

Who is Afraid of Power and Horror?: Emotional Narrative Through Story Mining in Apocalypse Now

¹Eun Jung Park and ²Jinwha Kim

¹Minerva Liberal Arts College, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 107 Imun-ro, Dongdaemun-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

²Division of Business Management, Sogang University, 35 Baekbeon-ro, Mapogu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Abstract: This study has the aim to analyze viewer's emotion concerning power and horror in the film of Apocalypse Now. The emotion concerning Vietnam War is driven by the sound and darkness. This study will explore how the different narrative structures influence our perception of Apocalypse Now as the disclosure of 'emotional darkness hidden in human mind of rapaciously insanity. Text mining techniques will visualize how the diverse images and sounds and the film script documents of Apocalypse Now influence on viewer's perception of 'human darkness' hidden under the circumstances of Vietnam War. The emotional structure of human darkness in Apocalypse Now is framed as 'human darkness'. Willard executes Kurtz following the orders of the US Headquarters, then, rejecting to be the new leader of Kurtz's Kingdom, he "leaves" for "nowhere," with the resounding cognition of the reality of human darkness. The fact that in this film there are only the audiences who would listen to Willard's interpretation of Kurtz's last word, 'horror, horror' does not make film viewers insane in the real space but make insane in a fantastic space. This study will analyze the emotional darkness between the impact of sound and the power of light and shade through the text mining revealing 'horror' only in the fantastic spectacle space which will be proven as the story mining in the process of audience cognition.

Key words: Apocalypse Now, horror, emotional darkness, story mining, light and shadow, sound

INTRODUCTION

The film images and sounds have blurred our competence to differentiate between reality and simulation, making our experience of war into a mere "spectacle". Movie technology and image spectacles resulted in a positive depiction of war and our cognition of that spectacle turns us as viewers into implicit imperial subject. Vietnam War exists in his film, Apocalypse Now (Sheen *et al.*, 1979), however, Coppola explained that the Vietnam experience he attempted to depict was in fact an emotional darkness through the hyper-reality. Coppola noted that the production itself mirrored psychological reality in many ways. "It was crazy," he said. "And the way we made it was very much like the Americans (who) were in Vietnam. We were in the jungle there were all of us we had access to too much movie equipment and little by little we went insane" (Eberwein, 2005). Coppola's powerful visual images and multi-layered sound track, still have behind them the "terrific suggestiveness" of Conrad's illuminations heart of darkness. This study

investigates how Coppola's intention for the human darkness has transmitted to the viewer's emotion by emphasizing on the impact of sound and the power of light and shade due to the human darkness on behalf of the power in the war instead, we can find the ironical spectacle on "horror" biased by the American Imperialism.

Literature review: Ebert explained Coppola's film to his list of "The Great Movies", stating: "Apocalypse Now is the best Vietnam film, one of the greatest of all films because it pushes beyond the others into the dark places of the human soul. It is not about war so much as about how war reveals truths, we would be horrible never to discover" (Ebert, 1999). However, many critics have debated whether Apocalypse Now is an anti-war or pro-war film. Some critics insist that the anti-war message reveals the non-intentional brutality of the war, the absence of military ordering system and the imagery of machinery destroying human and nature. Advocates of the film's pro-war stance, however, point the same

elements as a glorification of war and the declaration of American supremacy. According to Tomasulo (1990) “the US foisting its culture on Vietnam” including the destruction of a village, so that, soldiers could enjoy surfing, proves the film’s pro-war message. Not to mention of pro-war or anti-war film, however, this study will explore the provocative issues on what is the emotional reality of human darkness in this film concerning the Vietnam war (Agrawal *et al.*, 1993).

This study uses text mining techniques to analyze the script documents. Text mining is a techniques inducing information from diverse form of texts such as news, web contents, product reviews and social networks. It, in detail, finds patterns, trends, relations and meaningful information from those texts. The processes of text mining generally involve crawling the text, parsing the text, analyzing the text and representing the output in visual forms. In many cases, natural language processing techniques, lexical analysis of word frequency are used alone with data text mining techniques such as association rule analysis and visualization techniques (Baker, 1992; Carley, 1993; Corley *et al.*, 2010; Domingos, 2005; Danowski, 1993). Text mining has been applied to diverse areas such as product reviews analysis, stock market predictions, opinion mining on products and sentiment analysis for movies. As one of the text mining areas, social mining uses social text from Facebook, Twitter and blogs. Analysis of these texts provides what are the customer’s opinion on the products and services. It also helps companies understand customer’s needs and wants (Scott, 1991; Wasserman and Faust, 2008; Beller, 2003). In this study, however, *Apocalypse Now* film scripts are analyzed to find frequently used words as important key words which contribute the major story architectures in general. These story architectures are also associated by rule analysis to find relationship and pattern among these key words. This study will track down through *Apocalypse Now* the fact that frequency of those key words and relationships among them would provide major components building the stories in the scripts as most stories consist of meaningful key words and relationships among these keywords.

This story mining is not a new concept but it requires a new approach. To effectively communicate about the text mining this story mining is not telling about others but telling about your story. It’s about connecting some narrative with sounds and lights in ways in which there are relevant to the audience which is focusing on the why, rather than the what and the how. The story mining is the best practices through the lens of narrative structure and expert storyteller, how to make a story more

meaningful connections with their audience and how to enlighten to reach and to maximize the impact of their stories.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

As a film study of the Vietnam War, *Apocalypse Now* will show how even Hollywood films can claim for the emotional darkness to those who just declare an emphasis on filmic technology and the image spectacles concerning war. Despite claiming to be against a war this film is depicting America’s psychological involvement in Vietnam War which seems at best ambivalent about war while at worst, it also seems to celebrate it. The very nature of cinema indeed has the tendency to make war into spectacles in which the images with lights and shadows and sounds are embedded. Therefore, the viewer’s reception of those spectacles turns into a simulation with indirect providers of the imperial project. By accepting images of war as a form of illusionary spectacles with grandiose sounds and overwhelming lights, the viewer thus becomes both colonizer and colonized. As Beller (2003) suggests in “The Cinematic Mode of Production,” we become a colonizer through the camera’s angle which is simultaneously that of imperial subject and because we create the scene by patching together with separate frames (Spurr, 1993). We are also colonized, however, because this film has conquered our mindful nature and Vietnam landscape, turning us through participation into subjects both of Hollywood and of American imperialism as our free mind is surrendered to the money-making entertainment industry.

In order to prove these, this study will explain the viewer’s emotional data statistically on horror driven by the power of war in which Colonel Kurtz has been secluded and embodied. This study will prove Willard’s vantage point of view can be transmitting to the viewers through the storytelling architecture in *Apocalypse Now*. In the last scene, the words of ‘horror, horror’ echoes resoundingly from Kurtz via Willard into the viewers in the blending space of fantasy in the product of conceptual metaphor and emotional sympathy.

The conceptual metaphor of power and horror is shading with the film elements of lights and sound, so all the viewer’s concept of anti-war and horrible brutality driven by the human darkness in the war are intervened by the emotional complex with lights and sound. This study investigates viewer’s emotional responses on the power and horror exerted by aesthetically dominant lights and grandiose sound in *Apocalypse Now*. The impact of sound and the power of lights and shadows result in the

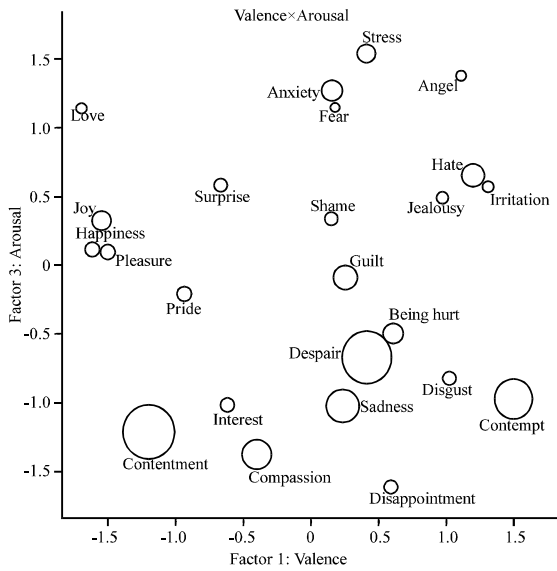


Fig. 1: The relativity of emotion for 'horror'

emotion of human mind. Plutchik's Wheel of emotions has been authoritative for the model of emotions, since, 1980's. It has eight primary bipolar emotions that are analogous to color wheel by extending or combining the different emotions up to 32 kinds of emotions of human beings. According to the followings, the emotion of 'horror' in the film of *Apocalypse Now* has deeply related with the dark color feelings such as fear, terror, anger, disgust, anxiety, stress, awe, despair, sadness, shame, irritation, submission and so forth (Fig. 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In *Apocalypse Now*, film narrates a privileged vantage point from Willard and via. the camera eye for the viewers as well. As Willard heads out with the guard boat to take him upriver we as the viewers, gaze on the rugged Vietnamese landscape from the helicopter flying high over the jungle. This "commanding view" offers a "sense of mastery over the unknown" (Sontag, 2002). At the same time, the vastness of the Vietnamese landscape gives us a sense of its empty darkness, suggesting that, it is a nature that needs to be civilized with lights. The destruction of the US military wreckers is thus representative of the American conquering toward the Vietnamese darkness and its myth-making from the white man's supreme image. This film shows itself replicates the conquest of the nature through its "military ordering" mastery over the Vietnamese landscape. The Vietnamese are also gazed on and "conquered" with the emotions such as fear, terror, anger, disgust, anxiety, stress, awe,

despair, sadness, shame, irritation, submission and so forth. When Willard finds the commanding officer, Colonel Kilgore, he leaps to terrorize all the Vietnamese in the background a landing craft, paralleled with the head of a shark to "swallow" a Vietnamese hut, smashing survived Vietnamese villagers with 'horror'.

Kilgore uses loudspeakers at top volume to play Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" as he swoops down on a dark Vietnamese school yard with American lights of gun fires. His full of fire lights toward the dark Vietnamese emptiness turns into frightening with his emptiness with dark emotion such as fear and horror. This study also explains Willard's cognition process is ended up with the emotion of 'horror', just as Colonel Kurtz has kept with it as a symbol of darkness itself. Willard intends to enlighten Kurtz's darkness, however, Willard turns into stuck with emotional darkness as horror as Kurtz realizes at the end of his life. Figure 2 will prove that the gun fire lights that Willard keeps to search down Kurtz convey reversed into the dark 'horror' of the Mekong River in which Willard is finally stuck at the moment when Kurtz has exclaimed as his last words.

Text mining of *Apocalypse Now* is visualizing with the key word of "Willard" at the center of network. It is scientific and natural because this film is thoroughly narrated by Willard, so that, the perceptions of the stories on Kurtz are conducted by Willard. Willard is seeking the distorted power of Kurtz into the deep 'down' of the Mekong river with the basic clue of PBR, a record of voice of Kurtz who is rarely seen his name in this network.

Willard is only seeking 'down' to the shadow of Kurtz. Across the Cambodia, Willard's emotional darkness is deep downing into the hearts of Kurtz identity. Figure 2 shows several important words such as 'Willard', 'down', 'PBR', 'boat' and 'He' around the center of the network. In this Fig. 2, on the left centered, 'He' is indexing Kurtz without referring his real name. Kurtz has no name because nobody knows about Him who is endowed the only symbol of human darkness due to the betrayal of the US army. Kurtz is the only shadow without lights in the two third part of this film story.

When Willard is heard of Kurtz from US Headquarters, he could not realize how the name of Kurtz would be in the center of his heart, however, in the process of Kurtz's seeking into deep down of the Mekong River, Willard could hear only the rumors about Kurtz surrounded by the darkness of camera eyes with lights and shades. Only with the resounding sound effect of heart beating and silence sometimes, the film spectacle has the foregrounds of darkness with shading lights to

Kurtz. The size of 'Kurtz' is so small as other meaningless words are so. However, we as viewers, know what is the emotional reality toward Willard. He is a soldier but he has a vast trauma of Vietnam War where he just knows that make-believing is the only way of his survival from the US army. Indeed, the true 'horror' that he faces in the last scene might be in cognizing that he can no longer function outside his role as a soldier and the life he once knew back in the US world is where he can never return (Spanos, 2000; Sussman, 2006).

While the movie gives you an emotional extension of the American imperial and colonial subject, *Apocalypse Now* not only expresses an anti-war stance of imperialism but also reveals the emotional darkness through cinematography with lights and sounds. Through Willard's vantage narration and his emotion embedded storytelling structure, the real failure of this film may be its failure to recognize what the 'horror' means why it is 'horror' and to whom the 'horror' is referring in the lineage structure of Kurtz-Willard-audience. The distinction between lights and shadows and the resounding sounds cause us war experience of make-believing of Hollywood myth-making machine. This mythology can control us with the illusion of 'horror' with emotional darkness and we as viewers are complicit in its production and reproduction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Eun Jung Park was supported by Research Fund offered from National Research Foundation of Korea in 2014 (NRF-2014S1A5A2A01017353). Jinwha Kim was supported by Sogang University Research Fund.

REFERENCES

- Agrawal, R., T. Imielinski and A. Swami, 1993. Mining association rules between sets of items in large databases. *Proceedings of the ACM SIGMOD International Conference on Management of Data*, May 25-28, 1993, Washington, DC., USA., pp: 207-216.
- Baker, E., 1992. Telling tales: Storytelling and adult environmental education. Master Thesis, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.
- Beller, J., 2003. The cinematic mode of production: Towards a political economy of the postmodern. *Cult. Theor. Critique*, 44: 91-106.
- Carley, K.M., 1993. Coding choices for textual analysis: A comparison of content analysis and map analysis. *Sociological Method.*, 23: 75-126.
- Corley, C.D., D.J. Cook, A.R. Mikler and K.P. Singh, 2010. Text and structural data mining of influenza mentions in web and social media. *Intl. J. Environ. Res. Publ. Health*, 7: 596-615.
- Danowski, J., 1993. Network Analysis of Message Contents. In: *Progress in Communication Sciences*, Barnett, G. and W. Richards (Eds.). Ablex Publishing, Norwood, New Jersey, USA., pp: 197-222.
- Domingos, P., 2005. Mining social networks for viral marketing. *IEEE Intelli. Syst.*, 20: 80-82.
- Ebert, R., 1999. *Great Movies: Apocalypse Now*. Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago, Illinois,.
- Eberwein, R., 2005. *The War Film*. Rutgers UP, New Brunswick, New Jersey,.
- Scott, J., 1991. *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*. Sage, London, England.
- Sheen, M., M. Brando and S. Bottoms, 1979. *Apocalypse now*. IMDB Com Inc, An Amazon Com Company, Santa Monica, California.
- Sontag, S., 2002. Looking at war. *New Yorker*, New York, USA.
- Spanos, W.V., 2000. *America's Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, ISBN:0-8166-3338-X, Pages: 253.
- Spurr, D., 1993. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*. Duke UP, Durham, North Carolina,.
- Sussman, G., 2006. Bulls in the (Indo) China shop: Coppola's Vietnam revisited. *J. Popular Film Telev.*, 20: 24-28.
- Tomasulo, F.P., 1990. *The Politics of Ambivalence: Apocalypse Now as Pro-War and Anti-War Film*. Rutgers, New Jersey, USA.,.
- Wasserman, S. and K. Faust, 2008. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. 17th Edn., Cambridge University Press, New York, USA.