The Research on the Way of Portraying Human Nature in the American Film the Shawshank Redemption

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Abstract: The Shawshank Redemption, as a classic and successful movie, not only bring the vividly visual experience, but also let people feel the baptism of human nature. This is inseparable from the director's precise grasp of the screen language. This study concentrates on how *Shawshank redemption* uses cinematic techniques to expose human nature. This article aims helping to improve the portrayal of human nature in future films and enable the audience to feel more deep thoughts about human nature in films. Researcher used qualitative descriptive research to analyze *The Shawshank Redemption* produced by Frank Darabont. The Secondary information is gathered from a range of periodicals and classic literature that are pertinent to the study's subject. The distinctive qualities of Andy, Red, Brooks, and Tommy are all vividly depicted in the movie using cinematic language. Andy is a wise, mysterious, and charismatic character in the movie. Red is a sincere, profound, and righteous persona. Brooks has a peaceful, disciplined, and miserable personality. In the movie, Tommy plays a funny and innocent young character. The *Shawshank Redemption* mainly focus on a humanist theme and the director transported the audience to a different world by using the proper filmic language and techniques.

Keywords: cinematic technic, human nature, film language, *The Shawshank Redemption*

1. Introduction

The Shawshank Redemption is a household name. *The Shawshank Redemption* has received universal critical acclaim and holds a score of 91% on Rotten Tomatoes based on 85 reviews, with an average rating of 9.3/10. It is also listed in the American Film Institute's list of the 100 greatest American movies ever made. This movie's themes of hope, redemption, and the resilience of the human spirit have resonated with audiences worldwide. Its inspiring message has led to it being considered a classic, and it has been praised for its ability to move people emotionally and leave a lasting impact on them.

The achievement of this film has impressed many celebrities. Steven Spielberg states that he was moved to tears the first time he saw *The Shawshank Redemption*, not just by the story, but also by the filmmaking. It was a masterful piece of storytelling, and it is widely regarded as one of the best films ever made. Barack Obama, also assets that The *Shawshank Redemption* is a classic. It's a film about the strength of hope, the strength of redemption, and the strength of the human spirit. It's one of those films that he believes everyone should see.

Despite the fact that *The Shawshank Redemption* has become a worldwide well-known movie, that wasn't the case initially, though. "*The Shawshank Redemption*" barely grossed $16 million in its opening weekend before being taken out of theaters. Given that the film's production cost $25 million, one might classify it as a failure. A year after its debut, the movie started to gain notoriety because of numerous Oscar nominations. It was nominated for seven awards, including "Best Picture," but it did not take home the trophy in any of them. Director Frank Darabont has a theory about the film's poor reception upon its initial release. He stated in an interview that audiences in the 1990s were less receptive to a slow-paced prison film. Some of the cast members, including Morgan Freeman, reportedly felt the film was poorly marketed and thus did not appeal to theatergoers.

This film Based on a 1982 novella by Stephen King, titled Rita Hayworth and *Shawshank redemption*. The novel is set in the 1930s, when "political corruption in America had reached businessmen" and even reached prisons. In the story, Andy, a young banker, is sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of his wife and her lover. Due to the corruption in prison, he is not cleared of his crime even though the truth is about to come out, but suffers from all kinds of mental and physical abuse in Shawshank Prison. However, Andy was not ruined by the mysterious fate, he finally climbed out of the 500-yard-long fecal pipe on a thunderstorm night and regained his freedom, living the life of a free man by the sea in Mexico after more than 10 years of unremitting digging.

This study will concentrate on how *Shawshank redemption* uses cinematic presentation to expose human nature. When it comes to the portrayal of human nature, people tend to associate them with books and text-related information. In contrast, this study focuses on how film as a modern message carrier can show human nature.

2. Literature Review

Since cinema is the meeting of the business people of the film industry with the artists and actors to create a literary work that can be appreciated by millions of audience members, film is frequently referred to as a marriage of art or literature with industry. Film is seen as a powerful and distinctive kind of literature and art in addition to being beautiful and commercially successful because it is comparable to drama, music, painting, and even sculpture. While at same time, Film is distinct from all other forms of media due to its inherent ability to move freely and continuously. Film is able to surpass the static constraints of painting and sculpture in terms of the complexity of its sensuous appeal and its capacity to concurrently communicate on several levels thanks to the continual interaction of sight, sound, and motion [1].

The movie's elements play a crucial role in constructing and developing the tale so that it may be understood and appreciated clearly. There are four main elements in a movie as David Bordwell said in the Film Art: An Introduction, which are Mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing and sound [2].

Mise-en-scène means everything that is seen in front of the camera during a shot is included in this component of film form. In addition to unplanned aspects like passing traffic and insects flying into the frame, it can also incorporate planned elements such diverse props, lighting, costuming, make-up, rehearsed body motions and facial expressions, the performers themselves, and computer-generated images. Even things that are clearly immobile in the shot (such the scenery and buildings) are nevertheless a part of the Mise-en-scène since the director choose to incorporate them [2].

Cinematography is a catch-all phrase for all camera adjustments made to the film strip during the shooting stage. It also covers procedures that take place in the lab following shooting. Three general considerations for cinematography are Camera Angles (High, Low, Straight-on, Bird's-eye); Camera Distances (Extreme long shot, long shot, medium, close-up, extreme closeup) and Camera Movement (tracking/dollying, hand held, crane, pan, tilt). Determining the type of lens (wide angle, long, or normal), the kind of film material, and the speed at which a shot was filmed is also sometimes necessary because they all have quite varied visual impacts [2].

The simplest definition of editing is the joining of two distinct video clips (two distinct shots). Typically, a film's editing follows a certain logic of growth or is intended to make a statement through juxtaposition, which may call for the spectator to "fill in the gap." In addition, editing creates a sense of space for the audience by figuratively building the environment that the movie's story is set in. In other words, there is no "world of the story" without proper editing (called diegesis) [3]. The following are some essential ideas in spatial editing. The most common one called Establishing shot, which is a shot that depicts the spatial relationships between the key players and the background of a scene, typically filmed from a distance. A movie might open with a long shot of a suburban house, followed by a cut to a scene of household life inside, creating an obvious spatial connection even though the two images could have been taken on separate continents. The second one is Reverse shot, which is an editing technique that switches between people based on the logic of their dialogue. The third editing method that combining shots by adhering to the logic and course of a character's glance or look is called Matching eyeliner [3].

Sound in a movie also plays and non-negligible role. The are two types of sounds used in a movie: Diegetic and nondiegetic sound. The universe of the movie is called the diegesis, and it comprises scenes that are implied to have happened as well as scenes and locations that aren't shown on screen. Any voice, musical piece, or sound effect that is depicted as coming from the movie's setting is considered a diegetic sound. This can include the sounds of traffic and people speaking when a scene features a busy city street. Nondiegetic sound, on the other hand, would include background music or narration that appears to be originating from somewhere other than the narrative's setting.

Above are the introductions of the main techniques in film language. The language of film differs from the language of fiction and drama because it has a higher degree of acceptance among the public. It can visually and vividly express a kind of human thought and emotion, and the language content is closer to life and audience, film language has a strong penetrating and infectious power. Relying on the visual carrier of the screen, it can directly touch the audience's visual senses and psychological defense. Therefore the film language is more grounded and easier for the audience to accept [4].

This characteristic of film is also used in today's educational media with the goal of fostering greater creativity, clarity of thought, and depth of reflection. Media technology offers a wide variety of expressions, and according to film realists, the visual and auditory presentation of information in film has a special connection to reality. Extreme versions of the viewpoint assert that people see things on or through the movie screen because film is based on photography [5]. Less extreme versions either emphasize how similar perceptual experiences while watching a movie are to regular perceptual experiences [6] or they contend that a movie's level of realism is determined by its capacity to make observations about or express opinions about reality. [7]. All versions emphasize that the perceptual nature of cinema is closely related to the human real world, so that the language of cinema can appeal to a wider range of people and has more potential to influence the world

This study aims to analyze the cinematic ways of portraying human nature in the film, therefore human nature is another aspect that researcher will explore about. The study on human nature has been analyzed by A. S. Cua in the article Morality and Human Nature. He claimed that human nature includes two aspects, one is externalism, the other is internalism. Externalism views the relationship between morality and human nature as primarily an external issue. According to this viewpoint, morality is somewhat at odds with human nature. As a result, the very fact that morality exists draws attention to some problematic elements of man's fundamental drive for motivation. Internalism, in contrast, interprets the link as intimate and internal. Morality is in some ways a part of human nature. Also, there exist in the fundamental nature of man. In contrast to internalism, which is arguably more usually associated with the idea that people are inherently good, compassionate, and cooperative, externalism is linked to the idea that people are fundamentally wicked, aggressive, and destructive [8].

The things that need to aware of is that human nature is not fixed and unchanging in objective existence, it is an individual from birth to death [9] During the whole life process, it develops continuously with its own genetic quality and the external environment. Therefore, people should not look at human nature from a static point of view, but from a developmental point of view. To define a person's humanity, people must look at his actions throughout one person's life, pay attention to the integrity. The human nature displayed by people in any period is one-sided and cannot be used to judge a person's complete humanity [9].

Based on the foregoing, the researcher concluded that film is a very special form of audio-visual media since it incorporates both sound as hearing and moving pictures as senses of sight. The researcher found that there have been many precedents in the study of film itself or in the philosophical direction of discussing human nature, but few studies have focused on how human nature is presented to the audience through cinematic techniques. Therefore, this study will help to improve the portrayal of human nature in future films and enable the audience to feel more deep thoughts about human nature in films.

3.   Methodology

Data that provide a subjective account of the "who, what, and where of an event or experience" are produced via qualitative descriptive research. From a philosophical standpoint, constructivist and critical theories that employ interpretive and naturalistic techniques are most suited for this research methodology [10]. *The Shawshank Redemption,* a film produced by Frank Darabont, is the major data source, and secondary data is gathered from a variety of literary publications and periodicals that are relevant to the topic of the study. All the data sources used offer accurate and current information. The researchers collected data using the documentation method, and they analyzed it using the descriptive analysis methodology.

4.   Result

The researchers analyzed how different characters with different personality traits are presented in a cinematic way in *Shawshank redemption* movie.

Andy in the movie is wise, mysterious, and charismatic. In the beginning of the film, audience are suspicious of Andy's identity, which can be seen in the dialogue between Andy and his cellmate when they have a compassionate dialogue scene. The audience realize that is seriously inconsistent with Andy's current status as a "prisoner", and subsequently derives a sense of mystery.

Red in movie is a sincere, profound and righteousness character. Red was depressing in the low-key color prison before Andy coming to Shawshank. In the first appearance of Red, the director with a low camera angle shooting, compared with the warden high camera The contrast is stark compared to the high camera position of the warden.

Brooks has a peaceful, disciplined, and miserable personality. The institutionalization of the prison makes some people become very numb, and brooks is one of the typical institutionalized prisoners. The standard focal length side light shooting can clearly show the characters. a wrinkled face and a head full of white hair. The old man's face is shy and he stutters when he speaks.

Tommy shows a funny and naïve young character in the film. The director uses medium shots to show Tommy's relaxed action work, close-up to introduce Tommy's humor and extreme close-ups on his eyes to show Tommy's frank and determined attitude toward learning.

5.   Discussion

The film takes Andy as the main narrative line, setting up scenes with important characters respectively showing the inner feelings of the characters with its unique film language. The images

of the Red, Books and tommy are particularly prominent, with a unique picture language that explains the characters' personalities and ultimate fates.

At the beginning of the film, audience see Andy interrogated in the courtroom. The sharp questions from lawyer made Andy's inner emotions fluctuate, and the director used tracking forward camera movement shots to rendering the tense atmosphere of the picture, Under the influence of the environment, Andy's still keep calm facial expression shows his meticulousness and fearlessness when facing danger. The tracking camera and the delicate performance of the actors complement each other. Audience can see Andy's determinate expression, and experience his clear logical thinking. Andy's identity changes throughout the movie, each time has a mysterious color, the audience experience a sense of doubt about Andy's identity from beginning. When Andy's mysterious veil is lifted, the audience can realized that Andy's various performances after being imprisoned are actually the struggles against fate, thus Andy's personal charm are presented in the powerful actions. During the nineteen years in Shawshank, Andy not only rescued himself, but also did not forget to help other prisoners. He kept instilling seeds of hope in the inmates, and never stopped writing letters to the Senate. His persistence eventually received touching results. After the library was built, Andy had time to help tommy to read and write, and he even got high school diploma. Other prisoners also find this peaceful place to learn something in the depressing environment Shawshank with the help of Andy. The director uses sound and color to shows a sense of freedom occur among those prisoners when they absorbing knowledge. Relaxing slowly background music and the warm tone in the library undoubtedly bring a cozy and chill atmosphere in the dark and painful prison. the brilliance of humanity from Andy also represented in the Mise-en-scène.

In the performance of Red's character, the director deliberately uses a "gray and black" film language processing way to describe Red's changes of emotion. Before Andy appeared, Red was depressed and hopeless in his heart under the dim color of prison. Red entered the door to make his appearance, not knowing how to stand, not knowing where to put his hands, his eyes are permeated with unease. However, audience find that this is a low camera elevation shot, in contrast to the high camera position of the judge. It shows the respect for an old prisoner and the contempt for the judge who is above him. He could not even imagine that he would have his day out, and freedom was an extravagant hope. As Red sits down to answer the trial judge's questions, a slow-paced shot leads people gradually closer to Reed's inner world, where he is innocent, where he will not endanger society, where he aspires to freedom. Just as people sympathize with the no-longer-young Red, a bright red "rejected" close-up ends the ridiculously pathetic interior sequence. this desire of freedom could only fade slowly with the passage of time. From him and Andy's conversation, people can see that he understands the human nature, understand the hidden rules in the prison. He already loss of hope about the future, always maintained a gentle attitude. However, things began to change as Andy come to Shawshank. Andy's hopeful attitudes deeply influence Red, he become less and less pessimistic. Red started playing the harmonica like when he was younger, Red and Andy are closer than anyone else, Andy felt a sense of freedom he never felt in prison before. Andy's successfully escaping impressed Red, he realized that it was the hope that support Andy find his way to freedom with nothing but a small hammer. Eventually, the scene of parole for Red was impressive. The overall mood is buoyant and hopeful when Red is released from prison to start a new life. Audience can clearly see that the whole film has become colorful and vibrant in tone, contrast this with the gloomy darkness of Shawshank Prison. The camera movement concentrates more on the tracking character instead of simply keep stationary in the first part of the movie. This symbolizes a sense of freedom, Red regained the right of freedom, he can move around outside of the prison and see the world. The background music is soothing and soft, and a variety of natural sounds into one, birdsong, leaves swaying, breeze all give the audience a sense of beauty and full of hope.

According to Red's words, Brooks is an "institutionalized" person, and the inhumane Shawshank has turned out to be his fond "home". In the first shot image of Brooks in the whole film: the camera pans across to the left, Andy enters the picture from the right with a dinner plate, and when Andy is seated, the foreground of the camera is the back of Brooks with long gray hair. The first appearance of his is a standard focal length side backlighting, from the picture people can see the appropriate focal length like the human eye observation, moderate shooting distance is very affectionate. Wrinkled face,with the outline of white hair; Brooks is a slightly shy old man, because his first conversation with Andy's is even stuttering.

The most rare brisk rock music in the film came out with the police car, and here appeared the new protagonist Tommy. Tommy's first appearance shot: a push shot, which became successfully shifts the focus to Tommy, who is thrown into the shadows by the camera pan among them, the feature of pushing the lens to compress the space brings oppression to the audience. Seems to convey something to audience. The following group of shots constitutes montage style and the director uses the middle ground to the camera shows Tommy's brisk movements at work, and uses a close-up flat shot to introduce Tommy 's humor and ease. This picture successfully portrays Tommy as a lively and sunny Boy. this shot also serve as a foreshadowing to show sunny Tommy died tragically in the hands of the warden, Tommy's death further sublimated the warden's viciousness.

6.   Conclusion

Film is a unique type of audio-visual media because it combines the senses of sight and hearing with moving images. This study focusses on the way that *Shawshank Redemption* exposes human nature through cinematic presentation. Andy, Red, Brooks and Tommy have distinguished characteristics and they all presented vividly in the film through cinematic language. In the film, Andy is wise, mysterious, and charismatic. He not only freed himself during his nineteen years in Shawshank, but he also insisted to support other prisoners. The director uses sound and color to demonstrate how learning can give prisoners a sense of freedom. A cozy and chill atmosphere is undoubtedly created in the dark and painful prison by the soothing background music and the warm lighting in the library. Andy's brilliant humanity was reflected in the mise en scène as well. Red in the movie is a sincere, profound and righteousness character. Red is greatly influenced by Andy's optimistic viewpoints; he gradually loses his pessimism. The scene when Red is released from Shawshank is generally upbeat and optimistic. The audience can clearly see that the tone of the entire movie has changed from the previous gloomy darkness of Shawshank Prison to one that is colorful and vibrant. Instead of remaining stationary in the first part of the film, the camera movement focuses more on the character that is being tracked. Red regained his right to freedom, he can move around outside of the prison and see the world. Brooks has a peaceful, disciplined, and miserable personality. His initial presentation is a conventional focal length side backlighting; from the image the modest shooting distance is affable. Brooks is an older man who is a little reserved because his first discussion with Andy even stutters. He has a wrinkled face and white hair that is outlined, making it appear as though people are familiar with the elderly sketch. Tommy shows a Funny and naïve young character in the film. The director employs a flat close-up shot to establish Tommy's humor and ease while using a middle ground to show the camera Tommy's quick motions while working. Tommy is successfully portrayed in this image as a happy and vivacious boy. *The Shawshank Redemption* is a classic film with the theme of humanism. While exaggerating humanity, it praises freedom and advocating the firm belief in redemption. The director used the appropriate film language and cinematic techniques brought the audience into another world. This is also worth learning for future film industry to create more exciting and in-depth films for the society.

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