

On Jia Zhangke's Documentary Aesthetics

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Abstract

Jia Zhangke's films show a kind of conscious humanistic care, artistic pursuit and unique camera language in front of the audience, which makes jia's films with extremely personal style become a unique scenery line in the film industry. This paper mainly discusses the documentary aesthetics of Jia Zhangke's films from three angles: the attention to the sound of films, the attention to the living state of marginal people and the insistence on the documentary style. On the basis of a detailed interpretation of the characteristics of Jia Zhangke's film aesthetic style, the theme of Jia Zhangke's films is summarized as follows: One is to show the real and ordinary Chinese people, showing their shining point, that is, the positive mental state in the face of life and life and the passion of life everywhere; The second is to film the ordinary People's Daily life as a starting point to show the development and changes of Chinese history, systematically comb and analyze Jia Zhangke's films.

Keywords

Jia Zhangke, Documentary Aesthetics, Aesthetic Characteristics

1. Introduction

Movies can be light entertainment or serious art (Liu, 2019), and both the filmmaker and the moviegoer can make their own choices at this point. Movies are naturally artistic and commercial. If the maximization of commercial value is pursued, the artistry of a good film cannot be weakened. On the contrary, it is by means of commercial publicity that more audiences are familiar with it that a win-win situation can be achieved between artistic value and commercial value interests (Zhao, 2012). Other filmmakers try to combine light entertainment with serious artistic ideas. Films like Hero, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and A Touch of Sin are commercial and artistic. However, in my opinion, Jia Zhangke is groping his way on this road of balancing art and commerce. Although this combination is not evident in Mr. Jia's current films, the trend is already evident.

As moviegoers, we expect filmmakers to do something new, but at the same time, we don't want them to change their old style, and we worry that they will lose their old spirit and spirit in their new exploration. The aesthetic style of Jia Zhangke's films has become his own distinctive mark and won him too much international fame, all of which are both a driving force and a cage. If Jia Zhangke's film can achieve a win-win situation between art and business, it will greatly encourage the new generation of new directors and further expand the market space of Chinese art film.

2. The Thematic Implication of Jia Zhangke's Films

"I am glad that my growth has accompanied our country's 30 years of reform," Jia said in an article titled Let the World Stand in awe of China. My memories are a mixture of personal growth and national development. This gave me the opportunity to witness 30 years of reform and opening up, and to record and show the impact of this reform on The Chinese people in my subsequent film work. This sentence is the concentrated embodiment of the aesthetic spirit of director Jia Zhangke's film. The protagonists of Jia zhangke's films are ordinary people who are affected by the huge and rapid transformation of Chinese society. Whether it is the anxious youth group or those who bear the dull and difficult life, they have no wealth or power but have tough vitality. Jia Zhangke said: "When I was 17 or 18 years old, I would not sleep at night, always looking forward to the arrival of the next day, always think that the dawn of something new will change, something new will happen. But in the end nothing happens, in the face of reality, we change ourselves, our ideals fall on compromise and disappointment. Gradually, I came to understand that the compromise of life, environment and habits is actually a very great commitment. Sometimes it is harder to give up your ideals than to stick to them. Because giving up can mean there's no drama in life." This is not only his own experience, but also his deep understanding of the characters' restless, silent and tenacious life. Jia Zhangke, on the other hand, has a consistent interest in the course of Chinese history. Personal history and national history is the combination of Jia Zhangke film of the same theme, the combination of these two aspects is on one of the real individual petty, mixed and disorderly, daily life of the state of the display, it shows the panorama of the whole era, at the same time as writing the strong life consciousness, highlights the human survival dignity. Therefore, Jia Zhangke's film has a grand spirit, which uses the life of everyone around us to form an overall picture of our country's times. He does not try to show the deep ideological truth hidden under the surface of reality, but tries to strip ideology and reveal the truth in People's Daily life. This is the root of the artistic charm of Jia Zhangke's films.

3. The Characteristics of Jia Zhangke's Film Aesthetic Style

3.1. An Emphasis on the Sound of Film

A large number of long shots and rich sound are the most prominent aesthetic

characteristics of Jia Zhangke's films, so it has become the most recognizable aesthetic style of Jia Zhangke's films. Film sound includes language, sound and music. In terms of language, Jia Zhangke always insists on performing in dialect, reflecting his consistent pursuit of documentary reality. In terms of sound, Jia's films are filled with elements of loudspeakers and TV news, which play different roles in different films. In terms of music, each of Jia Zhangke's works has an inseparable relationship with music, but there are certain changes in the use of music techniques. Jia has added rich sound elements to his films since his student days with "Home from the Hill." "Yesterday Once More," "Get Addicted," and "Xintian You" are all symbolic music of The Times. Among them, Yesterday Once More and Xintian You are played by radio and tape recorder with sound source, while Get Addicted has no clear sound source and can be regarded as silent source. At this time, Jia Zhangke has been aware of the charm of sound, but the use of it is still relatively awkward. To the shooting of "Xiao Wu", rich sound elements and images have been natural and appropriate collocation, become the highlight of the film. The excellent use of music in Xiao Wu is mainly reflected in Farewell My Concubine and Heart Rain, two of the most popular songs in Fenyang county in 1997.

The emphasis on sound is a constant feature of Jia Zhangke's film aesthetic style. Rich sound elements play different important roles in Jia Zhangke's films. In "Home from the Hill" and "Xiao Wu," the sound of movies is mainly used to set off a sense of The Times and record history. Begin from "platform", sounds, especially music person state of mind, more focus on performance and jia Zhangke chosen theme and character also determines the importance of music: "platform" of the story revolves around art ensemble, the leading role of the unknown pleasures Qiao Qiao is Datong "singer", "world" in the role of small peach is the world's art troupe of actors in the park. Ambient sound, prominent in "Home from the Hill" and "Hometown Trilogy," loses its luster in "The World," a sign that Mr. Jia no longer adheres to the documentary tradition of his work.

3.2. Attention to the Living Condition of Marginal People

"In our vision, every walking individual can give us a sincere touch, even a ray of sunshine evacuation, or a few heavy breathing. We see the world around us, we feel the pain of others, and we show our concern for them." (Lin et al., 2003) These are the words Jia Zhangke wrote when he was a student. This is why Jia has focused his camera on Xiao Shan, a migrant worker living at the bottom, from the very beginning. Starting with "The Hill Goes Home" and continuing through "The World," Jia's protagonists have always been those on the margins of the mainstream. Jia Zhangke does not exaggerate or sugarcoat. He always records real life with an objective attitude. However, in this objective attitude, we clearly read a deep humanistic concern.

Jia Zhangke's films do not exaggerate the grief and suffering of the bottom people too much, but reflect the changes of life and emotion of the bottom

people under the collision of times and social changes. The film focuses on their spiritual world and spiritual needs, trying to restore the real living state of the bottom people to the greatest extent. A series of films narrated from the perspective of “the bottom”, (Pan, 2014) thus arousing people’s attention to the living conditions and mental state of the bottom society. If Jia Zhangke is a gray and pessimistic director when it comes to cold reality, he is always a determined and optimistic artist when it comes to human nature. Xiao Wu, San Ming, Xiao Ji, and Bin Bin all have the goodness of human nature. When all the good things pass us by, it is these inner lights that touch us the most. Jia Zhangke’s perspective on the world is unique and sharp, and people that ordinary people do not pay attention to often become the object of his attention. He doesn’t think he cares about the little people. To him, there are no little people in life. Everyone is ordinary and ordinary. Jia looks at ordinary people affectionately and objectively presents their lives. “Artists reveal the state of existence,” he says. “It is the task of politicians to change.” Jia Zhangke has fulfilled his task as an artist.

3.3. Adherence to Documentary Style

If there is only one word to sum up the aesthetic style of Jia Zhangke’s films, it must be documentary. The documentary style is the most fundamental characteristic of Jia Zhangke’s film works and also his persistent pursuit. It is the lack of films that reflect China’s social conditions that leads Jia to make his own films; It is precisely because of his insistence on independent expression and recording the truth that his path to shadow is particularly bumpy. From “The Hill Goes Home” to “The World,” long shots are Jia’s most common camera language. When it comes to long-shot aesthetics, people tend to think of documentary aesthetics immediately. Indeed, the most basic function of the long lens is to maintain the continuity of time and space, so as to achieve the purpose of documentary. Jia Zhangke’s emphasis on sound also reflects his pursuit of documentary reality. He believes that sound can “bring out a very current social atmosphere”, and hopes that his films can be “more or less documentary in audio-visual aspect” (Hao, 2004). The pop songs, the loudspeakers and the TV news are all Jia’s means of recording The Times. Non-professional actors, dialect performances, contemporaneous recording, these special means are also for documentary service. “In the pursuit of authenticity, characters and stories no longer exist as political symbols and national culture counterparts, and life approaches the real state of existence.” (Qu, 2003) From “Platform” to “Xiao Wu” to “Ren Xiaoyao”, we can see the great changes of Shanxi in the past 20 years, and see the real people and life in the critical transition period of the country. Jia Zhangke likes to use dialect in his films. As a symbol of his mother tongue, dialect exists with regional characteristics. A person’s dialect directly indicates his birthplace and cultural background. Allowing non-professional actors to perform in their own local language virtually gives the actors a kind of freedom in language, which can make their performance more real. If non-professional ac-

tors are allowed to perform in Mandarin, which does not belong to them, it is very awkward, and the film itself will change its taste. On the other hand, Jia Zhangke takes dialect as the language most commonly used by the characters in the film. The most important point is that dialect can represent the groups who speak these dialects, whose voices are covered and have been in a state of aphasia. The director speaks for the silent group and presents the feelings of the little people, reflecting Jia Zhangke's humanistic feelings. The characters in Jia Zhangke's films use dialects more in line with the social status quo. Most migrant workers in the films come from small towns or rural areas and seldom communicate with each other in Mandarin, which is closer to real life and further enhances the documentary reality of the film (Shi, 2011). "Hills home" to the hills to shoot for a long time, the small arms, rough, aesthetic style, the civilian epic features of "platform", "unknown pleasures" concerned about the unemployed youth, in the "world" of the "two girls" intangible lament, and ultimately are related to real life, all reflect Jia as a sense of responsibility and conscience of intellectuals. Throughout Jia Zhangke's film works, the theme throughout is the persistence of narration at the bottom and the continuous care for the bottom society, which conforms to the trend of The Times and also shows the director's sincere humanistic care (Qi, 2018).

"The constant conversion of TV channels has changed people's audio-visual habits. In front of a large number of audio-visual products, audiences easily choose their instinctive needs. The artists have lost their dignity by pandering. ...If the professionalization of this art is only for the purpose of supporting my family, THEN I would rather be a free amateur director, because I don't want to lose my freedom. When the camera starts rolling, I hope I'll always be able to ask myself if what I see is really what you're thinking or feeling." (Lin et al., 2003) It is this attitude of Jia Zhangke that determines the intensity of his films. It is this kind of strength that gives the audience a deep shock and a lasting touch. We need serious films as well as entertaining ones. In this era of soaring material desires, we need artists like Jia Zhangke who insist on independent expression and recording of truth. The documentary style is the pursuit and characteristic of Jia Zhangke's films. Meanwhile, it should be regarded as the medal of Jia Zhangke's films.

4. Conclusion

Jia Zhangke performs in real and ordinary Chinese at the same time, using the experience of the local story to show the public the Shanxi county, find the best in them and some of the weakness of human nature, tell the story of personal local-color China and China's experience, with the world of ordinary little perceptual spirit in social reflect on in the process of the modernization of society. It is a witness of the historical changes of China. We need serious films as well as entertaining ones. The expansion of entertainment consumption is a manifestation of emptiness. In this era of soaring material desire, we need artists like Jia

Zhangke who insists on independent expression and recording of truth. The documentary style is the pursuit and characteristic of Jia Zhangke's films. Meanwhile, it should be regarded as the medal of Jia Zhangke's films.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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