

Shadow, Existence and Individuation

Interpreting Japanese Film "The Low Life" from the Perspective of Analytical Psychology*

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Abstract—From the perspective of analytical psychology, this paper interprets and analyzes Japanese film "The Low life" from the dimensions of the core concepts of analysis psychology—individuation, shadow, the acceptance and transformation of shadow. It outlines the psychological meaning of "People's search for their status in the world and their identity" which strenuous expressed in the film.

Keywords—*individuation; shadow; existence*

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Low Life" is a novel by Japanese adult film actress Mana Sakura. In 2017, it was adapted into a film of the same name and played in the Main Competition Unit of the Tokyo International Film Festival together with other 15 international films. This short story was once among the front roll of best-selling novels. Different from the "erotic" description and "must have to" choice in the past impressions, this novel highlights women, the life meaning and self-realization of women in this industry. It is also different from the ordinary writer's "God's perspective", the author herself is engaged in this industry and seems to have in-depth thinking. Just like the director who put this novel on the big screen once said: This novel is about people looking for their status in the world, as well as their identity". In other words, it is the location of existence. At the same time, it also explores the embodiment as the channel of self-expression and communication.

Analytical psychology explores the culture widely, it is an

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unconscious deep psychology, and explores the meaning of myths, religions, cultures and races as the symbols in human society. It also uniquely describes the human shadow, individuation, archetype these content of human cultural unconsciousness and collective unconsciousness. In 1912, Jung first proposed the concept of shadow, in the following decades, Jung continued to study and enrich this concept. By 1945, Jung gave a straightforward, clear definition: "It (shadow) is the kind of thing that an individual is unwilling to become. The shadow is the repressed part of personality, it has vitality and autonomy. If the shadow has always been suppressed and not well treated by Self-awareness and social norms, it will eventually lead to serious consequences. The repressed parts will separate and form fragments of personality, leading to the division of personality. If the individual cannot mediate these two aspects, it will lead to neuropathic division. Jung equates the inferior function of the shadow with its involuntary nature around a large number of autonomy and emotions. The ultimate goal of Jungian analysis psychology is to achieve individuation. It is the individuation process is start with the individual is able to realize the shadow. Individualization, Jung believes that the goal of spiritual development is self, there is no linear evolution, only some kind of detour to oneself. Single form of development at most exists in the beginning period, after which everything points to the core, and the process of lifelong psychological development is the individuation [1].

II. MIXED NARRATIVE AND REALISM

This adapted film is a mixed narrative realism film that records the conflicts faced by four women and how to find them, as Zeze told AFP during the interview: "This movie is about people looking for the status in the world, and their identity". Three of the women's life stories start when they become AV actresses. Miho is a 34-year-old housewife who respects her husband. Her husband is good in most aspects, but

he is sleeping in a different room with Miho with the excuse of busy work. Until Miho found that her husband was watching adult film behind her back, finally Miho made a decision: to shoot AV. After the first shooting, the actor who played her opponent came to comfort her. He shared some of his own experiences when starting this job: I thought I had to love each other to do it, but no matter how to whitewash it, human beings are no pure animals. In the end, I can only comfort myself that this is just work, and work should be done happily and efficiently. Miho herself was the most sensible person at home since childhood. In this repressed family, she gradually retracted her desires and showed what they expected. No one has ever cared about what she wants. Shooting the film became her only outlet for venting, from shyness to input and then to enjoyment. She indulges into sex, gets a short self-satisfaction in the false plot, and feels loved. Because the job she did not get to see her father before he died, it became her most regrettable thing. In the face of her husband, she chose not to hide anymore... The second protagonist is Ayano who came to Tokyo to study, she chose to drop out of school and enter the adult film industry without telling her family. A childish face has a maturity that does not match the age. Unlike Miho's initial entry into the AV industry, Ayano has a period of experience so clearly she is a veteran. Even she will be joking with the actor after the shooting. There are too many people working together, so she became numb, and sex has become a job, it did not make her feel real happiness. Once in the bar she met a wonderful man but the next morning, she hesitated, flinched, and unilaterally killed this unsentimental relationship. After all, there are too many uncertain factors, if he knows her career, will this relationship still have result? The last protagonist of the story is Takako who has already withdrawn from the adult film industry. When Takako was young, she shot a period of adult movies, hooked up with a married man and got pregnant, so she has to stop shooting. When she gave birth to her daughter Ayako alone, she was unable to maintain her livelihood, so Takako took Ayako back to hometown and ask her grandmother to raise Ayako, as well as Takako herself. Soon Ayako has grown up, she became a beautiful girl, and is quite talented in art. But the fact that her mother once shot adult film bothered her, and soon the news went public in school. The classmates isolated her, humiliated her, mocked her, and made her unable to lift her head. What's more, someone had text the whole school crowd and making her unspeakable secret go public. Because of this, the relationship between Ayako and Takako is getting worse. Ayako could not understand why Takako has to shoot adult films. Although this has become a thing of the past, the label "AV actress" will follow Takako for a lifetime, and the name "AV actress's daughter" will be accompanied with Ayako in the future. This has become the smog forever in this family's heart.

The four protagonists in the film except one of the daughters who are not engaged in this industry, the other three each represent the three stages of filming adult movies. The environment, family and pressure that each person faces at every stage is different. There are thousands of reasons to enter this industry, but most of the outcomes are the same. As long as you set foot on the adult film industry, it is basically a no return road. In Japan, where adult movies are legal, the

public's acceptance of AV actresses is far less than we think. Many people watched the AV while looking down on the AV actress. Just as the protagonist has been confused: Why are content creators lower than consumers? They watch porn movies, but they look down on the AV actress.

The mixed narrative style adopted by this film often not only allows the audience to see the AV actress at different stages, but also sees the difference behind the same appearance. Although they all are AV actresses, although it also involves the search for self, search for the feelings to be loved, search for the feelings of existence, but each person's path to self-realization is still different. Miho found the release of her suppressed desire through this path and the discovery of herself along the way; Ayano found the real place for her own personality and confidence through this road, and it is precisely the embodiment of self-worth; Takako found the so-called "true love" through this road, otherwise she would not give birth to the child and be forced to stop the occupation, but she can not integrate into the surroundings, and frequently suffering from the "lower look" around.

III. BINARY DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE HIGH AND LOW AND EXPRESSION OF EXISTENCE AND SHADOW

There are many expressions of binary conflicts in the film. On one hand, the film plot is pushed to the climax, on the other hand, the binary opposition is also expressed:

When Miho's father died in the hospital, she was playing the erotic plot on the set with the actor. The climax of life experiences and the saddest emotions happened at the same time. This is not only a synchronic expression, but also a revival of life. Should we allow releasing our own desires? Whether it is related to punishment if the desire has been satisfied? Whether it is still deeply in the conflict of satisfying self and others? In the end of film, Miho confessed to her husband, lying quietly in the father's mourning hall "upstairs", sleeping gave the best answer.

Ayako wearing a low-necked white shirt to help in the grandmother's restaurant, male guests can not help but sign with emotions, Ayako grows more and more beautiful, grandmother reminds her to wear a little more in the future, Ayako questioned her grandmother, are you jealous of me who is so young and beautiful? On one hand, it is the "positive" Representative who raised two generations with hard work, on the one hand is the combination of "AV" actress and male one-night stand — Ayako, it seems to be a symbol of the combination and product of the shadow, but it seems that the positive part is also has envy and jealous to the "shadow", just like the "shadow" also has energy, power and positive side. The lines in "The Dead End" said: "The law is particularly cute. No matter how good you can be, it only limits you from unlimited bad. It is clear that everyone has something dirty in their hearts, it is ok to think about it, but it can't be done. The law is more like the subsistence allowance of human nature, which is a compulsory cultivation. It has humanity but also it is cruel". The evil of human nature, pornography, violence, gangs, gray areas, etc., just like the shadow of humanity as a whole, people always want to have a "Heaven" where there is no such shadow, but since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden

fruit and expelled from heaven, humans have never lived in "heaven" since then. Shadows will be here as long as people are there, just as we can always see our shadows as long as we exist. The shadows are always there. If try to leading the pornography, I am afraid that the darkness of human nature will be like flood and beasts, and it will be out of control. If we block pornography, then I am afraid that human nature will fall into a vacuum zone and there is nowhere to breathe. But the upside down weather to block it or to lead it, human beings have their own laws and policies, but as a complete person, "Birth is certainly the greatest thing in the world, but 'sex' is equally great, because it is the fusion of love, and pornography is the original sin of human beings. Weather to black or lead, the truth will help guide it".

Shadows cannot be eliminated. After finding the shadow, it takes courage to face the shadow. Shadows are not accepted by individuals, cultures, and society, even they are myths and prehistoric things. Because of their strong vitality and autonomy, as stated in "Live": They did not give up, they did not ask for support and encouragement, they only ask for no ridicule. I took off my clothes and lay in front of the camera to survive. And you are standing in front of the camera in a well-dressed manner, but only to deceive. No one can be spared in front of shadows.

For shadows, repression is useless. Internal harmony has become a major problem for individuals and society to a large extent, but if individuals want to be more than just two-dimensional people, shadows must be dealt with [2].

IV. THE FATE AND INDIVIDUATION IN THE DESTINY

Individuation is a kind of motivation, an innate tendency which born with — we call it a drive, impulse, or a compulsive command in certain stages of life. This is to let the surviving individual fully embody themselves and become a real self in the time and space of the experience world. In the human world, who do you think you are? What is it? The nature of human selfhood and its development towards more distant consciousness are highly complex issues for everyone and constitute two themes of deep psychology [3].

In the film, Ayako likes to paint, she likes an unknown painter's paintings and she can't tell why. Just like she always wondered why her mother had to pursue such a career in the past and who is her father? She had too many questions until Miho's father died, and her mother told her who is her real father, when she went to the funeral, the mystery of life was revealed one by one, the only girl who surpassed her, even her half-sister, her mother all engaged in this industry, but she has her own destiny and interest, she has her own direction to achieve her own value, even more she found her own existence, accepted her own origin, and realized the beginning of individuation.

V. SURPASSING: ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE

Ayano, who was not able to get attention from childhood, lied that she was study in Tokyo but she sneaked out to be an AV actress. When her mother knew that she was coming with her sister, the first sentence she asked was: Is it because of the loan shark? Are you been cheated? (This is also the definition

of AV actress from a lot of person, but not because they owe usury or are deceived to be an AV actress). But Ayano said: This is just my job. Her mother screamed and begged her on her knees, but Ayano was not moved. When her mother left, she left a note saying, "Feel free to go home at any time if you feel work is too hard". Ayano who was first shows indifferent chased her mother and return the note to her mother and screamed: "I did a job that no one knows, how can I go back?" After several tossing, her mother gently folded the clothes and left. At the station, the mother and daughter hold each other affectionately. The scene was probably the warmest and most powerful scene in the whole film. The mother no longer forced Ayano to leave the industry that she liked, no longer accused her from doing such a disgraceful industry; she was no longer using her so-called maternal love to let her experience the endless "shame". Instead she held her daughter who is not glamorous and still persistent to go on. It is the most acceptable way for humans to treat the shadows, the acceptance of shadow is not an easy task, accepting the shadow means that people must admit those "evil" things belong to themselves. Just as each of us may easily say the shadows of pornography, violence, etc., or when these shadows are a concept, we are easy to accept, but when these shadows belong to us? When the qualities of these shadows happen to ourselves or to the people we are closest to? It is very difficult for us to accept it. Just as the mother of Ayano, at first she did not believe it at all, later she try very hard to pull her back and escape. Although accepting shadows makes us no longer "perfect", it makes us a "complete" person. That is, this process of acceptance resolves the confrontation between consciousness and shadow (unconsciousness) and opens the way to harmony between the two (Dethlefsen Darke, 1999) [4]. The image of the mother, only the warm love of the mother can resolve the "shadow" injury.

VI. CONCLUSION

In short, this is a film that visualizes the human embarrassment and desires. It shows the process, conflicts of some groups looking for a path of individuation, and avoiding the shadows of desire and pornography sliding completely into the darkness of human consciousness. In the end, it symbolically and perfectly demonstrates to the audience how to treat the shadows and show the possibility of transforming the shadows. But although the touching work of director Takahisa Zeze has pulled the heart strings, the audience expects that the moral distortion will be disappointing - the film deliberately avoids criticizing the AV (adult video) industry, and the public publicly accuses it of whitewashing the exploitation problem, perhaps this is also its own shadow this film has to face.

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