A Psychoanalysis of the Horror game 'Silent Hill 2'

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1. Introduction

The sense of horror is somewhat fascinating. That's because we tend to keep experiencing horror, though it doesn't make us pleasant. Historically, despite of the transformations of media, the numerous works including novels, movies and games with horror have represented our general interest in horror(Yang AeKyung 2004, 175). The medium has a popular status in a modern visual culture is definitely the movie. The audio-visual stimulating horror movie has been popular. Since the analytical formality(e.g psychoanalysis) for movie was set up in 70's, the horror movie has been revalued with new analyses on its deep structure(Seo InSuk 1999, 99).

Recently the games are becoming the medium has cultural and industrial effects like movie. So a scientific approach to the horror game is necessary. Just as the horror movie got its identity by a scientific approach, this kind of approach to the horror game would be meaningful as well. It is the general view that the experience of the horror game is similar to that of horror movie. It is sustained by the fact that games are based on the visual images just as movies are. But this view is passing over that games have its fundamental medium difference from movies.

McLuhan(2002) contends that "media" is message not "the contents" delivered. In his view, the unique midium feature of games delivers different messages from those in other media's horror experience like that in movies. So the experience of games is not neutral. Unlike other media, digital games possibly expand the human sense.

What I want to say in this paper is the game provides a new experience that others don't. I'd like to research how the digital games and horror experiences are connected and what differences the game has in delivering this experience from other media, especially from movies. For that purpose of this paper, I use the analysis formality for horror movies to analyse Silent Hill 2. I think the rest that the analysis formality for other media can't explain will show the identity of games.

2. Horror Games

Unfortunately digital games are not classified into a certain genre. Jeon GyeongLan(2005) contends that it is difficult to classify games into a certain genre because they are mutual texts demanding game players' multiple senses and have technical-industrial aspects. Also because it is for the amusement and competition. These characteristic features that emphasize entertaining and technical aspects rather than specific formality make various genre mixture on games.

In addition, its similarity to other media lies over technique, material and the forms of expression. That makes it difficult to tell its identity from the other genre(KGDPI 2005, 54-55). Eventually we need to know the horror game is judged by certain subjective standards. The general kinds of games are arcade games, adventure games, roll-playing games and simulation games. This classification is a general practice. . The horror game emphasizes the horror-

experiencing material aspects. The horror games are mainly being developed as the form of arcade(action) games which get rid of or avoid the scary objects and of adventure games. This tells us that the material "horror" is combined with terrible objects or mysterious plot itself.

Also the feeling of horror is ambiguous. It is not easy to analyze the term "horror" since it comes complexly and is confusedly used for anxiety, surprise and fear. The psychological term "fear" is originated from ancient English "faer" means a sudden disaster or a danger. Fear is meant to be an unpleasant artistic effect that is provoking from a pressing danger, and this is also a reaction upon the biological intimidation, which accomplish an exterior expression and an internal emotion with an accompanying physiological changes (Yang Ae Kyung 2004, 178-179).

Freud (2005b) distinguishes the astonishment (Schreck), fear (Furcht), and anxiety (Angst). Though anxiety is feeling that the sources of danger is not a known, this is a distinct state of anticipating or preparing some kind of danger. Fear requires a designated object to be frightened. However, astonishment is named by the state when anybody is in danger without any preparation.

We can see the biological emotion for the external object is an externalized fear; as compared to the anxiety is an internalized fear. You may well say that astonishment is more like the state when somebody suddenly gets into trouble without any provision. This kind of reaction is a psychology buffering work about the fear of nature and dark in a primitive age as well as the fear that human has about the vagueness, which is a common explanation.

With a multiplicity of fear, this emotion does not simply provide an unpleasant feeling without any refusal, but people actually enjoy it, which is an interesting point. As Freud distinguishes a pleasure principle and a reality principle in an early stage, he mentions that a person tends to avoid a temperature-humidity, but to persuade a pleasure, and this gets performed based on the real circumstances(Freud 2005a, 12-22). However, later on, he modifies his opinion on the "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." He contends that there is an instinct imperative impulsion that tries to go back to the previous state, and this is called "death drive (Trieb)" (Freud 2005b). This impulsion shows that the modern rationality, autonomy and civilization can not overcome the internal fear, and also it never solves the problem of internal fear. This kind of mediated fear is a factor to bring a pleasure, but also is used for material for a work of art.

Freud(2005b, 280-283) contends that people transform the actual fear into playing. He contends that throughout playing people repeat anything has great effects on them and that with this repeat they dissipate the intensity of those impression and become the controller of that situation. Transforming horror experience's passiveness into activeness explains enjoying mediated horror well. This attitude characterize repetition compulsion and play because it eases the horror of death surrounding consciousness. These uncanny objects are used for the major theme of surrealism art. The mediated horror is an actual horror but also means a temporary horror or a transformed horror. Balint(1987) contends in "Thrills and Regressions" that Philobatism and Ocnophilia were fundamentally corresponded. The horror we feel on the adventure rides is based on the matter of safety. Therefore, drive can't be fulfilled in unconsciousness is enjoyed in a relieved way or a mediated way. This shows that art works or plays are for the reflection of the human-inside fear rather than catharsis Aristotle mentioned(Kwon TaekYoung 2004, 81; Yang Ae Kyung 176-177). After all, the conditions, a mediated reality and a stabilized situation games create, are very attractive because they experience the fundamental drives like "horror" and "death" in a new way.

3. Object and method for research

I chose Silent Hill 2 by KONAMI internationally released in 2001 and in Feb 6th, 2003 in Korea. We can call this "Adventure Game" or "Horror Adventure" because it is all about horror. Because this game provide horror just by a feeling and an atmosphere of insecurity, this game differs from Action Games which get satisfaction by doing destructive actions on certain objects. Especially Silent Hill 2 is worthy of researching since it puts players in a very complex mental state.

This paper is supposed to analyze how game makes player and text be able to share horror which is unusual experience and emotion. The fundamental method is that it will borrow an analytic method of film studies for the movie analysis. Through this analysis in the community, it will be analyzed about the device to make an experience facing the fear. However movies and games are different media. for example, unlike the cinema audience, the performative agency as a player can control the situation and make his own situations in the game(King 2002, 51). Fundamentally there is material difference between the film and digital game. A film is made with shifting 24 still images per second. On the other hand a game is base on digital programing. Because of that, there is surplus that an analytic method borrowed from film studies can explain. This part must be a significant identity of game. By minimal analysis of text itself and meditation of media identity, I try to find the relationship between the special experience (Horror) and Game.

4. Analysis

4.1. An analytic method of film studies

1) Narrative
This game stars when main character(James Sunderland) gets a letter from a wife who has been dead for 3years. The goal of the game is for Silent Hill, James to meet his wife again who shared beautiful memories with him.

During the game, James meets Angela, Eddie, Maria and Laura. Main character meets his wife after he finishes killing creatures, solving puzzles. After he finds out that his wife who has been considered to be dead actually killed him, he killed his wife living in his fantasy. Like this, the narrative is based on a primary fantasy and substantializing the sense of sin. Dead wife could be the living dead which returns to the world because of not being able to solve the symbolic debt as Lacan said. James' wife is described as maternal superego which is castrated other and gives a castration anxiety. Also main character comes back becoming an executioner as agent of law who enjoys jouissance.

2) The point of view and a camera
Only subjective shot is provided in the game instead of the establishing-shot or the extreme long-shot that general movies use for relieving the anxiety. The exclusive and paranoiac angle continues his unstable states(Ziźek 1995, 88~89, Seo Hyun-Suk, 2005). In addition, not being able to use long-shot reflects the game's medium feature. Compared to movies, games which is close to the monitor and have small-sized images(Morris 2002, 91) are handicapped to use extreme long-shot to describe characters and settings on the monitor. Especially because recent adventure games focus on the main characters for story telling, provision of information by cut-scene or interface is preferred to long-shot.

Sight without body frequently appears in the "Point-of-view shot" performs the objects that provoke the anxiety and the cause of the anxiety at once. In the diegetic space, there is no one to occupy the point-of-view. The gaze existing like a ghost in the background is the gaze of the thing. The voice without body speaking in the radio means object petit 'a' which activates a living body (James, he meas game player You!) (Ziźek 2004, 63-94).

3) Characters and creatures (images and their role)

In the game, creatures' limbs are distorted or concealed. A creature having its arms inside the body, a nurse with crippled legs, a manikin with reversed arm and leg and a monster veiled of a steel tube are abjections Kristeva(2001) said as they were made up on the objective which threatened themselves. When they return to the subject, these objects remind the subject of a sense of sin and his trauma and disturb the identifying himself with a symbolic order. That makes the creature be the objects which maintain disgust, anxiety and a sense of sin, not be the objects which deliver the pleasure of destruction.

Main character is also an ordinary man. Unlike the characters in other RPG games, his power or capacity doesn't ascend. Game players experience not an external anxiety but an internal anxiety identifying himself with this incapable man's mental state.

4) Sound

In the on-screen sound : "Radio" with noise , he gets in the early stage of the game, gives the sense of horror to his closed sight when the creature shows up. Also the sound without body performs object petit 'a' and activates the main character. Even in the same place, the character of music is delivered differently when narrative circumstance is changed. The important fact is that this music delivers a specific emotion   by repetition of same part to the game players .

4.2 An analytic method of Game studies

1) Obstacles, save points.

This game has "physical and cognitive obstacles" in it. But physical obstacles are different from the destructing obstacles in general games. Rather they seems to be objects generating character's "repetition compulsion" or   maintaining the anxiety continuously. Keeping a feature of Adventure game, Silent Hill 2 has a lot of cognitive obstacles (puzzles). When a character is not capable of going on, those puzzles provide a lead to solve the problem. To solve the puzzles, game players use various of items and look for a notes. This process derives their active involvement. That is, in movies, There is an identification mechanism called "fictional enunciation system". In the game, It has a dual structure of "providing and concealing" the players' participating in this (fictional) enunciation system. Because save points exist only in specific places, they are devices creating the anxiety and continuing player's performance.

2) Interface and 'cut scene'

To maximize its subjective point of view on the screen, Interface isn't used in this game. This increases the player's involvement into the game and forms an isolated body when it minimize a delivering the information. Also in Silent Hill 2, there is cut scene has nothing to do with a physical operation when an event scene comes up. Those devises show player some of character's lost memories and deliver an important information and describe character's mental state.

3) Temporality

Game players are the real humane playing certain roles in the game world. Juul (2004) regards the time that players spend on playing the role in the game world as "Event Time" and the time that players spend on game as "play time". In this game, the 'fantastic' event time which the game character experiences turns out to be a fantasy itself when it finishes. In other words, the 'actual' event time is concealed until the game actually ends. If it is a movie, you would enjoy 2 hours as an audience. But if it is a game, you could experience another play time by an actual doing, a playing game.

4) Physical operation as a performative action

A game player initiates his main Subject status in the game when he believes that he can produce a cause and effect movement and spectacles just by pressing buttons. At this point, as a spectacle creator, it is important for an active game player to overcome a simple structure. It is also important that a constant operating buttons delivers a certain emotion. Meaningless and intentional delay happens by a continuous action, which is pressing buttons. This process happens just like a ritual for playing to forgive his sin with physical actions.

5) Interactivity

The relationship between a game player and a game text can be classified into an internal-interaction and an interpretative-interaction(KGDPI 2005). In the game, a player regards himself as a member of that fantasy world and tells the story in the point of the first person. Doing creative interaction, he figures out that the result of a game text is his own responsibility.

5.Conclusion

Games abstract experiences and represent them into new concert and method with devices such as metaphor and magnification (Park SangWoo 2002).

First, they substantiate individual fantasies. Individualized environment of game and the distance from the screen provide personal experiences (Morris 2002, 91). Digital programs dilute the characteristic of images as indexes. They perform the iconic sign and are transformed into the suitable images for substantializing of a specific individual mentality.(Park SungSoo 2002). That is, psychological fact Freud said which triggers the emotion of fear follows the mechanism such as the game text itself. Second, behaviors continues by repetition compulsion. Simple process of manipulation and epic logic force the repetition of the same behavior. Third, they have manipulability through performance. It is connected to the repetition of the second point, and it is a constitutional factor of participation subjects to the game. By manipulating buttons physically and continuously individuals connect themselves directly to the game text and convey specific emotions. Finally intentional transformational recognition of even time through the playtime provides the unique time of games.

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