terrifying atmosphere in Chinese and American films, as they both have similar sources of terror. When things are unknown, curiosity generates a feeling of fear. Generally speaking, in horror movies, the protagonist accidentally gets a box, a cathode ray tube, or something like this, and he or she is curious about what is inside, opening the box or looking curiously at the camera. Afterwards, a series of misfortunes and accidents will happen to the protagonist. But fortunately, she or he will eventually get rid of the unfortunate experience.

Doubt, jealousy, and hatred are all dark sides of human nature that people are unwilling to admit. In daily life, people tend to hide negative factors in their hearts. But sometimes, accepting and facing these negative factors is better and more positive. Otherwise, if a person is suppressed for too long, they will become mentally unstable. That's why almost all assassins in horror movies have a mentality of hatred and suspicion, but the reason for tragedy is that they cannot face their dark inner psychology correctly.

In order to create a terrifying atmosphere in Chinese and American films, directors often use narrow and enclosed spaces to create terrifying environments, which is a similar technique in Chinese and American horror films. They all make good use of enclosed spaces such as restrooms, elevators, corridors, and bathrooms. Usually in horror movies, there are scenes like this: when the protagonist is in the bathroom, a ghost with long

hair and rotten skin floats out of the water, or blood flows out of the water pipe, or suddenly finds someone standing behind them reflected in the mirror. All these terrifying scenes are terrifying enough to make your hair stand on end.

Both countries' horror movies make good use of the timid feelings we experience in our lives. When we focus on the story of the movie accompanied by soft and slow music, suddenly there is a terrifying sound or a ghostly face, with blood on the lips, hollow eyes, and the audience's sense of fear and terror reaches its peak. At the same time, the melody of the music reflects the audience's mental state.

4. DIFFERENCES IN HORROR STORY THEMED FILMS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES.

Terror films from different regions have their own unique characteristics. This is the result of different geographical locations, environments, cultures, and religious beliefs. As a carrier of a country's history and culture, movies influenced by historical and cultural factors are also different.

4.1 Differences in Ghosts

The ghosts in horror movies are completely different between the two countries. The ghosts in American movies are real, not the souls of the dead or monsters. But the ghosts and monsters in China are formed by people's imagination and do not exist in reality. Therefore, the ghost culture in the United States is visible, and they focus more on the visual aspect. However, China is influenced by the fictional and illusory culture, and has come up with many spiritual perspectives. On the other hand, the ghost culture between China and the United States is completely different. In American horror movies, "most American ghosts are extremely bad, fierce, cruel, and physical. They are mostly mummies, vampires, or similar things." (Anna, Harris, 1993) There have always been two forms of ghosts: one is a decaying corpse, and the other is a creature from other spaces, representing aliens. They may look disgusting and annoying overall, but when you look at them, you have the ability to protect yourself from these terrible things. The fear and terror stirred up by classical horror movies, through

external threats such as foreign invaders from other territories and bloodthirsty demons, left little sense of fear for the audience at that time. The ghost culture in China is completely different. He is non physical and invisible, no one knows where he will appear or when he will suddenly appear behind you. Usually, they are the souls of the deceased and their appearance has not changed much. At the same time, feudal superstitions also influenced Chinese ghost movies.

On the other hand, in horror movies, there may also be gender differences. In Chinese horror movies, the ghosts and monsters we see are usually women, but in Western horror movies, there is no such gender bias. For example, in Western horror movies, murderers such as Chainsaw Killer, Ghost Street, and Silent Lamb are all men. This difference is closely related to traditional culture. Taoism plays a significant role in China's profound traditional culture, with the most important work being the Book of Changes, another theory that balances yang and yin. We can learn about it from similar names such as Hades and Ghosts. Additionally, women are weaker than men and are more prone to experiencing terrifying hallucinations.

4.2 The Different Effects of Horror Movies on People

In Chinese and American horror movies, there is a significant difference in attitudes towards ghosts and monsters. Both countries acknowledge the negative effects of superstition, the dead, bloody scenes, and violence. However, so far, educators in the Chinese academic community still hold the view that minors will imitate the negative effects that appear in horror movies. In the United States, there is a further understanding of the impact of horror movies on people and society. They believe that evil thoughts will be eliminated in the process of watching horror movies. For example, if someone has a desire to commit murder, they can indirectly obtain satisfaction from horror movies, so the real murder will not happen to them in reality.

The background of American horror movies is mainly about the human vampire and devil series "(Anna, Harris, 2002). For example, the Texas chainsaw killer depicts distorted human nature and abnormal behavior using bloody scenes to create a

terrifying effect. To some extent, this horror is rational and will make the audience think deeply after watching the movie. They believe that humans have a dual personality nature and always have the impulse to make mistakes. Therefore, Westerners usually let God understand their sins or ultimately let pastors understand their inner thoughts. Meanwhile, the country requires legal assistance. It is different from Chinese horror movies, where the main events in the film are non-existent in real life, such as ghosts, spirits, and so on. Sometimes, it can cause people mental anguish, which cannot be solved solely by the law. Therefore, China's management of the entire country is a combination of morality and law.

4.3 Different Attitudes Towards Individuals and Collectives

Western culture emphasizes individualism, while Eastern culture emphasizes collectivism. Chinese culture places too much emphasis on collectivism and rarely respects individual experiences, including experiences that span the horror psyche. This difference is more prominently reflected in horror movies. In American horror movies, humans not only have to fight against natural disasters, but they also have to face pressure from society and government. Therefore, such movies often exaggerate the protagonist's personal abilities. However, Chinese horror movies always focus on the social contributions of the protagonists and tend to use the power of the entire country and collective to solve problems. That is to say, Chinese horror movies prefer educational films to train people on how to deal with misfortune. However, the United States is more focused on arousing the audience's individualistic thinking.

5. CONCLUSION

The significance of horror movies has surpassed the influence and achievements of the films themselves. It contains social, cultural, and political meanings and functions, and gender issues, aesthetic and psychological influences make it an indispensable and important part. The process of appreciating horror movies is similar to a constantly evolving psychological game, which can help the audience relax and alleviate their life stress. That's also why horror movies are so popular. This article compares the similarities and differences between

Chinese and American horror films, in order to contribute to the future development of Chinese horror films. China should not only absorb the experience and essence of the United States, but also develop the Chinese traditional culture and unique style to a deeper level.

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