

The Truth of the Swing in Military Movies: Between Politics and the Public

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Abstract—The relationship between social control and films is inseparable. On the one hand, film censorship, policies and regulations as representative of "hard control" regulate and restrict film creation and production activities all the time; on the other hand, internal factors such as moral concepts and national emotions guide and influence the film generation with the attitude of "soft control". The view of reality in Chinese military film is the representative achievement in revolutionary realism (or socialist realism), the modern extension of the traditional concept of "seeking truth" and "seeking reality" of the Chinese nation, and also a literary style that is generally appreciated by the middle and upper buildings in the developing socialist society with Chinese characteristics. Throughout the different aspects of military films in the development path of a hundred years, it can be found that the swing attitudes of realism in different historical periods show the change and dissociation of control power during the transformation of Chinese society. The truth of this swing reflects the complexity and diversity of social control.

Keywords—Chinese military film; view of reality; social control; politics; the public

I. INTRODUCTION

The generation of cultural symbols for any type of film is gradually produced along with various forms of social control. The most notable ones are the hard control represented by the film law, the communication law, the administrative licensing review system, and the grading system; the most influential and far-reaching effects are the soft controls represented by traditional culture, moral concepts, and national identity. For military films, due to the particularity of military themes, compared with other types of films, they have their unique growth environment and social positioning, and the control subjects, control methods and control intensity are more special.

II. PAN-POLITICIZATION AND THE CONTROLLING NATURE OF FILM CENSORSHIP

A. Early Chinese Film Censorship

China's film censorship activities have formed a tradition centered on political censorship along with the rise of the film during the Republic of China. In the Kuomintang's film censorship order, "the first violation of the 'Three People's

Principles' is listed as one of the major items. If the relevant articles in other major items are counted, such prohibitions will account for about one-fifth of the film's restriction. This makes the film censorship a strong ideological color." [1] In the film censorship mechanism led by the Communist Party, the standards of content censorship, ideology censorship and ethics review are highly coincident with the national will and the ruling idea; also, as a moral filtering mechanism and thought guiding means, censorship controls the whole process from production to dissemination of films. In 1948, the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China issued the "Instructions on Film Work", which established the Communist Party's film policy in the form of an institution, which clearly pointed out that "film propaganda in class society is a tool for class struggle." [2] During the later period of "seventeen years" to the "Cultural Revolution" period, the social control of film censorship became more and more intense. Under the influence of various political movements, left-wing thoughts and various irregular party struggles, the ideological criticism of movies went to the extreme. Finally, the film has become a cultural symbol of "directly serving for politics". [3] Military films under the control of ideology are excessive, powerful, and distorted, despite the ideals of inheriting the spirit of realism, are gradually silenced under the suppression of rigid institutional constraints and soft thoughts. Revolutionary realism was originally to "require the artist to describe the reality from the real and historical specifics of the revolutionary development of reality. At the same time, the authenticity and historical specificity of the description of literature and art must be used to transform and educate the working people with the spirit of socialism." [4] But with the intensification of the political movement and the constant instillation of the requirements that "the literature and art should serve politics", the "real and historical description of reality" has been neglected or even resisted, and the theme of "reform" and "education" has become the only goal of military movies is to achieve. For many contents that seem to have nothing to do with ideology, they are also forced to give some political meaning to control. The pan-politicization of military films reached its peak during the "Cultural Revolution".

B. Ideological Film Censorship

Strong political control is deadly enough to destroy any art system. During the Cultural Revolution, a series of subjects such as the positive image of the Kuomintang, the bloody sacrifice of Chinese army, the expression of human beauty and the beauty of human feelings, the performance of senior generals of Chinese army and so on have become the red lines of military film creation. In the review mechanism of the film state-owned system, the dual evaluation system of "approval-non-approval", "qualified-unqualified", and "allowed showing-not allowed showing" determines that the controlling subject is the absolute power owner to determine whether the film product can be released or not. Film works that are politically unqualified or ideologically unqualified, no matter due to what ridiculous reasons, can not obtain the qualification of legal communication. Even today, the pan-politicization of military film censorship mechanisms still exists and, to some extent, obstructs the development of military film realism. At present, the review standards for Chinese films are divided into two categories: the prohibition clause and the amendment clause. The standards respectively are the Film Management Regulations and the Film Script (Outline) Records and the Film Management Regulations. Article 25 of the Third Chapter of the Film Management Regulations stipulates: "The film prohibits the following contents: firstly, against the basic principles established by the Constitution; secondly, endangering national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity; thirdly, leaking state secrets, endangering national security or damaging national honours and interests; fourthly, inciting national hatred, ethnic discrimination, undermining national unity or infringing on national customs; fifthly, promoting cults and superstitions; sixthly, disrupting social order and undermining social stability; seventhly, preaching obscenity, gambling, violence or abetting crimes; eighthly, insulting or slandering others and infringing on the legitimate rights and interests of others; ninthly, endangering social morality or national outstanding cultural traditions; tenthly, other things prohibited by laws, administrative regulations and state regulations." [5] In the "Film Script (Outline) Records and the Film Management Regulations, Chapter III, Article 14, stipulates that the following nine situations are not required to be forbade totally, however, these conditions need to be revised before continuing to inspect:" firstly, misinterpreting Chinese civilization and Chinese history; seriously violating historical facts; misinterpreting the history of other countries, disrespecting other countries' civilizations and customs; derogating from revolutionary leaders, heroes, and important historical figures; tampering with important figures in Chinese and foreign masterpieces and famous works; secondly, maliciously derogating the image of the people's army, the armed police, the public security and the judiciary; thirdly, being mixed up with obscene pornography and vulgar low-level content, showing promiscuity, rape, prostitution, sexual behavior, sexual perversion and other hidden parts such as male and female sexual organs; being mixed up with dirty and vulgar lines, songs, background music and sound effect; fourthly, being mixed up with murder, violence, horror content, reversing the value orientation of true and false, good and evil, beautiful and

ugly, confusing the basic nature of justice and injustice; deliberately expressing the arrogance of illegal crimes; specific showing details of criminal acts, exposing special investigative techniques; having violent murder, bloody, violent, drug-using, gambling and other plots; having plots of ill-treatment of prisoners, torture of criminals or criminal suspects; having scenes, lines, background music and sound effect that are overly horrific; fifthly, promoting negative life outlook, world outlook and values; provoking contradictions and conflicts between religions and sects, between believers and non-believers, and hurting the feelings of the masses; seventhly, promoting the destruction of the ecological environment, animal cruelty, killing, and eating the state protection animals; eighthly, excessively expressing alcoholism, smoking and other bad habits; ninthly, in violation of the spirit of relevant laws and regulations". [6] In addition, as for the creative plans, literary scripts and completed films of major films or films involving major political issues, the Ministry of Culture shall send them to the Central Committee of the Communist Party for inspection, and the time for inspection is not restricted." [7] Thus, the scope of the system review is all-encompassing and ubiquitous. Many of the contents of design culture ethics seem to have little to do with politics, but in fact they are also compatible with the dominant ideology. In many examination regulations, words such as "malevolence", "misunderstanding", "confusion", "negativeness", "excessiveness", "deliberateness" and "promotion" are not quantitative words that are classified as strict standards. Almost all regulations are ambiguous and subjective, which also shows that although the rules governing the film are varied, the criteria for judging ideology, moral values, and values are firmly in the hands of the controlling body with actual power.

In countries where film censorship is highly concentrated, narratives about history and reality are often required to be as consistent as possible with cultural norms promoted by dominant ideologies, and cannot conflict with mainstream control power in historical narratives, class positions, and ideologies. For military films, the control is more prominent because the text content is almost universally related to political, military, historical and other sensitive areas. The correspondence between military film content and social reality, as well as the impact on military security and political order, make military films more dangerous and more in need of strict control than other films. Therefore, the political control represented by the pan-political film system is the number one control subject that restricts the development of military films. The view of reality of military films is not in some sense a realist burst of art, but the ideal reality of "reconstruction" under the control of state consciousness.

III. THE ILLUSION AND REALITY IN THE POPULAR DREAM

A. The Art of "Creating Dream"

Chinese military films are closely connected with war, history, national consciousness and other topics as cold as a steel gun and as deep and broad as the sea, though. But in

essence, it is still the same as all movies. It is a "dream-making" process that reaches an agreement with the audience. It is inseparable from hypothetical camouflage and sublimation of the real world. In Freud's "Analysis of Dreams", the basic proposition of psychoanalytic theory is put forward: "Dream is a kind of satisfaction of desire" and dreams are divided into three kinds: firstly, wish dreams: they are the open satisfaction of the wishes recognized by the dreamers. Most children's dreams and some of the adult's dreams (such as hunger and thirst) that meet the body's urgent needs all belong to such dreams; secondly, pretending dreams: the secret satisfaction of the dreamer's suppressed desire, that is, the dreamer's desire is prohibited by the 'self', and it can only be satisfied after disguise; thirdly, anxiety dreams: this kind of dream often has no disguise, and it is the open satisfaction of the suppressed desire. The anxiety of dreams is due to the fact that the power of the subconscious desire is too strong, the decorative effect of the dream fails, and the self 'throws' a punitive effect because it does not subdue the desire. Because dream desires are fulfilled in different forms, Freud finally revised his proposition as 'a dream is a (suppressed or repressed) wish (disguised) fulfillment'. [8] Social morality and legal constraints and self-conscious censorship are a kind of control over instinct and subconscious. The job of dreams is to camouflage the illegitimate parts of instinct and desire, so that they can escape the filter screen of consciousness review, and finally experience the thrill of pleasure.

B. The Expression of Desire That Breaks Taboos

Since its birth, the film has been called the art of "creating dreams", and Hollywood is also known as the "dream factory". The film creators create a false image with the most realistic illusion, and the audience must abide by the rules of the game and recognize the false as true in the process of watching the movie. The film has replaced human beings to "daydream", and instead of the audience in the social rules to complete the extraordinary experience through watching and imagining. "They are specifically created to stimulate the interest of others, and also can cause and satisfy their same subconscious desires". [9] The creation process of films and the generation of a "dream-making" mechanism itself represent a secret and tacit alliance between the film producer and the movie audience. On the one hand, in order to achieve the thrill of pleasure and the burst of instinct desire, the audience will naturally pay more attention to the content of taboos in social control such as sex and violence. Those films that involve taboo elements or have escaped censorship have gained more enthusiasm from the audience; on the other hand, in order to gain the favor of the public, the film producers continue to compete with the film controllers in order to enable the audience to enjoy higher-intensity viewing and seek the most entertaining character in the process of compromise and balance. Freud referred to the artist's process of "disguise" and "transformation" of instinct and desire as "sublimation". Through "sublimation," the illegal instinct is given a legal cloak, and the social control, self-control, and a series of externalized norms all agree with this legal and reasonable cloak. Only the subconscious of the audience can decode the instinct embodied in the story on the

screen through the film, and gain the experience of personal pleasure.

IV. THE LEGAL EXPRESSION OF MILITARY VIOLENCE ELEMENTS

A. War Movies and "Death Instinct"

As a military film closely related to the war, the burst of pleasure is associated with violence and death all the time. Ironically, in most countries' film censorship systems; it happens that death and violence are strictly monitored as "bad" instinct. "The most fundamental thing about human nature is basic instinct. The basic instinct exists in anyone, and its purpose is to meet certain basic needs. There is no 'good' or 'bad' in these instincts. These instincts are merely classified according to the requirements and needs of human society. It is acknowledged that the instinct (which can be represented by selfishness or cruelty) that is rebuked by society is of primitive instinct." [10] The war breaks the moral expectations of human beings in the civilized society for the hypocrisy of the companions, sweeping the peaceful areas with the aim of destroying all goodness and exposing all ugliness. Even the most gentlemanlike human beings will become cruel and ruthless executioners or hysterical victims under the gun. The desire for repressive power and desire for conquest is the most primitive driving force for humans to tear away moral constraints and legal cloaks, and to get rid of social control and wage war. The pattern in which this civilization is broken by instinct also happens to be a model of film entertainment against social control. Therefore, one of the entertaining expressions of military films — especially war films — is to resonate with the audience on the subconscious level in the story of rebelling against old control and establishing a new order, so that culture can adapt to instinct instead of blindly asking the instinct to obey the culture.

B. The Moral Cloak of Violent Pleasure

Thinking about life and death is a philosophical topic forever. Psychoanalysis believes: "In the end, no one believes that he will die. In other words, in the unconscious, everyone believes that he is immortal. As for the death of others, civilized people are careful not to say it to others in company." [11] People's sensitivity to death is due to the fear of self-destruction. In the movie, death is often attributed to accidents, car accidents, sudden illnesses, etc., but the movie avoids talking about the inevitability of death and corrects necessity towards contingency. People are afraid of death, afraid of its proximity; meanwhile, people are constantly fantasizing, peeping, and observing death. It seems that if people can't take the courage to explore this most important issue of mankind, life will be plain and meaningless. "The war will inevitably wipe out this habitual attitude toward death. People can no longer deny the death and be forced to believe in its existence. Now, people do die, and not one person at a time. But several people die at the same time, and thousands of people die together in one day. This is no longer an accident. Of course, there seems to be some coincidence. A bullet hits this person instead of that person.

However, the living person will eat the second bullet at any time and die as well. All of this gives the general impression that death is no longer an accident. At this point, life becomes interesting and life is full of meaning." [12] The prosody coding mechanism of the war film is nothing more than pretending, transforming, sublimating the humanity's yearning for primitive violence and curiosity about death under the ethical cloak of patriotism, collectivism, nationalism, dedication, altruism, etc.", in order to obtain the recognition of the system and legalized dissemination.

Along with the consciousness awakening of the viewers of the communication terminal and the diversified cultural hedging resistance, the attractive elements of military movies, such as life and death, violence, destruction, rebirth, etc., have broken through political control and other institutional control. The face of war is written in the illusion of an alternative reality, and the right to be legally disseminated for the truth that should not be revealed is also obtained. This phenomenon becomes more and more obvious with the passing of the war years. The film reform movement after the reform and opening up was essentially a loosening of the dominant position of communication and a downward shift of social control power. Military films and other films entered the market economy to accept audience ratings. The original control subject and control mode are broken, and the control power is transferred from the government to the audience. This directly determines that the view of reality of military movies gradually tends to coincide with the mainstream consciousness of the masses in the dangle.

V. CONCLUSION

The formation of realism in military films is not a fixed linear activity. Different historical periods, different pressure groups, different literary trends, different social cultures, different policies and regulations, and different economic bases have produced a strong or weak, or long or short control over the realism of the film. Among them, the national consciousness and traditional culture as well as the economic foundation are the most powerful in terms of control intensity, and the effect is most obvious. Chinese military films have been closely linked to realism since its birth. In the war environment, the documentary film dominated by the documentary style occupied the main position in the initial forty years of military film growth. Documentary nature has gradually evolved into the aesthetic style of military films with the continuous expansion of the number of films and the continuous advancement of film art. Even after the founding of New China, the rise of feature films did not lead to a downgrade of documentary military films. Military films with war history, revolutionary history, and political history as the main line must follow the historical materialism and develop in the direction of realism that respects history, respects facts, and is rigorous and realistic. "Politics, especially its sharp performance — military, is an unstable factor in the stable life of all societies, states and nations. The extraordinary symbol of ordinary life often attracts people's attention and becomes the center of historical records." [13] The left-wing film movement in the 1930s and the rise of anti-war films have brought the true

spirit of military films to a new stage. In the powerful collision between social and political forces and ideology, military films have been endowed with national mission and practical significance. The society calls for the film to promote the spirit of realism, reflect the real situation of the war and the face of the people, and make "each film is a realist work" [14]. At the same time, under the premise of describing the representative historical features and the revolutionary journey, people must also pay attention to the diversification, comprehensiveness and detail of the realism theme. Here the author takes Anti-Japanese War movies as an example. "The writing of the front line — the heroic killing of the enemy certainly belongs the anti-war movie; the writing of the rear assault production is also a powerful anti-war propaganda"; "Even if the material is captured, it seems that the ordinary citizens' life and triviality in the inner alleys can also be regarded as a masterpiece of the Anti-Japanese War." [15]

The realistic concept of military film is consistent with the realistic character of China's progressive film. As an important part of the people's film led by the Communist Party of China, the realistic concept of creation in the Marxist literary view also directly affects the creative principle of military film. Authenticity is the foundation and lifeblood of military film realism. Realism is not only a kind of soft control existence as a social literary concept, but also an organic unity of knowledge system, value system and thinking method system. Infectious films require the writer to strive for the harmonious coexistence of historical truth and artistic truth under the premise of respecting reality, grasp the essence of social activities, and make the film shape the characters "just like every audience"; the narrative story is also everyone's experience in daily life"; "the questions and answers raised are exactly what audience feels and eager to be answered in daily life." Only in this way can the film play a "serious and profound role of reason". [16]

Military films as ideological state machines, like the people's army, shoulder political mission and social responsibility. The state, the government, and the military are the main control subjects for hard control, direct control, and institutional control of military films. The "Two Combination" creation method of revolutionary realism and revolutionary romanticism founded by Comrade Mao Zedong and the concept of "literature and art for workers, peasants and soldiers" have always been the guiding ideology for the leadership of Chinese party in military film creation. In terms of performance content, the military theme reflecting the revolutionary history has always occupied an indispensable important position. For the purpose of expressing the national government's ideology and propagating the glorious image of Chinese party and the army, the state plans military films with means such as planning indicators and issuing orders every year. In particular, the major revolutionary historical themes that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s incorporated the realistic standards of military films into the charter in the form of institutions. The historical works such as the *Xi'an Incident*, the *Birth of New China*, and the *Towering Kunlun* are led by the government, and are co-produced by a major

revolutionary historical theme film and television creation leading group including the People's Liberation Army General Political Department of the Ministry of Culture, the Academy of Military Sciences, the Film and Television Bureau of the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television, CCTV, and other relevant units and experts. In multiple social controls, the realism of military films is not so much a natural artistic proposition as it is closer to the inherent requirements of a political task. In addition, the delicate depiction of the real heart of the characters in the *Anxious to Return* and *Little Flower* also marks the combination of the aesthetic spirit of realism and the national consciousness and military tradition, which enhances the aesthetic spirit of realism.

Under the constraints and control of various forces, the view of reality of military movies has also shown a vacillating posture in different historical periods. For example, during the "Cultural Revolution", the prevalence of "Three Prominent" and "asceticism" required the film to highlight the hero's high, large and full image, and to ban the appearance of love, humanity and other elements unrelated to the revolutionary victory. And the scene of bloodshed and sacrifice of the People's Liberation Army is also not allowed showing; as in the new era in the diversified social culture, the traditional narrative mechanism was broken, and under the control of the market economy, the realism spirit of military films was exiled by the leading idea of "entertainment first". The film phenomena of these specific periods all reflect the various kinds of stress reactions and problems caused by military films as an incompletely mature art form under various forms of excessive social control.

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