

The Elimination of Violence and Evil

Analysis of the Film Adaptation of the Novel "Cracks"

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Abstract—The paper aims to study the tendency of planarization and over dramatization in the film adaptation of "Cracks", a novel of South African writer Sheila Kohler. The paper analyzes the pros and cons of film adaptation from the aspects of characters, plots and structures.

Keywords—migration; violence-reducing; double tenses and Double Clues

I. INTRODUCTION

The novel "cracks" of South African writer Sheila Kohler is also called "female version of *Lord of the flies*". Focusing on juvenile criminal psychology, the work attracts readers and critics's attention as soon as it is published, and is screened by Jordan Scott, a British director in 2009. The film adaptation not only changes the background of the novel, but makes various modifications to the original novel, which makes the novel and the film manifest different colors based on the same story.

II. FIGURES: THE SKEWING OF CENTRAL FIGURES

The novel "cracks" starts with the reunion (two decades later) of the protagonists of the works — a dozen girls in the swimming team of the boarding school. They talk about the thirteenth member of the swimming team — the Spanish noble maiden Feeyama. The novel goes back to the year when Feeyama went into their lives, and how the girls' life become unbearable compared to Feeyama's perfection, especially when they see their coach Miss G, who is worshipped by the girls, adores and infatuates with Feeyama deeply. At the same time, Miss G blames on the swimmers who she once enjoyed as a contrast. The fire of jealousy burning in the hearts of girls in different degrees such as enclosed environment, depression and sexual desire in adolescence led to an uncontrollable collective torture incident. In that event, Feeyama disappeared forever, it becomes a public secret to all participants at the secret.

There is no doubt that the protagonists of the novel are precisely this group of adolescent girls. In the narration like reeling silk from cocoon, their depression and boredom in adolescence are showed, among which are being away from family living environment, isolated education, the wrong leading method, all of these aggravate their suffering. Each of them has their own sadness, some have broken homes, some

are abandoned, and some suffer from poverty and shame having nowhere to vent. It can be said that there are various gaps in every girl's life, and the gap is only a undercurrent in life before Feeyama's appearance, but after seeing Feeyama's life, the gaps, in the girls' eyes, become particularly apparent. What's worse, girls' swimming coach, Miss G having been the "spiritual leader" in their hearts, they love her so deeply that they think she just like their dreams to fly high. However, the pictures that Miss G adores Feeyama from feet to head hurt the girls' sensitive nerve once again. Like a bright light, Feeyama makes grisly "cracks" in girls' deep hearts fully exposed in life. The novel focuses on the specific situation of each individual in the small group, and describes girls' mental activities in the specific environment carefully. It presents the process of mentality aberration through the occurrence, development, brewing and outbreak. Readers can get a glimpse of factors that lead to the variation of the girls' mentality through the process, which drive them to do such merciless things. Seeing from the aspect, the novel has no difference from a psychological pathology report.

Different from the novel focusing on a group of young girls, Miss G become the absolute protagonist in the film, thus, the story evolves into a conspiracy of control and anti-control. As a result of Miss G's despise of rich knowledge and experience being seen through by well-informed Feeyama as well as her being nice is rejected repeatedly, Miss G incites the girls to attack Feeyama. But what leads to Feeyama's final death is Miss G's deliberately injury. What the whole movie presents is how a female teacher with personality distortion kills her unavailable objects by using her powers and the girls' blindness and ignorance. For this reason, the film adaptation is added more depiction of Miss G including her "social phobia", by which the image of powerful and glamorous appearance but inherent weakness and blackness is stressed out. While the girls are changed into the background, and a detailed description of each girls' specific situation is ignored, they become onlookers of the conspiracy, blind participants, and the final awakening. This simplification, undoubtedly, aims to highlight the role that the protagonist, Miss G plays in the whole event.

What kind of role does Miss G play in the original novel? She is actually the external projection of the girls' dark desires inside, such as her unrealistic dream, narrow vision, and blustering wildness, which more or less are the spirits of

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adolescent girls. That's why she can win the unlimited support of the girls. However, when Feeyama appears, Miss G's worship to Feeyama is a kind of extreme performance that many girls produce when facing a person better than themselves. Miss G wants to become a person like Feeyama just like every girl wants to own the perfection like Feeyama. Miss G's disgust on the girls also is the externalization of inferiority feelings hidden in every human's heart. When self-image is foiled being ugly by perfect objections, the most direct and effective way to solve is wiping out the superior. Seeing from the aspect, it's not strange that adolescent girls with their instinct treat their companion in the collective maltreating way. It can be said that Miss G is just an external cause, as the novel said, she is the crack itself, is the concentrated express of human nature of darkness, low self-esteem, and brutality. Miss G's verbal violence virtually drives the girls to ultimate violence. She is the factor that leads to malignant transformation of human nature in girls' living environment. But what really work are the cracks inside the girls. What commits the murder ultimately is the invisible poison — the lack of family and love, and the failure of education hidden in everyone's life.

III. PLOTS: VIOLENCE-REDUCING OF CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE GROWTH

The shock of the novel lies in the end, the seemingly ordinary description of a pile of violence. It is the unusual tone that reflects how the hatred is reasonable inside the girls. Seemingly unintentional, the girls surrounds Feeyama, looking more like a joke, and the use of violence seems just due to Feeyama's refusal to cooperate, finally, as the object of desire and refuses to obey, Feeyama becomes a doll in the collective abuse. In the name of playing game, the girls vent their depression, anxiety, cruelty, pain on Feeyama, they beat her madly, pick up a stick to rape her by turns until she is battered to death.

The film was adapted to reduce violence on Feeyama's death. Although the girls besiege Feeyama because of the inciting of Miss G, but they do not hurt Feeyama deeply, when Feeyama falls to the ground, they run in all directions out of fear. The swimming team leader, Diane, witnesses that Miss G takes Feeyama's respirator away deliberately to make her suffocate to death when she runs back after calling for people's help. Thus, the true face of Miss G is revealed, and at the end of the film the awakening swimming team members demonstrate in front of Miss G, and take off the belts symbolizing the swimming team, turning away. For Diane, she is on the boat away from the boarding school with the perfume presented by Feeyama at the end of the film. She flies and aims to contact the real world.

This film can also be seen as a growing movie. In addition to the main line of miss G, the vice is buried in the girls' growing from the blindness to know the truth, and finally to the process of brave action. This change is undoubtedly positive, but also a result that many audiences are willing to accept. In the film the girls grow up, from malignant girls to Miss G. The film emphasizes repeatedly the fading of the social function of Miss G, and her naive mentality so as to that she still can not change her living habits after leaving boarding

school, so she is really the crooked woman by the environment. While the girls are saved, the direct cause of salvation, is the true kindness sent to them by Feeyama.

It is no doubt that adapting the novel in this way adding a bright tail to the film, but it is due to this adaptation, the tragic power is weakened, the girls' images are flattened. The gist of the story has become a confrontation of true and false, light and dark, good and evil. Although the tragedy occurs, the positive energy that "justice will prevail" still remains in people's hearts. The sensitivity, sense of inferiority, their confusion when facing unsolvable problems, and their pains in growing are all eliminated, and it is adapted into a simple growing story. The simple dealing of the young people's psychology in the movie shows the creator's superficial understanding of the contradiction. Feeyama, who arouses the girls' hearts of jealousy in the novel, becomes their spiritual light in the film. It also simplifies many problems the writer explores how do schools and families catalyze a group of youth who should have yearned for goodness and beauty to criminals of the collective abuse event. The author's discussion, undoubtedly, provides an anatomy sample of juvenile crime for us. In the movie, the story of the young girls becomes violence-reducing of chicken soup for the growth.

IV. STRUCTURE: DOUBLE TENSE AND DOUBLE CLUES

The story of the novel is narrated in retrospect, the reunion after twenty years hides a tacit secret, and the secret was revealed until the end of the novel. At the beginning of the story, the scene of swimming girls' party is depicted; their living condition implies unease and gloom, which seems to relate to the dark years in boarding school. After memories, the truth is revealed, and it goes back to the present at the end of the story, the girls are already middle-aged, they go to Feeyama's cemetery and swimming together, and they seems to re-see the scene that swimming together with Feeyama in the old days.

This kind of double tense narration, no doubt, will extend an event time; the murder occurred twenty years ago, but its impact is so deep that it's runs through the whole life of the murderers. This event has become a secret, not only is tacit concealed by all participants, but the spectators out of their protection of selfish benefits. The party is called by the principal of the boarding school in those days. She has know that the disappearance of Feeyama have a close relationship with the swimming team mebers, however, for the selfishness of maintenance the honor of school, she does not choose to investigate the truth according to what she knows, but let Feeyama disappear forever. Then she blackmails graduated swimming team girls constantly using this secret. The image of the principal not only presents the darkness of the boarding school to readers but tells us that an evil is not a separate evil, but the result of all. The end of the novel reads: "we didn't return the way we came but took a different path. In the dark sky, across the flat grassland, we walked slowly." They reflect on, thinking why they went to such an evil direction in those days. Now, although they will not go to the original way, but the guilt that can not be washed out and the pains of the growth will follow them in the whole life. As for whether the secret will be finally revealed as girls growing, whether the girls can

face themselves in the past bravely, the novel leaves an open ending to readers, which extends the story to deeper and broader space and time.

The film adaptation does not retain this retrospective perspective, but into the tragic events of the time. Different from the novel, the film is set in double lines, the main line is Miss G's evil way, the vice is the girls' new life. The two clues develop parallelly, and formual attitude of the fall and rise in the end, and the opportunity is Feeyama's appearance and death. While in the novel, the clue of the story is only one — the evil bred in the extreme environment. The existence of Miss G is just a cancel cell of the malignant transformation of the girls' psychological process, an intro of tragic event.

V. CONCLUSION

The simplication in the tense and the addition to the narrative clues, undoubtedly serve for the film's theatricality — Miss G's disguise is finally exposed and her false personality is showed. The film selects the most dramatic composition in the novel as main body in the film, and reveals two different lifves through the results. The adaption gives the story more to watch, easy to understand, but also makes a deep thinking about teenage problem flatten into a conspiracy story of the opposition of good and evil, neglectes and simplifies the describition of complex life in the novel.

There is no doubt that Scott Jordan's adaptation of the novel to some extent is successful for the good management of loose and tight narration, and the actor's performance is also very convincing. But the adaptation of the novel also exists planarity, simplification, and the tendency of excessive dramatization, dissolving the deep thinking of original problem, which is a deep regret.

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