

Analysis on *Goodbye Mr. Loser* from Ideological Approach

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Key word: Ideology *Goodbye Mr. Loser*

Abstract: In all the film works of 2015, the small-cost comedy *Goodbye Mr. Loser* became the dark horse of the year with a total box office of 1.441 billion. This paper is guided by the 20th century Western literary theory and analyzes it from the ideology dimension.

1. Movie Plot

In *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, Xialuo lived a life that was not rich but happy. Even if he didn't earn any money, his wife Ma Dongmei still loved him whole-heartedly. Although Xialuo had a dream, it was so far-reaching that nothing had been done so far. The deepest complex in the heart was the goddess of secret love in high school, Qiuya. Taking advantage of the wedding opportunity, Xialuo returned to high school in his dreams. He rewrote history and turned himself from a school-recognized joke into a music godfather, of whom the school was proud and thought as highly as Einstein and Newton. Naturally, he also harvested the heart of Qiuya. However, things did not happen the way he expected and Xialuo ended his life with AIDS. The ending of his dream made him realize that real life was far much beautiful and meaningful than his old-time fantasy. Finally, Xialuo returned to his wife's side and lived a happy life.

2. Narrative Theory and Plot Analysis

2.1 The plot analysis under the narratology of structuralism

In his book *Morphology of the Folktale*, Russian literary theorist Vladimir Propp sums up the 31 functions of the story from hundreds of Russian folktales [1]. The French narrative theorist Tzvetan Todorov further simplifies them into five units [2] of the general pattern of story development:

- (1) The equilibrium state at the beginning;
- (2) Imbalance caused by unexpected events;
- (3) The protagonist is aware of the imbalance;
- (4) The protagonist makes efforts to change the development track;
- (5) Re-establish balance.

In the movie, Xialuo is originally in a state of balance, but he is restless. Seeing his goddess Qiuya at her wedding makes libido change from recessive to dominant, resulting in deviations and imbalances in behavior. A dream releases his *id*, which is a perfect dream on the surface, but the subconscious reveals that it is not perfect, prompting Xialuo to change the unbalanced state and return to balance. Different from the above five units, Xialuo returns to the initial equilibrium state through the punitive means of *the other*, subconsciousness in the dream, that is, Xialuo's AIDS end.

2.2 Freud's *fort-da* theory

Freud believes that everyone must be subjected to the reality principle to the suppression of the pleasure principle. We are willing to bear this kind of repression because, it is believed, by delaying the happiness in front of us, we can get it back in the end, even doubled [3]. He noticed that the grandson shouted "fort (leaving)", while he was playing, throwing a toy out of the stroller and shouting "da (coming)". Going back to the problem itself, an arrangement is disrupted and eventually recovered [3]. From the above perspective, the literary (cultural) form is the source of comfort. The reason why we endure the pain caused by the disappearance of watching a movie is

because we know that this disappearance will eventually return. In the movie, Xialuo is driven by libido, showing a state of disappearing. However, as an audience, we know that it will eventually return to balance. Because only in this way, only in line with our value expectations, will we discover the beauty and perfection of this world. The ending is what we expect, and the twists and turns are just what satisfy our curiosity of snooping. The role of the film's appeasement and the display of the core values of society are fully reflected.

2.3 Horizon of Expectations and Fusions

The German philosopher Gadamer believes that the horizon is a foresight that is mixed with outlook on life, values and different kinds of prejudice. It belongs to an all-encompassing large field of grand horizon (tradition) [2], in which both the readers (audience) and the literary (cultural) form have their own views, and understanding is the fusion process of the horizon. When the audience is watching, they combine their own horizons with the film's. There are approval, critical doubts, and negative exclusions. When the three are combined, the overall judgment and evaluation of the film is formed.

Jauss proposes the theory of horizon of expectations. Before reading, readers have already developed a directional expectation of how the work appears. There are two main types of expectations. One is the narrow literary horizon of expectations, which is based on past aesthetic experience (the aesthetic experience of literary type, form, theme, style, and language). The second is the broad life horizon of expectations, which is based on past life experience (social and life experience) [3]. The former mainly produces expectations for the actors, plots, and humor components of the movie itself. The famous comedy group, Mahua FunAge Team, plays the lead role in the movie, so based on their past performance on sketches, movies, and TV series, this should be a long-awaited comedy that makes people laugh out loud. Plus, the story is a comedy, it should have a happy ending. In the meanwhile, starting from personal life experiences and values, the audience led by the latter expectation will look forward to what kinds of positive energy and inspiring social values that the movie brings.

If the horizon of expectations gives viewers a visual impulse, then the horizon of fusion is the process of verifying expectations and generating judgments. Not surprisingly, the two films can indeed be regarded as a brilliant comedy full of amazing punchlines, where the horizon of expectations is met. The happy endings reflect the harmony and justice of the core values of society, so the horizon of fusion has also received satisfactory outcome.

3. Ideology and Movie Plot

The authoritative encyclopedia website Wikipedia defines ideology as a collection of beliefs held by individuals, groups, or societies, and a collection of conscious or unconscious opinions that constitute human beliefs, goals, expectations, and motivations. It is a comprehensive, normative concept followed by people, governments, or other groups that guides the correct behavior.

For movies, it is irresistible to raise questions. Since dreams are unconscious releases and it is a rampant world of *id*, why is there an unconscious *the other* needed to warn and punish Xialuo? Why do the audience expect the return of Xialuo? Why is the end of the story always going back to equilibrium? What is Gadamer's grand horizons (tradition)? Why does the audience's horizon of expectations have such a big impact on the movie? Why do movies cater to popular tastes? In order to answer the above questions, in addition to taking economic interests into consideration, following aspects should also be paid attention to:

1. For the film industry, like every other industry, economic gain is the ultimate goal. In addition, as a literary (cultural) form, it is indispensable to have an educational function. Essentially, it is a media means of social and class ruling, educating, and appeasing the public. There are gaps between social mainstream ideology and other ideologies (i.e. public ideology and group ideology). The purpose of edification is to narrow the gap and finally achieve integration. The core value of society in the 21st century, that is, the mainstream ideology of society, is prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, friendship.

All literary (cultural) forms are incorporated into this ideology. More precisely, they are themselves part of ideology.

2. Before the film is shown, the permit for public projection will be listed on the screen, which is the review mechanism before the movie is in theaters. The focus of the review is whether the theme and content are positive, whether it conforms to the socialist core values, whether it contains unhealthy factors, and whether it is suitable for social development at this stage. This is the first line of defense before reaching the audience, so factors that are not in harmony with the theme of the age will be expelled. In this way, the public can see positive literary (cultural) forms that are consistent with the theme of the times and core values.

3. The Interpretation of Dreams

Freud believes that people are made up of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. *Id* is completely unconscious, basically composed of instinctual forces, following the principle of pleasure. *ego* feels the external influence to satisfy the instinctive requirements, following the reality principle. *superego* represents the social moral standard, and it tends to suppress the instinct, following the principle of perfection. If human desires are not satisfied in real life, they will be indirectly expressed in dreams.[4]

The whole movie, *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, basically happened in the dream, lasting 1 hour and 20 minutes. In the dream, Xialuo returned to his youthful high school time and rewrote his history, successfully realizing what his *id* expects since Xialuo was faced with the social injustice in real life. For example, he complained about why such an attractive young lady married an ugly old man. He used to be recognized as a joke in the school and had no dignity. So what he desired most in real life was “dignity” and when his mask was exposed, he returned to his dream and changed history to seek comfort in his dreams. In the dream, Xialuo finally won the heart of his dream girl, and his libido was satisfied.

Xialuo is led to libido in his dream. In Freud's view, dreams represent a suppressed instinctual desire, but the dreams in the movie and the dreams of Freud are not exactly the same. In addition to the instinctual desire, there are still some rational factors in his subconsciousness. Although he can be with his dream girl in dream, realizing libido, there is also a rational *other* in it, which punishes the ravages of the *id* under the libido. Consequently, Xialuo ends with AIDS in his dream, waking up from the beautiful dream.

Undoubtedly, dreams are the unconscious release of the *id* in Freud's theory. In the dream, *superego* can be abandoned, *ego* is in the rest stage, and *id* can run wild to realize the desires that cannot be fulfilled, including money, reputation, social status, and women. For an individual, the ending of this dream is entirely possible because it has no social harm and does not negatively affect the public. Even if it is shared in daily leisure chat, it will not hurt anyone, and the listeners may be amused by it. However, for a movie with public influence and imitation-oriented potential, the ending of such a dream cannot be characterized as a legitimate art form emerged. For the reason that a movie carries the core values of society, it needs to spread the positive energy of society. If it rises to ideology, the information it conveys should be consistent with the mainstream ideology of society so there will be a promising future of both the film industry and the mainstream ideology.

4. Conclusion

The focus of this paper is on ideology. The plot is designed to highlight the theme and the theme is to embody ideology. Under the framework of mainstream social ideology, film narrative design enjoys enough autonomy, which can be comedy, legend, tragedy, or irony. In addition, the character settings can be normalized or non-conceived, and the plot has a relatively high degree of freedom.

In general, the film reflects the socialist core values in a bizarre and tortuous plot, reflecting the mainstream ideology of society. The horizon of the viewer and the horizon of the movie present a high degree of convergence. Audience ratings and box office data also eloquently illustrate the extent to which movies are accepted in a diverse society. Moreover, as a pastime, movies can make viewers resonate, comprehend the core values of society, and use their mainstream ideology to measure and correct their outlook on life and values consciously or unconsciously. In this way, it is obvious that its role has been fully utilized. No doubt, the high box office of the movies is not only

because they conform to ideology and social values, but there are many other factors, such as actors, plots, language, and humor. All these factors contribute to the success of the movies. However, all these factors can be freely played only within the framework of the ideological field.

References

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