Noir Elements of Neo-Noir: An Analysis of Quentin Tarantino and David Fincher

Yu Zhou

Shandong Radio and TV Station, Jinan, Shandong, 250000, China

Abstract: *The emergence of different film genres tends to reflect social development and changes in social form. Neo-Noir is a genre of film which emerged after 1960 that is always situated in the dark and dirty city. Compared with traditional Film Noir, Neo-Noir has new contents and novel forms. Neo-Noir reflects the crimes, violence and depraved humanity that tend to make the audiences feel negative and pessimistic. In this dissertation, I will take two representative directors (Quentin Tarantino and David Fincher) of the Neo-Noir genre in order to analyze the noir elements including montage, image style and psychology so that I can illuminate the artistic features of Neo-Noir.*

Keywords: *Film Noir, Neo-Noir, Quentin Tarantino, David Fincher, Noir elements, Montage, Color and light, Psychology*

1. Introduction

1.1. The introduction of Film Noir

"Film Noir" was born in America as early as 1940, but the concept of "Film Noir" was formally brought into film studies by French film critic Nino Frank in 1946. During the Nazi occupation of France, the French people had no opportunity to see American films. After World War II, the French audience and film critics came into contact with a large number of American films within a short time. This is why Nino Frank was able to discover a phenomenon with a keen eye that his American fellows missed - these crime films had unprecedented similar styles and he named these films "Film Noir". [8] Jason Holt lists four important elements to give a definition of "Film Noir". Firstly, they reflect sexuality specifically. Secondly, they use violence to portray 'degraded humanity'. Thirdly, they are black-and-white. Lastly, they feature guilty people escaping justice. [12] *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) are masterpieces of American Film Noir. These films portray a noir world which is full of violence, temptation and desperation. And these elements are tied up with American social and cultural change----After the ten years of the great depression (1929-1939), Americans came through World War II without respite. The prosperity, romance and glittering success of Hollywood were no longer realistic but Film Noir which focuses on the dark and dirty cities was a reflection of social situations. Film Noir ushered in a classic noir era (classic noir era is from 1940 to 1959 [8]) in American film industry. Film Noir is always in a dim light, has few characters and focuses on solving criminal cases. Hence only a very limited amount of content can be displayed on the screen. The outmoded black-and-white format also puts Film Noir at a serious disadvantage. It lost its glamour for audience who prefer the colorful spectacle and big screen. Film Noir was too conservative in look to keep up with the times and began to decline in the late fifties. If *The Maltese Falcon* represents the transformation from the traditional detective film into Film Noir, then *Touch of Evil* (1958), which is redefines the classical noir roles and even combined with a self-conscious critique of film noir, moves beyond Film Noir deliberately. Eventually *Touch of Evil*, the movie that Paul Schrader calls "film noir's epitaph", signaled the end of Film Noir. [6]

1.2. The introduction of Neo-Noir

Conard gives a somewhat loose definition of 'Neo-Noir': 'Neo-Noir is one kind of film genre produced after the classic noir era (1940-1959) that displays the visual or thematic characteristics of Noir sensibility'. [3] But film critics didn't begin to consider "Neo-Noir" as an independent genre until 1970. Americans and even Hollywood suffered huge losses in the financial crisis (1969-1970). This social and cultural background gave Neo-Noir an opportunity to attract attention from the audiences and film critics

who focused on the noir side of society again. It reflects crimes, violence and depraved humanity that make the audiences feel uneasy. *Chinatown* (1974), *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and *Fight Club* (1999) are well-known Neo-Noir films in the world. These films combine color with noir and they not only reflect the renaissance of Film Noir but also indicate the birth of an independent genre.

1.3. Noir elements of Neo-Noir and representative directors

Giving a single definition of Neo-Noir is much more difficult than marking the boundaries of Film Noir. Consider Bould's definition as follows:

'Films containing some of these noir elements have been described as Film Noirs. They also contain other elements shared by still other films, causing the genre to flourish from multiple centers' [1]

Many filmmakers, especially Hollywood directors and photographers have indicated that their works have been influenced by Film Noir. Their films are not the traditional sense of Film Noir but we can find the noir themes and the noir sensibility in these films distinctly. It is these noir sensibility and noir elements that are used to structure the connotations of Neo-Noir films. There are countless famous directors of Film Noir and Neo-Noir. Billy Wilder (the director of *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Sunset Blvd.* (1950)), Fritz Lang (the director of The *Woman in the Window* (1944) and *The Big Heat* (1953)) and John Huston (the director of *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950)) are representative directors of Film Noir. Their masterpieces of Film Noir exert a subtle influence on many modern-day Neo-Noir filmmakers, including Quentin Tarantino and David Fincher. Many traditional Film Noir elements can be found easily in these two Neo-Noir filmmakers' films. Such as 'its particular treatment of gender and sexuality, its devices of flashback and voice-over narration, its concentration on abnormal psychological states and its visual style' [8]

Quentin Tarantino (born March 27, 1963) is not only a famous screenwriter, but also a well-known Neo-Noir filmmaker.

'Tarantino has cultivated his persona as a 'film geek', someone who is passionately devoted to films, possessing enormous erudition and enthusiasm about trash culture.' [8]

At the 1994 Cannes Film Festival, he beat Krzysztof Kieślowski (the director of *red* (1994)) and won the Palme d'Or, for *Pulp Fiction* (1994) which is characterized by non-linear narrative, aesthetics of violence and elements of Neo-Noir film. There is no doubt that *Pulp Fiction* has become a culture emblem and one of the most classical Neo-Noir films. In addition to *Pulp Fiction, Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and *Kill Bill* (Volume 1, released in 2003& Volume 2, released in 2004) are also widely recognized as the well-known Neo-Noir films.

In addition to Quentin Tarantino, David Fincher (born August 28, 1962) is also an undisputed leader of Neo-Noir. Although both of them are contemporaneous Neo-Noir filmmakers, Fincher's personal noir style is entirely different from Tarantino's. Fincher's feature debut *Alien 3* (1992) [16] was not very successful in public praise. But his next film *Se7en* (1995) received widespread acclaim because this Neo-Noir film reflected a morally bankrupt society and depraved humanity in a practical way. *Fight Club* (1999) failed to meet the expectations at the box office but received praise for its directing and themes. Melancholy is often the preponderant mood of Fincher's films, including his later works such as *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011) and *Gone Girl* (2014). Although the stories in his films are complicated and distortional, Fincher has no intention of puzzling audiences. Conversely, he intends to stimulate thinking among the audiences.

In this dissertation, I will take two representative directors (Quentin Tarantino and David Fincher) of the Neo-Noir to use an example in order to analyze the noir elements including montage, image style and psychology and illuminate the artistic features of Neo-Noir. I have divided each of the noir elements according to the two directors' personal styles. The chapter of montage, for example is divided into two parts to reflect this: nonlinear narrative and flashback. The chapter of image style consists of the use of color and the use of light. The rejection of the traditional moral judgment and the contradictory mentality constitute the chapter of psychology.

2. Noir elements: montage

2.1. Quentin Tarantino's unique technique of montage:nonlinear narrative

Generally, Film critics classify Neo-Noir films as modernist (sometimes called neo-modernist) and postmodernist. The modernist era is the early period which ran from roughly 1967 to 1976. The postmodernist period began with Lawrence Kasdan's *Body Heat* (1981) and has persisted to this day. [3] One of the most important differences between modernist and postmodernist is the divergence of narrative construction. Straightforward narrative lines of modernist are replaced by more and more complicated story constructions. For example, nonlinear narrative is one of the complicated story constructions of Neo-Noir film. Conard points out that Tarantino plays a significant role in postmodern Neo-Noir. He is good at using nonlinear narrative as his classical noir element. [3]

Quentin Tarantino's artistic talents are embodied most vividly in *Pulp Fiction* (1994). Tarantino's favorite screenplay is *Le Doulos* (1962) which he evaluates as "You don't have any idea of what's going on until the last 20 minutes" [8] . Tarantino is so inspired by it and prefers to tell a simple story in a structurally complex manner so *Pulp Fiction* use nonlinear narrative in which the sequence of plot is jumbled up and thoughtfully rearranged so that the audiences would focus on the plot of film and tend to make a clear understanding of the plot continually. On the face of it, the name of *Pulp Fiction* has no connection with the plot of the film. Actually, it is a ridicule that makes the audiences have the illusion that the film is just made up from several different stories roughly at the beginning of the film. However, when the audiences see the film further, they would find that the film contains three primary storylines which are interrelated and interact on each other in various ways. The three leading roles of these three primary storylines are contract killer Vincent Vega, prizefighter Butch Coolidge and Vincent's partner Jules Winnfield. And the film can be divided into seven sequences:

1) "Prologue—The Diner"

2) Prelude to "Vincent Vega and Marsellus Wallace's Wife"

3) "Vincent Vega and Marsellus Wallace's Wife"

4) Prelude to "The Gold Watch" (a: flashback, b: present)

5) "The Gold Watch"

6) "The Bonnie Situation"

7) "Epilogue—The Diner"

These seven sequences could be reordered in chronological order: 4a, 2, 6, 1, 7, 3, 4b, 5. There are some overlaps between sequences 1&7 and sequences 2&6 but each sequence is displayed by different perspective. Foreshadowing and overlap play a very significant role in nonlinear narrative by reason that they are beneficial to the narrative symmetry of the film. The details are highlighted by overlaps. In sequence 2, Jules Winnfield delivers a passage from Bible before killing person and this plot repeats in sequence 6. (see Fig 1) After Jules kills that person, another man storms out of the toilet and shoots Jules and his partner. (see Fig 2) The audiences would be astonished when they find that there is a hidden person who they ignored in sequence 2. The audiences' surprise is due to the fact that they have got used to the omniscient god's eye view in the previous films. But nonlinear narrative challenges that and gives the audiences a shock. What's more surprising is that Vincent, the leading role of the primary storyline, is killed in sequence 5 but rises from the dead in the next two sequences. The audiences' fields of view are controlled by the time in linear narrative but Tarantino liberate the audiences' mind from formulaic films and give them a brand-new experience of watching films.

Figure 1: Pulp Fiction (1994)

Figure 2: Pulp Fiction (1994)

In addition to *Pulp Fiction*, nonlinear narrative is also used in other Tarantino's films. *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) is divided into several stories and reordered by characters instead of time. The same story is told from the different characters' perspectives so the fact is puzzling. With the appearance of each character, the audiences begin to know the fact gradually but the roles still just know the part that they experienced. Varying degrees of information between the audiences and roles constitute the suspense. It is an interesting fact that Bill doesn't show his face in whole *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003). And the reason why Bill wants to kill the Bride is unknown until *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (2004) tells the plot about their history out of the chronological order. These two films are fragmentary. It, however, represents Tarantino's open mind and he wants the audiences to take part in the creative process of his films.

Nonlinear narrative, a unique technique of montage, is quite different from the most of mainstream films but it is an indispensable part of Tarantino's noir elements. At the same time, nonlinear narrative reflects Tarantino's rebellious spirit of traditional mainstream films. This unique technique of montage slips the leash of traditional linear narrative and tells stories out of chronological order. Instead of making the film become hard to understand, nonlinear narrative not only helps build up the audiences' interests but also maximize dramatic impact. Tarantino, a representative director of the Neo-Noir film, exposes a wonderful noir world to the audiences by his unique noir element--- nonlinear narrative.

2.2. David Fincher's unique technique of montage: Flashback

"Flashback", one kind of psychological montage, means an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time from the current point in the story. [7] Flashback was first used in the field of films by Rouben Mamoulian in 1931. Flashback occupies a very important position in Film Noir by reason that it is an indispensable classic element of Film Noir. Take *Double Indemnity* (1944) for instance, at the beginning of the film, Neff, a wounded man, returns to his office. Then he presses down the start button of the recorder and begins to make a confession about a mysterious murder (First person narration is another traditional noir elements in Film Noir). (see Fig 3) Then the film flashes back to the first meeting of the Neff and heroine. (see Fig 4) The directors of the Film Noir always use the flashback to express a feeling of hopelessness. In this film, flashback makes audiences feel the portent of tragic ending and it was fated that Neff's plan should fail.

Figure 3& Figure 4: Double Indemnity (1944)

Compared with the Film Noir's flashback, David Fincher's flashback is more transitory. Some images flashes onto a screen so briefly that the audiences could capture the role's transient psychological activity. At the beginning of *Fight Club* (1999), the director intersperses the progress of explosion with Jack's phone call. (see Fig 5) The fridge goes off suddenly when Marla answers the phone. (see Fig 6) This explosion symbolizes the great shock of Jack. At the end of the film, Jack realizes that himself is Tyler who always dominates his personality. Fincher uses the flashbacks to show this progress. It makes more

sense to say that these flashbacks are meant to be, not representations of memories or fantasies, but representations of what has really happened. [9] The high speed of the shot cut represents the anxiety and awakening of Jack and the pictures show the invisible psychological activity of the role. (see Fig 7& Fig 8) Flashback is not only an important feature of Film Noir but also one of Fincher's essential noir elements.
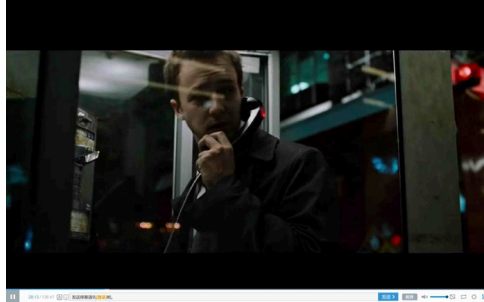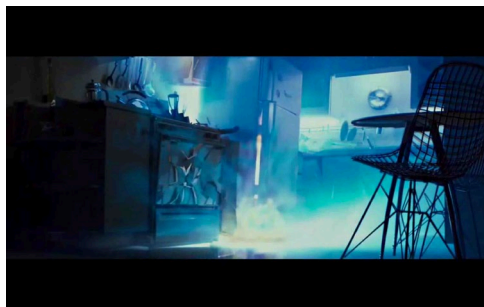

Figure 5: Fight Club (1999)

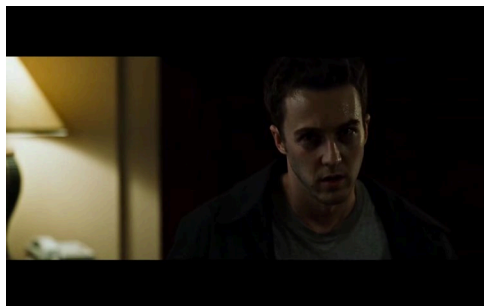*Figure 6: Fight Club (1999)*

Figure 7: Fight Club (1999)

Figure 8: Fight Club (1999)

Flashback is the most commonly used types of editing in Fincher's films, especially the films which have theme of uncontrollable fate. In addition to *Fight Club*, there are many other examples. The editing of *Seven* (1995) is skillful and dramatic. When the film draws to a close, a flashback of Mills' wife is displayed on the screen. (see Fig 9) Fincher also inserts some momentary frames of Tyler in *Fight Club*. (see Fig 10) He uses the same technique in his two films to demonstrate his personal style. At beginning of *The Game* (1997), lots of disordered scenes display the mind of Nicholas Van Orton and the audiences could feel the scar of Nicholas' childhood through the combination of these scenes. When the shot is cut

again, the scene display adult Nicholas' face. (see Fig 11&Fig 12) This scene makes the audiences understand that the scenes displayed before are Nicholas' recall of childhood. The flashback used here lets the audiences have access to the role's inner world and make the following plot more reasonable. The first half of *Gone Girl* (2014) makes the audiences have complex emotions towards the husband Nick Dunne----a combination of sympathy and suspicion. Then flashbacks (Amy's diary) display that Nick and his missing wife Amy's marriage had already disintegrated. The flashbacks (Amy's diary) and the reality promote the development of the plot synchronously. Gradually, the audiences and Nick start to get close to the "truth". With an increasing speed of cut between these two kinds of narrative, the whole thing becomes uncontrollable and the director tell the audiences the truth of the matter immediately instead of giving them a chance to think carefully. The flashbacks used here greatly accelerate the rhythm of film and create a thrilling atmosphere. Compared with the common narrative of recall, the flashback could portray characters and capture the transient psychological activity. David Fincher uses the flashback to let the audiences go into the role's inner world which is complex and contradictory.

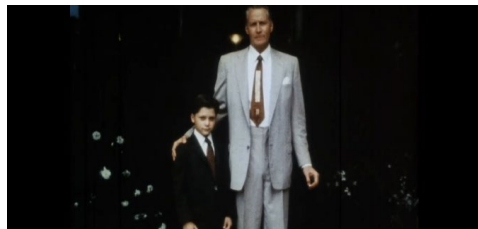

Figure 9: Se7en (1995)

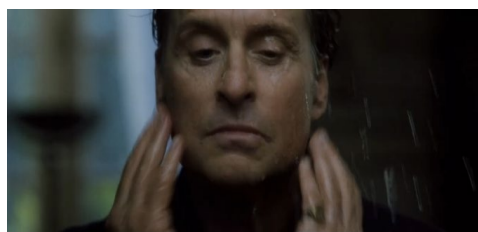*Figure 10: Fight Club (1999)*

Figure 11: The Game (1997)

Figure 12: The Game (1997)

3. Noir elements:color and light

3.1. The use of color in Quentin Tarantino's films

Kathrina Glitre (2009) said: " Color is objective and subjective. It is relative, cultural and specific." Different kinds of emotion would be generated due to the different cognitive elevations of different people, even to the same color. Color plays a significant part in films. Outstanding directors always control and use color carefully to complement the narrative of films and enhance the emotions of roles.

So it is necessary to analyze the use of color in Neo-Noir. As mentioned before, the outmoded black-and-white format put Film Noir at a serious disadvantage so it lost its glamour for audience who prefer the colorful spectacle and big screen. As a result, Film Noir is too conservative to keep up with the times and began to decline in the late fifties. Faced with the rapid development of cinematic technique, Neo-Noir makes up for this disadvantage of Film Noir.

Color is one of Quentin Tarantino's noir elements and his films are always rich in color, especially *Kill Bill* (Volume 1 and Volume 2). He arranges color carefully in these two films. The color, which is used to divide the film into several sequences, becomes an important element of narrative. At the same time, the rhythm of film is accelerated by color. *Kill Bill* (Volume 1) can be divided into six sequences:

1) Prologue

2) "Chapter1: 2"

3) "Chapter2: The Blood-Splattered Bride"

4) "Chapter3: The Origin of O-Ren"

5) "Chapter4: The Man from Okinawa"

6) "Chapter5: Showdown at House of Blue Leaves"

Sequence 1 is black-and-white. Some Neo-Noir films, including *Dead Again* (1991) and *Natural Born Killers* (2000)(based on an original screenplay by Tarantino), combine color with black-and-white sequences. *Kill Bill* uses black-and-white for flashbacks in the first part of the film----the past is black-and-white and the present is colorful. In this respect, this treatment of color is the feature of postmodern Neo-Noir. Sequences 2&3&5 are colorful. It's worth noting that sequence 4 is colorful animation. The final sequence 6 lasts for forty minutes. The frequent shifts between colors and black-and-white relieve the audiences' visual fatigue. At the same time, the frequent shifts of colors represent the Bride's psychological activity. The black-and-white part represents that the Bride is tired and numb. After the Bride cuts off electric power, the picture turn into dark blue and this part symbolizes that she starts to calm down gradually and her cool mind foreshadows the success. The final duel between the Bride and O-Ren is arranged in a classical Japanese garden. There are lots of color elements: O-Ren's white kimono, the Bride's yellow sport suit, the black samurai sword, the red blood and the white snow. Tarantino always uses red which is often combined with black-and-white to strengthen dramatic impacts. In addition to *Kill Bill,* this kind of treatment is also used in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) *and Sin City* (2005) (Tarantino is the guest director). Yellow, represents 'happy' and 'optimism' in normal conditions, is not a common color in Neo-Noir films. However, yellow is one of Tarantino's favorite colors----the Bride's yellow sport suit and car; the yellow subtitle of *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction* and *The Hateful Eight* (2016); and the yellow faces in *Sin City*. (Tarantino is the guest director of this part). Yellow becomes a symbol of Tarantino's personal noir style. Tarantino loves color and it's interesting that the main characters of *Reservoir Dogs* are even named after colors (Mr. Brown, Pink, White etc.).

Tarantino makes great use of color. This magic of color charms the audiences and leads them into a colorful noir world. The great use of colors in Tarantino's films make the noir world so real that the audiences could even smell the scent of the world through the screen.

3.2. The use of light in David Fincher's films

Famous cinematographer Vittorio Storaro named his book "Writing with Light". This suggests that the use of light is crucial to the film. As Rudolf Arnheim mentions: "in black-and-white film there is but one way to achieve extreme contrast: through the difference between black and white." [2] This difference is the chiaroscuro lighting. In classic Film Noir era, all noir films are black-and-white. Since then, Film Noir has developed the low-key lighting style. Three-point lighting is commonly used in traditional films--- a key light, a fill light and a back light. However, low-key lighting often uses only one key light or fill light, even a simple reflector. There are a high lighting ratio and a predominance of shadowy areas in low-key lighting scenes of Film Noir. The reasons why Film Noir directors like low-key lighting are as follows. Firstly, the stories of Film Noir always happen in the dark and dirty cities, especially in the evening. Secondly, Film Noir often reflects crimes, violence and depraved humanity so the directors could combine the scenes with the narrative by using low-key lighting. Many Neo-Noir filmmakers, especially Hollywood directors and photographers who grow up in classic noir era are influenced by this kind of noir elements. The technique of low-key lighting still can be seen in modern Neo-Noir films which are no longer black-and-white.

David Fincher is one of the directors who are influenced by Film Noir and he takes the light as his noir element. Fincher often combines the light with the narrative, which reflects his aesthetic pursuit of Neo-Noir. In classic Film Noir era, owing to the limitations of cinematic technique, only a very limited amount of content can be displayed in the shadows. However, faced with the rapid development of cinematic technique, modern high-speed camera provides Fincher a chance to display exceptional sharpness pictures at very low lighting levels. [8]

In terms of the photography style of *Seven*, the film's pictures are based on the low-key lighting. Fincher sets two scenes in different lighting levels in order to create horror, eeriness and mysterious atmosphere of the crime scene. Although it rains continually outdoors, the scene is still bright relatively. It is dark inside the house that is in great contrast with the brightness outside the house. The noir directors always use the light that contrasted clearly with the dark. In this film, Fincher tries to use this contrast to indicate the sordid business in this house. The key light of this indoor scene is just a poor and yellow light of wall lamp. The roles' clothes and the stage properties, such as telephone and cup are fuscous. This treatment of color makes the audiences could focus on the change of light. At the same time, the flashlight's beam scans every corners of the room and the audiences could reconnoiter the crime scene by following the move of flashlight's beam. The shakes of the flashlight not only conform the plot but also create a mood of tension and fear. All these lighting elements are combined with the narrative perfectly.

In *Fight Club*, Fincher attaches great importance to the shadow of light which projects onto the face so as to form a contrast. The audiences could always notice that Jack has deep and dark eye sockets whether in the sunny days or the dark nights. This treatment of light represents the role's complex and tangled mental activity.

When critic Archer compares Oplev's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2009) with Fincher's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), he said: "Fincher has a more playful attitude to space and lighting, and a tendency toward unexpected and often enigmatic compositions." [10] The use of light is important to the expression of the David Fincher's noir world. Fincher uses light to create a shadowy and confusing labyrinth and he wants the audiences to find what lurks in the shadows.

4. Noir elements: psychology

4.1. The rejection of the traditional moral framework in Quentin Tarantino's films

A pioneer study of the moral value in classic period of Film Noir shows "the primary reference point of earlier days, the moral center, is completely skewed." [4] . When Lehan mentioned the moral of the noir, he said: "At the center of a noir plot is the assumption that everyone is degraded: nobody is innocent; good and evil blur as moral choices; redemption and betrayal are one and the same." [14] More evil and noir elements are added in the leading roles of Film Noir. Prior to this, the leading roles of the classical Hollywood films are always honest heroes. However, this kind of hero is not suitable for the noir world which is lack of the traditional moral framework.

Quentin Tarantino is a director who rejects the traditional moral framework and uses violence to stylize his films. There has been no shortage of film critics think Tarantino's films are immoral but Tarantino insists that his roles' individual fates are dictated by themselves or divine inspiration instead of his narrative. [5] In *Pulp Fiction,* Jules kills Brett who has transgressed against their boss. However, Jules decides to give up the violence because his lucky escape is a miracle; the boss's wife Mia has dinner with Vincent for entertainment but she snorts heroin and overdoses. At last Vincent save her life; Butch betrays the boss and kills Vincent while he is fleeing, however, he saves the boss's life from the perverts. It is not hard to see that Tarantino has no moral judgment in these stories. The law and justice are also completely absent. Instead of the traditional moral framework, it is violence that never stops.

Actually, Tarantino's films are quite different from other noir films which are full of violent elements. Most of filmmakers think they should strive to give meaning to violence and teach the audiences to avoid violence. Instead of taking such social responsibility, Tarantino pays more attention to the aestheticization of violence. His roles always die without any warnings or reasons and his violence just likes a game. In Xavier Morales' review of *Kill Bill: Volume1*," he calls the film "easily one of the most violent movies ever made" and "a breathtaking landscape in which art and violence coalesce into one unforgettable aesthetic experience." [11]

However, Tarantino's road to aestheticization of violence is not always smooth. [15] His script *Natural*

Born Killers, a relaxed and fun story, was adapted for a serious film which added lots of moral judgments by the director Oliver Stone. Stone's film reflects many serious social problems, such as violence, prison and media. Tarantino is very dissatisfied with such an adaptation, he said: " My script was pure. I wish he'd left it alone." [5] The differences that can't be reconciled between Tarantino and Oliver Stone reflect Tarantino's noir elements----the rejection of the traditional moral framework.

4.2. The contradictory mentality in David Fincher's films

Although both Fincher and Tarantino are contemporaneous Neo-Noir filmmakers, Fincher's noir element of psychology is different from Tarantino's. Fincher's films not only reflect the morally bankrupt society and the depraved humanity, but also stimulate thinking among the audiences.

Contradictory mentality is one of Fincher's noir elements. Although his films are complicated and distortional, Fincher has no intention of puzzling audiences. He aligns the camera to the people who seem to have easy and comfortable lives, but actually have contradictory inner world. Each of his roles strangely variegated with good and evil, repressed and wild----Mills in Seven, Nicholas in The Game, Jack and Tyler in Fight Club and Amy in Gone Girl. As Bould mentions in his book: "In Fincher's version of the world, the heroes often fuse with the villains, creating an intentional ambiguity." [1] The serial killer Doe in Se7en becomes a bit understandable and pathetic when he says his desire. In The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo, Lisbeth, a rebellious and hardhearted girl, arouse the audiences' sympathy when the film displays her past. [13] (Hirschberg 2011) With the change of the viewing angle, the roles' characteristics become more complicated and Fincher's noir style becomes more obvious. Fincher portrays roles by analyzing every detail. He is not only fond of the elements of contradictory mentality but also deeply committed to his roles and films.

Take Fight Club for example, Jack and Tyler represent two contradictory sides of one person and also symbolize a vast and hazy status of the role. Jack becomes tongue-tied when faces his lover Maria, however, Tyler speaks with absolute confidence. This difference implies the complex and tangle mental activity of the role. Tyler leads Jack and other underclass people to get rid of the substance's slavery but creates another way to enslave them by spirit eventually. The whole movie is so contradictory, not only between Tyler and Jack but also between free and slavery, spirit and substance. At the end of the film, Jack shots himself with a bullet and Tyler disappears with it. Does Jack get rid of Tyler? Does he not suffer from the psychological torment any more? Does he find his free life without substance's slavery or just become the "nice man" he used to be? We don't know the answers of these questions just like we are not sure with our future life. Contradictions actually are all around in our lives just like in the films. However films are films, they always tug at our heartstrings, make us think and worry. Films are not responsible for cleaning up the mess just like no one knows what happens after the big explosion. But we have responsibilities for our lives. Maybe it is a contradiction between films and our real lives.

5. Conclusion

In fact, there are lots of problems in the developing road of Neo-Noir. Some noir elements of Neo-Noir, such as violence and sex limit the films' broadcast and box office. Artistic and commercial natures of films are interdependent so the mainstream directors couldn't give up the pursuit of business benefits. Only on condition that the Neo-Noir could attract more audiences can it possess the capacity of long-term development. This doesn't mean, however, that the filmmakers should use more sensory stimulations or weak emotions to attract audiences. Firstly, Neo-Noir should be tied up with the social and cultural changes. Secondly, Neo-Noir has to keep pace with the development of cinematic techniques. Lastly, Neo-Noir is supposed to have irreplaceable styles and features so the directors' noir elements are crucial to the future of Neo-Noir.

New blood is brought into the Neo-Noir through Tarantino and Fincher's personal noir elements. Although they have different attitudes towards crime and violence, they have the same obsession with Neo-Noir. This obsession helps Neo-Noir earns its place in film industry and make people realize that Neo-Noir is not a simple revival of the Film Noir, it is becoming an independent genre of films. More and more mainstream Hollywood movies are added noir elements. These films not only have great success in box office but also popularize the concept of Neo-Noir. This will no doubt help to light up the future of Neo-Noir.

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