

The history of peppermint candy film studies essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Peppermint CandyThe director Lee Chang Dong used a male character to express a symbol of deprivation of Korea's society through using the political, economical and social crisis in the 80's and 90's. This film could be considered as just melodrama that only explores the how Young Ho's life is shaped by the social system. Compare to other movies, it portrayed Young Ho's life from current to past, where he jumps to the railway and screams " I am going back", then commits suicide. This event takes the audiences through a process Young Ho's life that was full of harsh experiences that made him into totally different young man from full of hopes and illusion about his dream. Also, the audiences realized how he loses his fame and money after its bankruptcy. In the movie, all these events are shown through the psychological exploration of Young Ho's life. The movie clearly shows that an oppressive and manipulating society diminished his individuality, and made him into a person without hope and love. The main purpose of this film was to emphasize how Young Ho became such a brutal man from innocent and moral young man. In this sense, Yong-ho is viewed primarily as a narrative device in which Lee Chang-dong explores the negative influences that such changes has had on the South Korean society at large—from the economic crisis in the 1990's to the military dictatorship within the government during the 1980's, the film elaborates on the tumultuous events that had shaped the South Korean societal landscape as well as the life of Yong-ho. One of the main elements that were shown in the movie was a masculinity of Young Ho and how it portrayed a militarized society which shaped Young Ho's personality and mind. Because the Korean military represents the strong male masculinity, the movie clearly shows how the military took control over the Korean society during 1980's and 1990's,

which created a militarized society that emphasized masculine nature. When Young Ho decides to go to the riverbank picnic to kill himself, when he buys the gun and starts planning who he should kill to relief his anger. When Young Ho has someone to spy on his wife (Honja) and later abuses her after he realizes she has an affair, the audiences could tell that Yong Ho is a calculating person and violent about his actions. Also, there are violence scenes where Young Ho brutally abuses the student to get the information he needed and the Kwangju massacre scene, where the soldier beats the men by kicking them and assaulting them. The director portrayed the image of militarized masculinity as the violence, strict discipline, and rational calculation, which were shown throughout the movie and how Young Ho used all these elements to emphasize his male oriented society. Throughout the movie, Young Ho, the protagonist of this film keeps away from activities that were considered feminine. For example, he did not give any help or respect to his pregnant wife and left her alone to suffer. Also Youngho and his fellow policeman discuss about the role as a father, which tells that they are only to talk with their teachers after they did bad things in the school. All of these show how this character fits into the concept of militarized society and how the film reflect upon a society that shapes their behavior and mind after 2 years of intense military service and training. Even though, the movie criticized of Korean ruined society, Peppermint also could be considered as a criticism to the military system itself. During the 1980's and 1990's, the military changed men into failing products through traumatic experiences. Yong Ho was changed in brutal and disparaging man after his involvement in the Kwanju massacre which he accidentally shot a girl. It was the most important turning point in the process of Young Ho's brutal life. Therefore,

the masculinity issued is shown as a huge part of the plot, where its modern rule within a changing post military society is questioned. Peppermint Candy shows the marginalization of the women role within the narration. Since, the movie mainly concentrated on a story about a man's life through a male perspective, I had hard time observing any feminine ideology that was shown in the movie. Women are oppressed by individuals representing a male-oriented society during 1980's and 1990's, like Honja is oppressed by Yong ho in the movie. In the movie, female roles are shown through Sunim and Honja, who has different kind of element. Sunim represents inspiration and love, but Honja represents as an object to be cheated on and ignored. Because women roles are used as tools to support a male-oriented plot, the director meticulously used it to express a criticism on the use of women in military as negative ways. However, I was not sure if the director intended to use this method to criticize the female role in society or if the film originally planned to express power of masculine society or even if the director was influenced by a militarized mindset. Either way, the overall plot of film failed to target female audiences when they have hard time identifying themselves within a story about a masculine male society. It reflects the importance of the masculine ideology within Peppermint Candy and explores not only of the political degradation of Korea but it also degrades masculine moral ideology in the society. The director Lee Chang Dong used various symbolisms to enhance artistic concept and the degradation of masculinity in the movie. The tragic fatale of Young Ho's life is more emphasized through the ongoing train and it also represents a symbol of man power in the contemporary history. This train is always appear after tragic events in his life which tells audiences that society and masculinity are the ultimate

causes of Yong Ho's disgrace and behavior. In the movie, his camera represents a symbol of his young age ideals and hopes. After Yong Ho sells his camera, and cheats on his wife after beating her badly, the audience sees the train passing. The train represents the reversing of the narrative that provides the film with a glimpse of the South Korea's past—poetically articulated through the notion of a train traveling backwards. It's certainly not a film that is easily digestible in any sense of the word—we essentially witness the unraveling of a fragile man against the backdrop of some of South Korea's most disastrous events. Its harshest scenes are punctuated with a view from the back of a train — shown backwards to look like it's moving forwards through the beautiful, mountainous countryside — accompanied by soft, melancholy string quartet music that traces a line back to the guilt-free past while never letting us forget the wretched man's death on the tracks in the future. In addition, the peppermint candy represents the masculinity and innocence in the movie. It was Young Ho's first love gift from Sunim and it also made Young Ho remember her and was able to prevail his masculinity. Unfortunately, His innocence and ideals goes away when the candy was crashed on the floor by a sergeant. As soon as he left the candies behind, it was turning point for him and he lost innocence by militarized world. He was once a bright-eyed youth himself, and it is the loss of that innocence that so troubles him in the opening scene when he is reunited with his carefree old friends. The symbolism of small everyday items like peppermint candy is profound, and the difficulty of creating a fresh, new present out of a rotten past is something we come to feel on a personal level. Therefore, these and other symbolisms reflect and define masculinity in Peppermint Candy. All of these elements show how the film represents

masculine society and how it influenced overall plot. It is important to notice that the focus of movie is not masculinity alone. I believe the movies' moral occult is the search of happiness, and though the masculinity question is an essential part of the melodramatic mode it is inaccurate to consider it as an only universe. Peppermint Candy is a story about a man within a political society which shaped him in negative ways. However, Masculinity clearly sets a background in overall society and affects a main character's mind. This important landmark in the South Korean democratic movement, in which a clash between government troops and student pro-democracy demonstrators resulted in 200 dead (mostly civilians), was a specter that would haunt Korean politics for the next two decades, and ultimately result in the arrest and imprisonment of two former South Korean presidents. Furthermore, the Kwangju Massacre also triggered the rise of anti-American sentiment, as it was widely believed that the Reagan administration had strongly endorsed the use of force in quelling the riot. And it is integral when the movie cries for a redefinition of society because it is a male-oriented society after all. Thus, Peppermint Candy is shown at the end as a movie that explores masculinity and its role in Korean society, and pleas redefinition of Korean masculinity: from a militarized defined to an individual and pure one. This is powerful filmmaking by director Lee Chang-dong and coupled with extremely convincing acting ultimately promotes Peppermint Candy as an exploration of one man's—and country's—most harrowing moments in history and the emotional residue that stems from experiencing such tragic affairs.