

Analysis of the Film 'Rebirth' of the Price of Revenge: The Distortion of Human Nature and Moral Degradation

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Abstract: The film *Rebirth*, starring Eric Chang and Ruan Jingtian, tells the story of two people with very different personalities who meet for the same purpose of revenge and desire to seek redemption in that revenge. This paper will analyze the film 'Rebirth', examining the impact and costs of revenge on the individual involved and those potentially affected, as well as delving into the concept of redemption between individuals and the intricacies of human nature as depicted in the film. This paper will study the psychological impact of revenge on the characters and the moral dilemma from a psychological perspective; then analyze it from a socio-cultural perspective, exploring the diversity of the expression of the theme of revenge in different cultures; and finally analyze the visual language of the film, analyzing the portrayal of each character as well as the transformation of each scene at the moment of revenge through the study of the film's plot. This paper will combine the above factors to analyze the ending and cost of 'revenge', conclude that the cost of revenge is multi-dimensional, mixed with the complexity of human nature, and reflect on the social phenomenon with the content of the film so as to provoke more thoughts.

Keywords: Revenge, Moral Degradation, Humanity, Redemption, Tragedy.

1. Introduction

Many professionals in the field of film analysis have extensively studied and explored the topic of "revenge" as an important argument. Typically, this involves examining the psychological effects and shifts in mindset that "revenge" brings about. Additionally, "revenge" frequently contradicts theories of social morality and propriety [1]. At the same time, scholars have expressed the concept of 'revenge' in more diversified ways according to different social and cultural backgrounds, which makes the audience more receptive to the content conveyed by the film [2]. In addition, the image language of the film on the theme of vengeance is also worth exploring in depth, and a more skilled and good use of audio-visual effects in the film can give the audience a more perfect viewing experience to cause people's deep resonance and thinking [3]. This paper is through the analysis of the film's 'rebirth' of the plot and characterization and a more in-depth analysis of the theme of 'revenge'. In line with the direction of many previous researchers, this paper will also analyze the film 'Rebirth' from the two-way redemption and revenge motives, but the difference is that this paper will pay more attention to the study of the important characters in the film and the process of psychological transformation of the characters. Firstly, this paper will start from analyzing the most basic image language in the film, and through exploring the plot of the film, we will analyse the different shapes of each character and

the transformation and editing of each scene in the context of revenge; then, we will study the psychological impact of revenge on the characters from the psychological point of view, which also involves moral and ethical issues, such as the fact that vengeance is usually on the opposite side of justice, and whether vengeance can be justified; finally, from the social and cultural aspects, this paper will study the psychological influence of revenge on the characters, and whether vengeance can be justified. From a socio-cultural perspective, this paper scrutinizes the acceptance of the concept of revenge in various social contexts, the transformation of the revenge story's narrative in various cultural contexts, and the internal transformations of the revengeful characters in various social contexts. This paper is of great significance to the field of psychology and sociology, as it helps people to understand more deeply the impact of revenge on negative psychological emotions, promotes social balance and reflection on justice and morality, and provides theoretical references for the reduction of social conflicts and the improvement of the legal system in a more humane way.

2. Overview of the Article Lineage

Rebirth is a crime film directed by Ma Yu Ke, which focuses on the story of many innocent people who rise up to take revenge after their homes are destroyed due to the rampage of a drug cartel. The two protagonists of the film, anti-narcotics police officer An Du and veteran Zhang Yao, work together secretly for the sake of their common enemy, joining forces to deal with the leaders of the cartel, Mu Kun and An Pei. But as the plan progresses, they slowly realize that the other's aim is not simply to get rid of the crime syndicate, and they each carry out this revenge drama with their own agenda. The script of '*Rebirth*' is more like a tragedy of the script kill, like a self-talking dream, letting the audience in the layers of reversal to lose themselves, but also subverting the normal logic and cognition. The theme of 'revenge' runs through the whole film. Zhang Yao's wife, a veteran, jumped to her death because she was forced to become addicted to drugs; Andu's parents, the parents of a narcotics police officer, died because of An Pei, one of the leaders of the crime syndicate; there are countless other people whose families are broken because they are forced to become addicted to drugs, and for them at this time, they can only live by breaking through and getting rid of the crime syndicate. At this point in time, their sole motivation is to eliminate the crime syndicate in a desperate attempt to survive. At this point, they no longer care about a positive or negative outcome; they live for "revenge," which serves as the motive and reason for the theme of "revenge" throughout the film.

3. Film Art and Narrative Technique

The film uses a variety of narrative structures, among which the flashback structure is the most distinctive [4]. Both of the film's climactic reversals consist of flashbacks, commencing from pivotal moments in the story and regressing through flashbacks to gradually unveil the origins and outcomes of the events. The first flashback structure occurs when Ando first reveals his ambition, which is the film's first turning point and pushes the film to another climax; and the second turning point occurs at the end of the film, which is the second time the film uses the flashback structure. At this point in the film, Ando has become so arrogant that he wants to trample the world under his feet. He thinks that everything is under his control, but he has also overlooked Zhang Yao, who can be the biggest variable in the film. His goal is not just to work with Ando to get rid of the crime syndicate; he wants to risk his own life to make drugs disappear from the city. Zhang Yao is not alone; behind him are many people whose families have also been destroyed by drugs, who live for revenge and never fear death. Let's go back to the narrative technique of the film. In addition to the flashback structure, the film also employs a multi-linear narrative structure and a narrative non-linear structure. The film involves a number of story lines; for example, it also uses flashbacks to tell Nancy's story and uses her story as an introduction, which leads to the tragic situation of many drug-affected people and their

families, who are forced to live and die, which once again points out the core of 'revenge'. The moral degradation and the distortion of human nature. These story lines will eventually converge and influence each other, just like the theme of 'Revenge' that runs through the whole film, and the film also uses multiple perspectives to tell the story, which makes the emotions expressed in the film richer and more able to arouse the audience's thoughts and resonance.

4. Language of Images

In addition to the narrative structure, which is very attractive to the audience, the use of music and color in the film is also worth studying [5]. The film inserts different styles of music in the two reversal places through timely music changes; for example, the fight scene before the reversal is heavy metal rock music; the drum beat of the music matches the rhythm of the actors' fight scene, which is full of excitement; and the soundtrack after the reversal is very sad; the music and the film lines match each other with a sense of sadness, which makes the audience feel the desperate situation of the characters in the same situation. Through the advancement of the plot, the skillful use of scene changes and camera positions, and the precise control of the camera angle at the reversal, the audience's curiosity is drawn out, and good visual and auditory effects are presented, which increase the viewing experience of the film. It is worth mentioning that several fight scenes in the film are very exciting. In the film, during Zhang Yao's initial encounter with an attack at sea, the cameraman demonstrated a unique approach by filming the fight scene from the bottom to the top. This approach not only made Zhang Yao appear at a crucial moment but also highlighted his high force value. Additionally, the fight scene between Zhang Yao, Andu, and the crime syndicate in the film's climax was equally exciting. Whether it's the intense street gunfight scenes or the close-quarters fight scenes, they all evoke intense emotions in viewers, causing them to sweat for the brilliant actors.

5. Psychological Impacts and Emotional Costs

Director Ma Yuke portrays the psychological changes within the characters in a profound way, making them more vivid and flesh and blood. As the plot advances in the film, the psychological changes of the characters are well worth exploring. Narcotics police officer Andu grew up living under the second leader of a crime syndicate, Anpei, whose identity is not only the second leader of the crime syndicate; he is also the director of the police department. And it was this extremely evil person who put Andu's parents to death when Andu was a child, so much so that Andu's heart was filled with strong hatred and resentment, and he practically grew up in an extremely dark environment. And the first turning point in his life was when he fell in love with a woman beside Anpei—Nancy. Nancy's appearance made Ampei think that he had been redeemed, that someone understood him, supported him, loved him, and pulled him out of the abyss where he could not see the light of day. And Andu put more and more of his emotions on Nancy. As time passed, Andu even projected his thoughts of his mother onto Nancy. But he knew that this was unspeakable and forbidden love, and that as long as Ampei did not die, he would not see the light of day. So he buried his growing hatred in his heart and turned it into a seed that took root and grew into a great tree. He wanted more and more, and his psyche became more and more twisted. He wanted the world in his hands, not just the destruction of a crime syndicate. He is perhaps the only person in the entire film who has ever fantasized about a better future, seeing not death but a happier life on the road to revenge. But things don't work out as they should, and when a person's psyche is extremely distorted, he can't distinguish between right and wrong and can't see justice [6]; and Zhang Yao, unlike Ando, is a vengeful person who runs towards death. From the time his family was destroyed due to the proliferation of drugs, he already had no hope for life; he lived for revenge and died for it. At first, he was full of grief and anger; the original happy family was shattered; the sudden change of life has plunged him into the

abyss of pain; he only wanted to avenge his wife and daughter; the determination of revenge has become the only belief to support him. When he tried to step into the trap set by Ando, he had to disguise himself, suppress his true feelings, and join hands with Ando secretly; however, as the plot advances and everything comes to light, Ando's ambition emerges, and he gradually reveals his resolute and bold side. He is not afraid of death; he has seen too many people who can barely survive because of drugs, and his sense of justice as a soldier gradually emerges; he never rises to the occasion, and his courage does not diminish at all in the face of his enemies.

If Andu is the ultimate black, he is pure white, and in the midst of a moral dilemma on the road to vengeance, he stands firmly on the side of justice.

While the psychological impact of revenge was discussed above, the following section discusses the emotional cost of revenge. Although revenge can bring momentary satisfaction and pleasure, the repercussions will also bring great pain, and the emotional costs are often far-reaching and complex. Revenge persists in inflicting pain and hatred; it is not a transient psychological phenomenon; it persistently lingers in people's hearts, without prompt resolution, and persists until death. The burden and remorse in the avenger's heart often accompany the pain and hatred, leading people to lose themselves and fail to find genuine relief. This is exactly what happened to Ando in the film *Rebirth*: he lost both of his parents because of Ampei; he lived in pain and hatred since he was a child; he had to hide his true self in order to survive at the hands of Ampei; and his extreme humility and pain led to a very twisted psyche. After Nancy appears, she relieves some of Andu's pain, but a greater hatred comes with her because Nancy is Ampei's sidekick, and Andu can't have her at all, which deepens Andu's hatred for Ampei as well as aggravating Andu's desire to get money and power. As the climax of the film approaches, the hatred in Ando's heart grows deeper and deeper. With years of courageous work at Ampei's side, he finally wipes out Ampei and the crime syndicate, but his desire grows more and more, the emotional cost of revenge has been carved into his bone marrow, and he is ambitious enough to think of world dominance. When he discovers that Nancy is a part of the so-called justice system, the beliefs that have been holding him together begin to crumble. The salvation he once believed in served as a catalyst, plunging him into a deep abyss; he has completely lost himself; the weight of revenge and remorse leaves him conflicted; he is forever engulfed in pain and a false self-perception, remorse that endures for a lifetime without any relief. The pleasure and satisfaction of revenge are usually very short-lived, and the trauma caused by revenge is often more lasting. The emotional cost of revenge is often high, and it does not bring true satisfaction but rather plunges people into deeper emotional and moral dilemmas.

The social and cultural background in the film is also an important factor in the theme of revenge [7]. Narcotics police officer Andu was born into a happy family, but the appearance of Amber makes it hard to take away the happiness that originally belonged to him, so that he grew up in a humble, gloomy environment, so that his heart is full of darkness. As time passes, he has the ability to protect himself. In the police academy, he day by day draws strips into a stranger he feels from time to time, not daring to have a moment of slack. He is afraid that after slacking off, he will become the same person he was when he was a child again with no hands. He housed himself in a dark blue uniform, with a police cap on his head, and the star badge on his shoulder refracted a different light, as if his life was slowly moving towards the light. Gradually, people began to call him Officer An and began to follow his orders and commands. He began to be able to live with dignity. As his social status slowly rises, he also cares more and more about rights, and he knows how comfortable An Pei, who sits on money and power, lives. He hated everything that Amber had, yet he wanted to take Amber's place. Dark and twisted thoughts took root in his heart and grew into a big tree. And Nancy's appearance seemed to fill his determination to want revenge with a full dose of catalyst. He began to live for dignity and have Nancy's love, very contradictory but reasonable; he wants to get emotional redemption but also wants to sit on the money and power; he wants to sit on the highest point of the

world. Because in his perception, money and power are what can always protect his dignity. He has carved his hatred for Amber into his heart, and he sees the end of revenge as 'rebirth'. Such a twisted motive achieved his ruthlessness in revenge; An Pei subconsciously influenced him to become a person who survives under extreme darkness, and the person who is filled with the psychology of vengeance and does all the bad things will be reversed; only Ando can never realize this; he is the one who is truly motivated by "vengeance" and "rebirth." He is the one who is truly "reborn" for the sake of "revenge."

6. Discussion

Since ancient times, the concept of vengeance in traditional Chinese culture has differed markedly from that of modern society, a change that has been influenced mainly by social reforms and the refinement of the legal system and moral values. In ancient China, the concept of vengeance was strongly influenced by Confucian ethics, family concepts, and social status, especially among families, where aspects of honor and filial piety were prominent. The traditional concept of justice emphasized reciprocal retaliation, teaching people the code of conduct of 'if no one offends me, I will not offend', and the concept of justice of 'an eye for an eye, blood for blood', which advocated the restoration of equality and the resolution of family or personal disputes through vengeance. In the old days, the legal system was not so important, and people mainly used 'revenge' to restore social order and improve social status. In Confucian culture, filial piety is an extremely important moral code, and filial piety is a traditional virtue from ancient times to the present, teaching children to have a high degree of loyalty and respect for their parents and elders [8]. As a result, vengeance has become a family duty, especially the concept of 'father's revenge', which emphasizes that children must avenge their parents' deaths or be considered unfilial [9]. The concept of vengeance in contemporary society, however, puts morality in first place and improves the legal system, thanks to the renewal of people's thinking and the influence of globalization. Nowadays, the establishment and improvement of the state's legal system has replaced the pure revenge for the sake of hatred in ancient times; improper revenge behavior is regarded as illegal and is sanctioned by the law. Solving problems through the judicial way emphasizes more on the fairness and justice of the law than the era controlled by money power [10].

The modern people's moral concept of renewal, so that people pay more attention to the attention of personal tolerance and social harmony rather than put the heart full of hatred in the first place, is more concerned about how to easily reconcile, advocating the concept of 'hello, I am good, everyone is good'. 'Revenge' is gradually regarded as a kind of unsound catharsis, which is contrary to the rationality and tolerance advocated by modern society [11].

Not only that, the impact of revenge action on the social audience involves multiple levels of analysis and research. In particular, the theme of 'revenge' in film and television works often has a complex and diverse impact on social audiences [12]. 'Revenge' usually triggers a strong emotional response from the audience, which can stimulate emotions such as anger, sympathy, and satisfaction. Conflicts and triumphs in revenge stories often satisfy the audience's emotional needs. In the film '*Rebirth*', the plot in which Andu and Zhang Yao teamed up to solve the crime syndicate and bring them to justice made many viewers applaud and feel relieved. When viewers see that justice is done, they may feel some kind of satisfaction, and the revenge plot in the film provides them with an emotional outlet in disguise. At the same time, however, the act of revenge is often accompanied by moral dilemmas. In the film, the narcotics cop Ando ignores the law and morality in order to take revenge; he only wants to pursue the so-called sense of justice in his heart, which makes many people die at his hands and cannot rest in peace. Viewers may experience a moral struggle while watching the film — they are satisfied by Andu's success against the black forces but struggle with the moral edge over Andu's indiscriminate killing of innocents... i.e., on the one hand they sympathize with the

avenger, but on the other hand they realize that the act of revenge may bring harm to many people and lose its moral justification. The impact of vengeance on the social audience is multi-dimensional; it not only engages the emotional senses but also affects people's views of justice; revenge plots can trigger emotional resonance in the audience, but they may also lead to a glorification of violence or questioning of the legal system.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the cost of revenge is multi-dimensional; it is diverse because it is mixed with human nature, which is complex, changeable, and inconsistent. By analyzing the theme of 'revenge', the film 'Rebirth' not only profoundly portrays the richness of different characters but also combines the entertainment of the film to portray the film story, which is more capable of arousing the audience's empathy and reflection on the social phenomenon, system, and structure and can cause the audience to think more independently. Although this paper has explored and analyzed the theme of revenge in depth, there are still many shortcomings; this paper focuses more on the analysis of individual films than on the analysis of different films in a more diversified way. Thus, this paper does not cover all revenge films or other films of the same genre and theme that want to convey the audience's somewhat different feelings and thoughts. In the future, research in the field of film analysis has the potential to broaden its scope, allowing for the exploration and analysis of a wider range of image languages through more specific and diverse film examples.

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