

Research on the Constructive Narrative Mode of Film based on the Embodied Imagination Theory

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Abstract:

Psychoanalytic theory can be used to analyze the narrative mode of the film to explain psychological problems from the perspective of dreams. Based on the theory of embodied imagination, this study uses the text analysis method to analyze the film constructive narrative mode embodied in the film *Deep Sea* through the case study. The film constructs the sand play narrative space and uses nonlinear narrative techniques to reflect the three major characteristics of the film's constructive narrative mode based on the theory of embodied imagination: the integration of authenticity and illusion in image construction, the penetration of emotional emergence and the process of image experience, and the realization of healing effects both on and off-screen. In the research process, the advantages and disadvantages of film works are analyzed. The advantages of free narrative logic and immersive movie-watching experience are accompanied by the disadvantages of increasing the threshold of movie-watching and large investment risks. This study provides a reference for the construction of the theoretical system of film constructive narrative mode.

Keywords: Embodied imagination theory; constructive narrative mode; sand play narrative space; nonlinear narrative technique.

1. Introduction

Using the perspective of dreams to present psychological problems is a common technique in movies. Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the healing power of dreams and stimulates its healing effect through the study of dreams. Therefore, using psychoanalytic theory to analyze the text of movies can explore the narrative mode when movies present psychological problems from the perspective of dreams. This study focuses on the theory of embodied imagination and the constructive narrative mode of film based on it. From the perspective of text analysis, it explores the script characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of the constructive narrative mode based on embodied imagination theory. It has important reference value for forming a traceable theoretical system of constructive narrative mode. This study mainly uses literature analysis to read and analyze relevant literature and conducts text analysis of typical film cases through case studies. On the premise of film practice, this paper refines the relevant characteristics of the constructive narrative mode. The goal of this study is to form the characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of the constructive narrative model that is scientific and can guide practice, and provide a ref-

erence for the construction of the theoretical system of the constructive narrative model in the future.

2. Theoretical Basis

“Embodied imagination” is a kind of “dream work” method created by Robert Bernick based on analytical psychology theory, advocating that in the threshold state between consciousness and unconsciousness, the dream image is re-experienced in the way of active imagination, and the unconscious content is realized through the awareness of different body feelings to achieve the corresponding therapeutic effect.

The theoretical basis of embodied imagination theory inherits Freud's traditional psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology and comes from the school of archetypal psychology [1]. Embodied imagination theory not only has high theoretical and practical value in the field of psychology but also has broad application space in the field of literature and art. The embodied imagination theory provides a new perspective for the psychoanalysis method of film and gradually forms a new narrative logic and mode for its unique image experience method. The narrative mode of many famous movies more or less reflects the spiritual core embodied by the image.

2.1 The Historical Evolution of the Embodied Imagination Theory

According to traditional psychoanalysis theory, dreams are the unconscious reflection of reality based on human desire, and the elements of dreams are arranged by a special logic of unconsciousness, which is the subconscious symbol of unconsciousness. Therefore, free association aims to deconstruct, analyze and associate the images in dreams, to obtain the conscious connotation of the unconscious images. And rely on the image connotation interpretation to realize the healing effect in the real world. This theory has been continuously retained and developed as the theoretical core of psychoanalysis [2].

The theoretical basis of analytical psychology is to construct the overall mechanism of mental balance, in which the role of dreams is to achieve this stable equilibrium state by "compensating" consciousness. Moreover, it is believed that the image in dreams expresses itself in a metaphorical form, so it is necessary to complete the image content through Active Imagination [3].

2.2 The Basic Theoretical Connotation of Embodied Imagination Theory

First of all, dreams are real [4]. This is the most important theoretical basis for embodied imagination theory. The embodied imagination theory holds that dreams mirror and complement the real world, thus making it possible to communicate consciousness and unconsciousness. Secondly, dreams should be viewed from the metaphorical perspective of subject-object consistency [4]. Based on the real-world view, the embodied imagination theory draws on the phenomenological theory, opposes the subject-object opposition, connects the subject and the object by suspending the meaning of the image, and makes the image experience possible. It advocates a mildly constructive way of working in dreams, thus communicating the conscious and unconscious to achieve real-world healing effects. Finally, dream work is therapeutic. The embodied imagination theory inherits the consistent tradition of psychoanalysis, advocating that through communication between consciousness and unconsciousness, negative emotions and energy stored in unconsciousness can be released, and trauma transformation and healing can be realized through embodied imagination [5].

Since then, the embodied imagination theory has emphasized the value of emotion and believes that emotion is a bridge between consciousness and unconsciousness. Emotional fluctuation and emergence mean the smooth progress of image experience and the gradual advancement of the healing process [6].

3. Application of Embodied Imagination Theory to Film Narrative Mode

The relationship between psychological problems and dreams is inseparable. Because of the connection between psychological problems and dreams in their manifestations, the two are often discussed together. Dream is not only an important perspective to study psychological problems, but also an important form to describe psychological problems. Therefore, psychoanalysis hopes to stimulate the healing effect of dreams through the study of dreams, to realize the treatment of realistic psychological problems.

In the art of cinema, dreams are connected with psychological problems. In the expression of the emotional feelings and treatment process of psychological problems, it has become an important choice of film expression techniques to present in the perspective and form of dreams. Because of the underlying relevance, the way dreams are presented tends to present psychological problems truthfully to the audience in a more free and infectious way.

Therefore, psychoanalytic theory can be used for the artistic analysis of films, to find out in which aspects the theoretical core of psychoanalysis is applied in films, and then summarize, analyze and transform it into a relatively mature and fixed film narrative mode, providing references for the artistic creation of films.

Corresponding to the development of psychoanalytic theory, the film can be divided into two ways when using the connotation of psychoanalytic theory to interpret dreams, namely deconstructive narrative mode and constructive narrative mode. The deconstructive narrative mode corresponds to the traditional psychoanalytic theory and free association, and its core feature is to advance the plot along a complete and clear story arc and constantly explain the dream images. Starting from the story, it gradually presents a novel with an attractive plot and theme for the audience. The constructive narrative mode corresponds to analytical psychology and active imagination. In contrast to the deconstructive narrative mode, there is often no clear story context in its artistic presentation, and the story process is changeable and difficult to predict by the audience. The storyline is relatively loose, but there is an emphasis on emotional outbursts and emotional experiences along the way. From the perspective of experience, it is hoped that the audience will be brought into the characters to feel the development of the story together.

The two narrative modes are not contrary to each other. In some films, the characteristics of the two narrative modes are blurred and merged. As a non-mainstream narrative mode, the constructive narrative mode intentionally retains some characteristics of the deconstructive narra-

tive mode in the process of development. For example, although it does not rely on a clear storyline to connect the plot of the film, it does not mean that the constructive narrative fully adopts the stream-of-consciousness telling method, but still retains the plot core for most of the time, avoiding the plot development of clutter or completely deviating from the theme.

The narrative mode using the embodied imagination theory is a typical example of the two narrative modes learning from each other. In essence, it belongs to the constructive narrative mode. Because embodied imagination and active imagination are in the same vein, both emphasize the experience of dream images. This experience process must have no established context and end, and there can be no established storyline and ending restriction in artistic presentation. However, different from active imagination, embodied imagination does not advocate the active creation of consciousness but emphasizes the experience and communication of the original dream image. Therefore, reflected in the narrative mode, the embodied imagination does not advocate the unlimited creation of consciousness, but limits the story to the original scope as far as possible, and rejects the deliberate complication and illogic of the plot. Therefore, the constructive narrative mode of the embodied imagination theory, while retaining its characteristics, integrates some advantages of the deconstructive narrative mode, and presents dreams in a form that is easier to be accepted by the audience.

4. The Methodology of Constructing Narrative Mode

The constructive narrative model with the embodied imagination theory as the core is a general theoretical framework. In practice, more specific psychological and film art theories will be used to explain, and the spiritual core of the image embodiment theory will be reflected in the interpretation. Among them, the representative theories include sand play narrative theory and nonlinear narrative theory.

Sand play therapy is a psychological clinical technique. The core of sand play therapy is to construct box-court space. The recipient places and combines toys at will in the box filled with fine sand to connect with his/her unconsciousness, thus realizing the communication between consciousness and unconsciousness in the box and courtyard space, realizing the release of negative unconscious abilities, motivating his/her self-healing abilities, and finally achieving the treatment of psychological problems in reality [7].

Similar to dreams, the sand play space can be used as a space for the existence, communication, and experience

of unconscious images. Therefore, sand play therapy provides operational space for the embodied imagination theory from the practical level. From the perspective of film narrative mode, the film can also construct a sand play narrative space for the characters, in which there are unconscious images related to the characters. The film presents the process of the story, which is to use artistic techniques to show the treatment process of the sand play therapy, and finally achieve the healing effect both on and off the screen. This kind of film art narrative technique is called the sand play narrative technique.

The narrative technique of the sand play determines that there will be a large number of metaphorical images in the film, which represent the unconscious images of the characters. In the process of communicating, experiencing, and growing together with one image after another, the characters release their unconscious negative emotions in the way of emotional emergence and thus obtain self-redemption. This is also the basic content of the sand play narrative film.

The nonlinear narrative technique is a widely used but not clearly defined narrative technique. Its most important feature is the opposite of linear narrative. In film practice, the main application of nonlinear narrative techniques is to change the way of telling movies in the order of time and achieve a higher degree of freedom in content telling using flashbacks [8].

But in the practice of film, there are still many controversies about nonlinear narration. First of all, the abandonment of chronological order does not mean the use of nonlinear narrative techniques. Many movies don't advance the story in chronological order, but there is still a clear storyline to guide the progress of the plot. Secondly, although the use of narrative techniques such as flashback can give the story more flexibility, the abuse of this technique will destroy the story and fluency of the film. Finally, some films show nonlinear narrative effects even though they advance the plot in chronological order through exquisite plot settings or artistic techniques. Therefore, the nonlinear narrative technique is not a film narrative technique with mature theories and methodology but constantly explores new changes in the process of development and enrichment [9].

5. Text analysis of the film “Deep Sea”

As a psychological compensation mechanism, dreams will reflect the dilemma and desire of people in reality and express it through metaphor. In the *Deep Sea*, Shen Xiu is dissatisfied with reality, but it is difficult to escape, and the missing of the past is unable to return. In turn, it is wrapped in negative energy, resulting in strong self-anxi-

ety and depression. This realistic psychological dilemma becomes the basis of image construction in the film.

Swiss psychologist Piaget's research on child psychology shows that human thinking develops with age, gradually establishing the concept of object and stepping out of the "self-centeredness" without object [10]. The process of stepping out of self-centeredness is a process of constantly building emotional links with others. In contact with others' schemas, children constantly make emotional connections and gradually form stable and mature emotional and cognitive patterns. However, Shen Xiu, who was suffering from depression, evaded this process and fell into infinite memories of the good past, resulting in an imbalance in the mental state [11].

5.1 Basic Characteristics

By using the theory of sandplay narrative theory and nonlinear narrative technique, one can analyze the text of *Deep Sea*, so as to obtain the general characteristics and practical methods of the constructive narrative mode with the theory of embodied imagination as the core.

There are three basic characteristics of the constructive narrative model with the theory of embodied imagination as the core.

First of all, the reality of the dream determines that the construction of the sandplay narrative space and its images is based on reality, but it is modified by the rules of illusion, to construct an image experience space between reality and illusion. The image construction in *The Deep Sea* is based on reality, and many images in the film show one-to-one correspondence with things or emotions in the real world. For example, the sea spirit corresponds to the mother in reality, or the obsession with the desire to achieve the balance of the past; Dejected ghosts correspond to painful memories of the past; The red hoodie represents the missing mother; The rudder is a symbol of navigating the ocean of the unconscious as one wishes.

However, the imagery in dreams is not a mirror of the real world but is presented through various forms of metaphor. When facing immense psychological pressure and difficulties in reality, individuals may use pleasant illusions to mask the harshness of reality, thereby creating beautified imagery. This also sets the stage for subsequent communication and experience of these images.

In the deep sea world, the eccentric and alienated father is the sea otter Lao Jin, who has his own children, Hua Hua aunt became the first to accept the ginseng, replacing the Shen Xiu as the family center of the younger brother is to make the ginseng extremely intimate and comfortable small sea otter, the sneakers are not fit to become comfortable cotton drags, instant noodles can also be „Manhan dinner“, The whole gray-blue reality becomes a colorful

world. The images after beautification together provide an idealized space for Shen Xiu to receive attention and care, thus creating conditions for Shen Xiu to redeem itself.

Secondly, emotional emergence runs through the whole process of image experience. Image experience focuses on the change and emergence of emotions, using emotions as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious. The image experience and scene changes in the *Deep Sea* are accompanied by emotional fluctuations and emergence, and the emotional changes also symbolize the process of Shen Xiu's self-redemption step by step. The most visually striking particle ink special effects in the film, each appearance represents a release of emotions. Through the emergence and release of emotions again and again, Shen Xiu can release the negative emotions hidden in the unconscious from the real world, and express the true self in this process, so as to return to the state of psychological balance.

Not only that, many of the images in the deep sea are themselves symbols of emotion. The sea elves are guides of the sea adventure and represent positive emotions. They take on the image of a Shen Xiu's mother and guide Shen Xiu on their adventures in the deep sea. Dejected ghost is on behalf of negative emotions, whenever Shen Xiu into confusion and difficulties, on behalf of depression, sadness, dejected ghost will be Shen Xiu wrapped. These images not only represent different emotions, but also promote the emergence of emotions. Emotional change and emergence are important drivers of the story.

Finally, the healing effects are felt on and off screen. Insight experience is the psychological experience accompanying the whole process of insight problem solving [12]. Film has a stronger sense of „presence“ than other art media or presentation methods, that is, through a limited time to attract the audience to complete a high-level, high frequency, a large number of attention projection, forming a kind of emotional construction of the text, to create a highly immersive movie-watching experience in a short time. The ultimate purpose of using image experience in film is to trigger the insight experience on and off the screen, so as to achieve the healing effect on and off the screen.

On the screen, Shen Xiu gradually improves the psychological mechanism of emotional cognition in the process of image experience and communication, so as to achieve psychological balance. Shen Xiu no longer blames herself for all the responsibility, but gradually accepts reality, finds self-worth in the adventure of the illusion world, and finally realizes self-redemption. Off screen, the audience is brought into the perspective of Shen Xiu, an immersive adventure in the deep sea world. The suspense and rever-

sal settings at the end of the film show the audience the dual development of the illusion and the real world, which triggers the sexual insight experience both on and off the screen, making the audience also participate in this journey of redemption.

5.2 Advantage

The constructive narrative model with the embodied imagination theory as the core has its own unique advantages. First of all, by using the construction of sandplay narrative space and the application of nonlinear narrative techniques, compared with the traditional deconstructive narrative mode of linear narrative, the constructive narrative mode with embodied imagination theory as the core has freer narrative logic and more changeable narrative arrangement. This has a unique advantage for the presentation of dream plots. Since the development of dreams is full of changes and difficult to predict, the use of constructive narrative mode can reduce the real experience in dreams to the greatest extent and create conditions for the audience's immersion and experience. Moreover, the flexible narrative arrangement and unpredictable plot direction can make up for the possible lack of story in the constructive narrative mode to a certain extent. But the remedy is not absolute. Just as nonlinear narrative techniques sometimes retain a fuzzy logical chain to connect the plot logically to a certain extent, the dispersion and concentration of the plot are contradictory and influence each other. The film needs to find the right balance between the two contradictory states, which is different for each film, so it cannot be generalized.

Secondly, the constructive narrative mode with the embodied imagination theory as the core will give the film a stronger sense of immersion and substitution. In a sense, the constructive narrative mode does not require the audience to carry on a lot of logical thinking when watching the film, but only needs to bring the perspective of the characters and feel the adventure of the characters together. The audience does not need to worry about the development direction of the plot and the future fate of the characters, relax their hearts, and jointly feel the emergence of the characters' emotions, so as to obtain a symbiotic experience. From then on, emotion plays an important role in the constructive narrative model with the embodied imagination theory as the core. On the one hand, emotional emergence can serve as the development node of the plot and help the audience adapt to the development rhythm of the plot. On the other hand, emotional emergence can greatly enhance the audience's immersion. It helps the audience to establish an emotional link with the movie, so as to achieve emotional resonance off-screen.

5.3 Limitation

Although the constructive narrative mode with the embodied imagination theory as the core has its own unique advantages, compared with the traditional deconstructive narrative mode, its disadvantages are also very obvious. First of all, the threshold of movie viewing with the constructive narrative model has been significantly improved. On the one hand, due to the long-term dominance of linear narrative techniques, audiences have formed corresponding movie-watching habits. Audiences are used to following the clear story line to enjoy the plot, expecting the setting of suspense and the reversal of the ending. Therefore, when the constructive narrative mode adopts nonlinear narrative techniques, the audience has no logic to follow in the subconscious, and it is easy to keep up with the narrative rhythm of the film. As a result, it is difficult for the audience to bring the character's perspective, and the subsequent emotional link becomes nonsense. On the other hand, although the constructive narrative mode has a stronger sense of inclusion and immersion, this sense of inclusion is not suitable for all audiences. Without strong narrative support, once the themes presented in a film conflict with the viewer's life experiences and values, the sense of immersion becomes unattainable. In such cases, viewers might even develop feelings of aversion and rejection towards the film's expressions.

Secondly, the increase of the movie-viewing threshold will lead to a series of chain reactions, and ultimately lead to the film market that adopts the constructive narrative model, the risk is not proportional to the return. In order to ensure that more audiences have a good viewing experience, the film needs to make up for it from other aspects. „The Deep“ tries from two angles. The first is the use of pioneering particle ink technology, which greatly improves the visual effect and impact of the picture, to help the audience better immerse in the deep sea illusion world. The second is to set up a reversal in the ending, by blending the illusion world with the two-line story of the real world, to stimulate the audience's insight experience. „Deep Sea“ is a very high quality film on all levels and makes many successful new attempts. But even so, „Deep Sea“ word-of-mouth and box office still appeared a large gap, and these new attempts have paid a lot of time and money costs. Faced with the wave of film commercialization, the shortcomings of the constructive narrative model such as long time, high cost and unstable income have also been amplified, and new attempts will only become more and more difficult. This also determines that the constructive narrative mode is only suitable for some special themes and types of movies in the short term, and can not be used as a mainstream film narrative mode.

6. Conclusion

Through the textual analysis of the Deep Sea based on the embodied imagination theory, three characteristics of the constructive narrative model with the embodied imagination theory as the core are obtained: the construction of the image is based on reality, but it is modified by the rule of illusion; Emotional emergence runs through the whole process of image experience; The healing effects are felt on and off screen. On this basis, the paper analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of the constructive narrative model with the embodied imagination theory as the core. The advantages are mainly reflected in that the constructive narrative mode with the embodied imagination theory as the core has freer narrative logic and more changeable narrative arrangement and can give the film a stronger sense of immersion and substitution. The disadvantages are mainly reflected in the increase of the threshold of viewing movies and the market risk is not proportional to the return.

Since the constructive narrative model has not yet formed a mature and complete theoretical system, and new attempts are constantly appearing in practice, the analysis and research based on specific cases is the main way to study the constructive narrative model at present. This research method is very important. Through the accumulation of case studies, a relatively fixed theory and methodology of constructive narrative mode can be gradually formed, thus laying the foundation for the construction of a theoretical system.

Future research should not only focus on relevant theories of psychoanalysis but also pay attention to new developments in traditional film art theory. Additionally, with the emergence of new media concepts such as the metaverse, the development of film art has introduced many new forms. Under the influence of these new forms of cinema, the constructive narrative model will find more new appli-

cations and contexts, and the related theoretical systems will inevitably undergo new changes.

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