

# Analysis of Bong Joon-ho's Film Style Under Freudian Psychoanalysis

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doi:10.56397/SAA.2024.12.04

## Abstract

As the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud's ideas of humor mechanism, peephole theory and personality structure theory have been widely influential in the field of film analysis and creation. Excellent film director Bong Joon-ho, as one of the benchmarks of Korean film and television art, has contributed many fresh creative dimensions to the world film art. This paper aims to combine Bong Joon-ho's movies with Freudian psychoanalytic theory and analyze the collision between them.

**Keywords:** Freudian psychoanalysis, Bong Joon-ho, humor, personality structure, peep

## 1. Introduction

As the seventh art, film has evolved from a true representation of real life and social culture to an unrestrained construction of artistic time and space, and gradually developed into an artistic activity in which directors externalize their inner consciousness through images. In the 1960s, with the development of time and the recognition of mainstream ideology, the psychoanalytic theory represented by Freud gradually evolved into the main theory of film research. During this period, excellent works such as *Psycho*, *The Shining* and *The Silence of the Lambs* appeared frequently, and film creators began to pay attention to the inner and spiritual world of characters. Bong Joon-ho's films have the appearance of genre films, but he is a director with a strong sense of personal consciousness. In his works, his personal desire flow analysis and social dilemma thinking are flowing, and he tries to realize the visualization of human instinct desire by constructing image

space and time and realize the free expression of the inner world of characters with straightforward lines and willed relationships. Bong Joon-ho's films are the visual results of the instinctive desire and the subconscious in psychoanalytic theory.

## 2. The Self-Mockery of the "Humor" Mechanism

Freud's psychoanalysis theory has a profound insight into "humor" and believes that the operating mechanism of "humor" is "emotional consumption saving". People's Daily negative emotions such as fear, anger and shock can be alleviated through "humor" mechanism, so humor has the function of emotional catharsis. Bong Joon-ho's films focus on the real living conditions of vulnerable groups, deeply analyze the problems of the bottom society, and take a pessimistic look at the changing human nature. Therefore, whether in the process of watching the film, or after knowing the ending of the film,

the audience examines the interpretation of this “tragedy” from the perspective of onlookers. The emotion of struggle, the violence of the dialogue, and the characters’ pursuit of death and redemption have always appeared frequently in Bong Joon-ho’s films, which can not help but make the audience feel heavy watching emotions. In order to alleviate such feelings, the audience’s emotions can be relieved for a moment. Bong Joon-ho uses the technique of “humor” many times in the film, interweaving “Bong’s humor” into the exciting and intense human examination images, so that the audience’s emotions can be released in a tight and orderly manner. The struggles of the little people under the current of The Times or the class system are interpreted by “Bong’s humor” with some humor, but careful aftertaste is a kind of weak and helpless pessimistic self-mockery. Bong Joon-ho’s early work *Kidnapping the Dog at the Gate* used a lot of humor elements, the story is mainly around the unhappy hero Won Joon chasing and killing an innocent dog, the tight plot and ups and downs of the story let the audience be affected by the fate of the dog, but when Won Joon was harassed by the dog’s barking, after a series of thrilling processes, he caught the dog. But found that the dog is a mute, Yuan Jun white run, the reverse of the story into the film brought humor and fun, alleviating the audience for the fate of the dog affected by the sense of urgency. Bong Joon-ho is good at creating “humor”, which may be related to his own “relaxed” temperament. Born in a scholarly family, his family’s profound cultural heritage and artistic atmosphere have endowed Bong with a unique temperament and soul. He has a keen artistic perception, superb painting and writing ability, and a unique film creation mode. Similarly, Bong Joon-ho’s paintings can capture the joy and joy in the life of the bottom of the bottom. As a master of film art, Bong Joon-ho’s film works have a high box office and audience’s voice under the extremely high artistic attestation and humanistic care, which cannot be separated from the “Bong’s humor” shaped all the time.

### 3. The Realization of Peep Impulse

Freud is the first to propose the concept of “peep” theorist, he believes that everyone has the desire to peep, “peep” is originally reflected in children’s curiosity about other people’s reproductive organs and physiological functions, childhood peep desire is not satisfied, adults

will be crazy pursuit of the pleasure of spying on others’ privacy.

In Bong Joon-ho’s films, “peep” is mainly reflected in two aspects, the first is the “peep” between the characters. Bong Joon-ho’s film “Mother” cleverly uses the peep function to make the film more interesting. In the film, when the mother Huizi helps her son find no evidence of innocence, she thinks of her son Tao Jun’s friend Zhentai who did not go to the party with her son as promised on the night of the incident, so she thinks that Zhentai once again deliberately planted the crime on the mentally disabled son, in order to find the truth, Huizi infiltrates the Zhentai home to find evidence, and finds a bloody golf club, unfortunately, when Zhentai takes his girlfriend home, Keiko had no choice but to hide in the cabinet. Through the gap, Hye-ja peeks at Jin Tae and his girlfriend’s intimate process, while Bong Joon-ho’s film camera zoomed in on Hye-ja’s eyes. In film theory, “eye” is a symbol of peeping. Film master Hitchcock is good at presenting psychoanalytic theory to the audience by using the lens in a simple way. His interpretation of the peeping function of “eye” is similar to Bong Junho’s peeping design. The curtain covered with “eyes” in the dream of the hero of his masterpiece *Master Edward* is the dream interpretation of the hero’s reality to peek at the truth of the murder, and the eyes cut with scissors are the implication of the film to hide the truth. In the social survival, “voyeurism” has always been a condemned act, especially among the opposite sex, when the desire is forced to suppress, people’s demand for “peep” pleasure will be more intense. The film is an art form that can meet the audience’s needs. In the 1870s, film theory proposed that there was a “peep” relationship between the audience and the screen, which was mainly reflected in the audience “peep” the unknown secrets of the film characters through the screen, or the audience saw the film characters “peep” other characters, and then obtained the pleasure of peep. Bong Joon-ho in the movie screen depicts violence, sex, ethics and other uncommon events in life, not only to enhance the commercial sense of Bong Joon-ho film, but also to meet the audience’s “peep” psychology. Bong is very much in agreement with Freud’s peeping theory, that is, he believes that everyone has the desire to peep, which is people’s instinct and nature. He puts the desire to peep into the film but does not

construct the protagonist's peep desire for no reason, but establishes it under certain preconditions, which affect the protagonist's survival or personal safety to a certain extent. This also gives the character the legitimacy to be peered at. In Bong Joon-ho's film works, Bong Joon-ho's expression of secret sex, marginal ethics, and bloody violence is the means by which Bong Joon-ho wins the right to speak of his personal style of image. Therefore, his films can combine humanistic care with audience's attention, so that the audience can satisfy the psychology of snooping and prying during the viewing process.

#### 4. The Balance of Personality Structure

The psychoanalytic aesthetic theory represented by Freud holds that the subconscious mind and instinctive impulse play a leading role in human artistic activities and provide deep impetus for aesthetic creation. Therefore, the psychoanalytic film criticism theory seeks for the deep subconscious cultural psychology of film images through the symbolic analysis of film texts. Bong Joon-ho is good at portraying the "evil" of people at the bottom of society. In his shots, the struggle of the balance or imbalance of the personality structure of marginal characters drives the trend of events. Due to the pressure of social survival, dignity and goodwill are erased, thus bringing the audience's attention and scrutiny to social issues. The theory of personality structure is one of the core theories in Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud believes that a complete person should include three kinds of personality: id, ego and superego. In the operating mechanism of personality, the ID and the superego are almost permanently opposed, so the ego needs to operate all the time, and through the mutual coordination and checks and balances between the ID and the superego, a relatively complete personality order can be achieved, so as to ensure the harmonious coexistence between the personality itself, people and people, and people and the outside world.

##### 4.1 Id — Create a Realistic Character

As the most primitive and innate personality in the human spiritual world, the simple pursuit of the realization of the original desire of the ID contains unmodified human nature, such as selfishness, jealousy, survival and so on. The biggest attraction of Bong Joon-ho's film is that through the oppression of the social system, the

injustice of interpersonal communication or the irreconcilable desire, the identity of the characters in the film is exaggerated and detailed. Through the dramatic plot designed by the director, the audience can realize the maximum reflection.

As an Oscar-winning film, *Parasite* is a profound and realistic depiction of human nature. The main character, Kim Ki-woo, and his family live in a dark and damp semi-basement with narrow Windows parallel to the ground. If the Windows are not closed during the rainy season, the whole room is flooded with rain. Still, life is quiet for the Kims. When Ki-woo, who failed in the college entrance examination several times, is successfully hired as the tutor of rich Park by falsifying his academic credentials, the poor family seems to have found a convenient way to survive. Therefore, motivated by primitive greed, selfishness, and laziness in the "ID" personality structure, other members of Ki-Yu's family also successfully applied for other positions around Park through false identities, and lived in a villa when Park's family traveled, enjoying free shelter and food, and verbally validating the host who provided them with jobs. After the lie is discovered by the former nanny, he pushes the former nanny down the basement and tries to hide her body. Under the calm life of this rich villa, there are interwoven truths and lies. Bong Joon-ho's depiction of human nature in *Parasite* is exactly the interpretation of the "ID" personality in Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

##### 4.2 Ego — Reasonable Character Compromise

The ego evolved from the ID personality, which is a rational state formed by people in order to adapt to the needs of reality, through acquired and suppressed emotions of the ID. The motifs of Bong Joon-ho's works are mostly about people at the bottom, human nature and social problems, so the compromise description of ordinary people in social communication is more detailed and real. In order to realize the needs of survival, the protagonists often suppress the ID and coordinate the superego in order to better improve their adaptability in the environment. *Kidnap the Dog at the Gate* tells the story of middle-aged man Won Joon, who is in the bottleneck of life and career, after he fails in the professor's rating, he constantly compromises and struggles with life. The core of the film revolves around an angry Won Joon who tries to kill the noisy dog in the community when he is in distress. Under the shell of "Bong

black humor”, Bong Joon-ho shows us the common people in South Korea before and after the millennium. In the film, Yuanjun, who is frustrated, finally gets a professor by bribing the leader, the young female staff who dreams of becoming famous but has been unknown chooses to set foot on nature to find the meaning of life, the building manager secretly cook dog meat in the basement to avoid inspection, and the empty-nesters will take the pet as the whole life and obtain psychological comfort. Bong Joon-ho uses calm film footage to show the importance of the identity in the survival of the characters, rationalizing the characters’ motivation for compromise.

But when self-personality imbalance, people will produce psychological and spiritual diseases, in the stage of struggle and pain. In *Parasite*, the ex-nanny’s mentally retarded husband steals to live in the basement of a rich family for several years because he has no ability to survive; In “Mother”, the mentally handicapped son Tae-woo has no fear after accidentally killing people; Bai Guanghao, the mentally retarded suspect in *Memories of Murder*, is mentally disturbed after experiencing childhood trauma, unable to defend the crime, and was almost wrongly convicted. Bong Joon-ho’s films are good at coldly examining such marginal characters, depicting the injustice and repression suffered by people with unbalanced personality in society, and interpreting the absurdity of reality with various coincidences and witty storylines, which is also Bong Joon-ho’s unique creative dimension.

#### 4.3 Superego — Create a Sense of Sublimation of the Protagonist

The characters in Bong Joon-ho’s films are never absolutely good and evil, and it is through the real reproduction of the complexity of reality that Bong Joon-ho has become a good hand in producing genre films, but breaking genre films. Ordinary people in life can bring goodwill. Although the superego personality of Bong Joon-ho’s movie characters is reflected in very few scenes, it brings a little warmth to the film and a ray of light to the ending, cleverly avoiding the distortion of the justice image. Zhen Tai, the supporting character in “Mother”, has always been a street gangster, but when his friend’s mother Huizi asks for the truth in vain, he helps her catch the gangster to find the truth; When Ki-Woo, the protagonist of *Parasite*, sees that his family is trapped in a predicament

where lies are about to be revealed, he chooses to pick up a stone and go to the basement to kill the former nanny couple to ensure the safety and interests of his family. At the end of the movie *Parasite*, President Park faces the mentally handicapped lying in a pool of blood, without any pity, but continues to express disgust for the basement smell emanating from the poor man. Father Ki-Woo cannot bear it, and sticks out a knife to President Park, who is full of contempt. *Kidnap the door dog* in the brave rescue of the young female staff thousand south, let the dog escape the homeless cooking claws, the hero Yuan Jun in the bribe money out of a alms to the subway with children begging for a single mother. The superego is a morally idealized state of the personality, and Bong Joon-ho uses his suspenseful cinematology to deal with meticulous detail and bring the power of justice to the audience in uninterrupted shock, anger and epiphanies.

#### 5. Conclusion

To sum up, from the perspective of Freudian psychoanalysis, the exploration of Bong Joon-ho’s film role shaping and lens language design can better summarize and summarize Bong Joon-ho’s creative style and fill in the hidden deep meaning of Bong Joon-ho’s creation.

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