

Chinese Western Cinema: Noumenal Value and Developmental Dynamics

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Abstract: Chinese western films certainly have their own artistic purposes and origins, criticism and art research, but also there is no lack of different levels, different styles of film creation and rich accumulation of works. However, in the contemporary context, especially the penetration and embedment of digital technology and new media art into film and television art, it has a wide impact on the development of contemporary film. It is obviously important for Chinese western films to find the "convergence point" in inheritance and innovation, to find opportunities to highlight their own academic value, and to Orient themselves. This article from the "emotional painting", "emotional boundary" and "style shaping" three aspects to explain and deepen our understanding of western films and thinking.

1. Introduction

"Since entering the new era, the western film centered on Xi 'an Film Studio (western film in the narrow sense) has created brilliance. After more than 40 years of ups and downs, the western film has become a generalized concept with increasingly blurred meanings and boundaries." ^[1]Opinions vary on the academic value of Chinese western films. Maybe different people will have different perspectives and opinions. Here, the author is not in a hurry to give the answer, but only wants to explain it from the three aspects of life, emotion and form, thus forming a new vision of three-dimensional integration, and discussing the noumenal academic value and development of western films. On the one hand, from the perspective of life, emotion and form of three-dimensional integration, it may be indispensable to the development of western films to promote the theoretical thinking; On the other hand, the three elements of life, emotion and form run through the whole process of western film creation, and often become the focus of theoretical thinking and artistic exploration of the subject of film creation. In fact, for quite a long period of time, the artistic shaping of western films by film creators is all based on literature's deep exploration of real life and literature's exploration of inner emotions. Therefore, their film art practice always relies on literature and breaks through the inherent form of film, and finally, on the three-dimensional structure formed by life, emotions and forms. To realize the construction, shaping and transcendence of the western film style, it has laid a paradigm for the artistic creation and theoretical research of western films, opened a new vision and ideas for the aesthetic research of film ontology, and promoted the in-depth development and innovation of western film art.

2. Emotion Painting: The free exploration of infinite life

In the creation of western films, the emotional exploration based on real life is the key to the image of western films. The image it creates is not simply the life scene of the west, the inner emotion of the creator and the language form of the film superimposed together, but in the imagination and creation of the artist, these elements are deeply integrated and combined in the assumed artistic realm. In fact, it is the three-dimensional interwoven and interpenetrating unity of life symbols, emotional symbols and formal symbols. When these three elements are combined in the artist's imagination, the vivid and vivid images in western films are born. From the gritty peasant image in *The Yellow Earth*, which is closely connected with the earth, to the female image in *Ju Dou*, which pursues self and challenges the tradition, to the complex and multi-faceted criminal image in *No Man's Land*, which deeply reflects the dark side of human nature. These images are not only a reproduction of life in the west, but also an expression of the creator's emotions and an exploration of the art form. They go beyond the limitation of a single element, and obtain a richer and deeper connotation, thus giving the western film vitality and creativity. Therefore, it can be said that the images in western films are the products of the combination of life symbols, emotional symbols and formal symbols in the assumed realm. Because of the existence of each other, they acquire new properties and become a new creation beyond the single element.

Creation comes from life. The so-called life, in the context of film theory, does not refer to the objectively existing real world, but the experience that has been filtered, refined and sublimated in the emotional realm of the creator. Only when these experiences mature in the inner world of the creator and become part of his emotional world can they be transformed into images in the film. Therefore, although the real world is vast, the image field of the film does not expand infinitely. Only when the real world overlends with the emotional world of the creator, that is, when some elements in real life can touch the heart of the creator and trigger his profound emotional experience, these elements may be included in the image system of the film. "Art does not treat every part of life as an equal like a mirror, and all kinds of life phenomena are not equal in art." [2] Specifically, the reason why video art cannot be compared with the simple listing and description like a mirror is that the three-dimensional structure of the image it aims to achieve is not only a mechanical copy of life, but needs to go deep into it, carry out detailed decomposition and selective screening of life, and finally assimilate it into an organic part of the work of art for creative construction. Focusing on the field of western film, its image building is not only the surface description of western life scenes, but goes deep into the core of western culture, and carries on in-depth analysis and interpretation. In the film *"Yellow Earth"*, the scene of "waist drum dancing", with its impassioned drum beat and powerful dance, vividly conveys the tenacious spirit and unique folk customs of the western people. In *Sad Brook*, the cultural characteristics and inner spirit of the western prairie peoples are explored in depth by showing details such as life on horseback and the "drunk horse". Film creators will choose those life fragments that best represent the spiritual characteristics of the West, and through the use of lenses, plot arrangements and role shaping, these fragments will be recombined into an organic whole, so as to build a three-dimensional and vivid image of the West. In this process, the emotional world of the creator plays a crucial role. In western movies, those images that can touch the audience's emotions and trigger resonance are often those elements that best embody the spiritual characteristics of the West and best demonstrate the unique perspective and emotional world of the creators. This has also contributed to a remarkable phenomenon in the various stages of western film art creation: labor and emotion have often become the themes

that creators are most enthusiastic about and can give full play to their creativity, and they have been incisive and vivid performance in Western film images with unparalleled depth and breadth. The emergence of this phenomenon is closely related to their deep touch and activation of people's hearts. In fact, in the early days of film, although "labor" attracted the enthusiasm of creators and audiences for its technical characteristics in a relatively short period, with the continuous development and maturity of film technology, the focus of film creation gradually turned to more complex emotion and thought expression. As a result, the status of "labor" in the film gradually became relatively marginal. In spite of this, the early western films deeply explored the meaning of labor with its unique narrative techniques and visual presentation, showing the hardships, beauty and humanity behind labor. The stories of the characters are often closely connected with labor, which becomes an important element to promote the development of the plot and deepen the theme. Take for example the film *Old Well*, a film focusing on rural life in western China, which centers on drilling Wells and tells the story of villagers represented by Wangquan who struggle against the harsh environment in order to obtain domestic water. Many early films tended to focus on the struggle for survival and heroic resistance to the enemy, showing a rough and simple style. Over time, however, audiences' demands for content have changed. They are not only satisfied with watching exciting fights and thrilling plots, but also want to feel a deep emotional resonance from them. "American contemporary esthetician Susan Lange, starting from semiotic aesthetics, further believes that art is the creation of the symbolic form of human emotion, and art is the expressive form of human emotion." [3]With "labor" as one of the core themes of western films, the expression has gradually broadened to a richer and deeper emotional field. "' Emotion 'is different from general feelings and impressions, but something that originates from the deep mystery of human vitality, which is equivalent to what Goethe called' the most intense moment of phenomena '". [4]Among them, love, a unique and strong emotional experience, is particularly prominent. Western films, as a vivid example, fully demonstrate the concrete embodiment of this trend in artistic creation. By carefully constructing plots and portraying characters, the filmmakers let the audience see a love that can still shine brightly in harsh circumstances. Take *Red Sorghum*, a typical western film, as an example. It not only shows the bravery and tenacity of the western people, but also makes the audience feel the greatness, power, purity and depth of love through the love story between Jiu 'er and Yu Zhanao.

In general, in the world of western films, the imbalance between practical value and emotional aesthetic value seems to stimulate the inspiration and imagination of generation after generation of filmmakers. Under the tension of this imbalance, the emotions of filmmakers can be more fully expressed, and their personalities and selves can be fully displayed freely under the camera. Compared with the real field of labor, the world of western films gives the creators more freedom. In reality, labor often carries a heavy burden and is strictly constrained by practical value. Few people regard it as an aesthetic object. However, in western movies, labor can be transformed into an aesthetic enjoyment, especially from the perspective of those characters who are not directly involved in labor, labor appears to have aesthetic value. Only when the practical value is exceeded to a certain extent, can human emotions get the real aesthetic freedom. In the image field of western movies, the life expressed can only be the tip of the iceberg in real life. Even for those elements that have been more represented, their representation in the film still has a considerable distance from the real aesthetic freedom. When the emotion in real life is still bound by the concept of practical value, it is difficult for the artistic expression in the film to completely transcend this constraint. In a sense, under the limited emotional freedom, the picture of life presented by

western movies is also affected or restricted to some extent.

3. The Realm of Emotion: Free interpretation in the form constraint

In the creation of western films, emotional exploration based on real life is certainly true, but as far as the emotional display of western films is concerned, the art on this territory is indeed full of deep emotional levels and multiple theme exploration, but this does not mean that the emotional world of Western films is as broad as the spiritual world of creators. On the contrary, the western film, as an art form, has its own limitations in the expression of characters' emotions and mental states. The classic Western characters' love and hate experiences are more complex and varied than what is directly presented on the screen. The depth and ethereality of the emotional world make the film face many challenges in capturing and conveying it. It is difficult to accurately describe and quantify like science, but relies more on the audience's intuitive feelings and subjective interpretation. In western films, the expression of emotion often needs to be indirectly shown through the behavior of the characters, dialogue and the atmosphere of the film, which makes the emotional world an unfathomable mystery in the art of film. The emotional aesthetic activity conveyed by the film is the more elusive part of this "unknown territory". The creation process of western films is like digging into a deep "unknown territory". The way of directly displaying characters' emotions through pictures and music is sometimes too straightforward and lacks depth. It is difficult to fully capture and present the inner world of characters. However, indirectly reflecting the emotions through the actions and decisions of the characters makes the emotional world become fuzzy and full of imagination, leaving the audience with unlimited space for interpretation. In western movies, the audience often feels the emotional impact of the characters through their actions and expressions, but this feeling is subjective and complex, and everyone's experience may be different. At the same time, emotional expression in films is often accompanied by multiple factors, and even the same result may come from different motives and emotional states, which adds difficulty to the audience's interpretation. Moreover, the traditional lyricism in western films is more reflected in the direct presentation of the character's psychology, but this presentation can only touch the surface of the emotional structure. In order to dig deeper into the emotional depths of the characters, the filmmakers usually use tight plot design to push the characters to the turning point of fate, so as to break their original emotional stability and show their true feelings deep inside. Even so, the plot construction of western films also faces challenges. Although the plot needs to show the tight logic and inevitability of causality, in actual creation, the development of the plot is often affected by coincidence and chance. These coincidences and contingencies make the development of the plot full of uncertainty, and also make the expression of emotions more complex and real. But this inevitability brought about by coincidence is actually just a more tightly organized possibility, which adds more suspense and attraction to the film. Take *The Song of the Phoenix*, for example, which tells the story of the deep relationship between suona artist Jiao SAN Ye and his apprentice You Tianming, as well as their difficulties in inheriting folk music. In the film, Jiao's serious illness serves as a turning point in the plot, breaking the emotional stability of the two. In the face of his master's illness, You Tianming has to take on the responsibility of inheriting the suona skill, which allows his true emotions to be revealed. In the process, the audience sees You's love and respect for his master, his dedication to the suona art and his helplessness over his fate. In terms of plot construction, the coincidences and contingencies in the film, such as the timing of Jiao's serious illness and the difficulties You encounters at key moments, all bring uncertainty to the development of the

plot. These coincidences and contingencies make the expression of the characters' emotions more complex and real. At the same time, the inevitability brought by such coincidences makes the plot of *Song of the Phoenix* more attractive. In the process of feeling the emotional fluctuations of the characters, the audience will be more involved in the story. This is how filmmakers have managed to tap into the emotions of their characters through a tight plot.

Western films, as a unique field of culture and art, reflect the exploration and pursuit of human beings living in a world full of imperfections. As a unique art form, it has greatly improved the expressiveness of film image through its unique image language, narrative technique and visual style. However, even though the western film has carried on the continuous innovation and development in the form, it still cannot fundamentally eliminate the limitations of the film image itself. No matter how western films change their shooting methods, editing techniques or visual effects, the inherent limitations of the film as an art form will always remain. Although the aesthetic norms of form can be accumulated continuously to provide more possibilities and inspiration for the image expression of western films, it can not eliminate the limitations of form. Although filmmakers continue to create and try new film forms and technologies, such as widescreen, high-definition photography, CG special effects, etc., which bring visual revolution and breakthrough to the film, even though these new forms give the film image more abundant and diversified expression methods, the limitations of forms are still a fact that cannot be ignored, which also shows that any film form, Whether it is the western film or other genres, its positive and negative functions are interrelated. The superiority of form, such as unique visual style and profound thematic exploration, often complement each other with the limitations of form, which together constitute the complexity and diversity of the art of cinema. In western films, this kind of complementary relationship is particularly obvious, which makes western films face formal challenges and limitations while displaying the unique charm and profound connotation of Westworld. In the world of western films, no matter the setting of external environment or the shaping of characters, to some extent, it still reveals the imperfection of the object world from time to time. The inner world, motivation and choice of the characters also show the imperfection of the human subject world. The narrative techniques and visual presentation of western films, like the thinking tools used by human beings to understand the objective world, also have imperfections. For every shot and every line of dialogue in the film, the director presents a certain attribute of the thing through a specific concept or discourse, but he can't exhaust the whole thing. Such limitations sometimes lead to misunderstandings in the audience's interpretation of the film, or fail to fully appreciate the profound meaning of the film. In the process of film production, the director and scriptwriter will exhaust all possibilities into the creation of the film. Due to the limitation of resources and the urgency of time, it is often impossible to consider all the details and possibilities. As for the narrative structure and expression techniques commonly used in western films, they also have their limitations and imperfections. It is these imperfections that make western films have room and potential for development in terms of form and connotation. Through continuous exploration and correction, western films will gradually improve and become more colorful, attracting the audience's attention and thinking. Western films are the common cause of filmmakers, who have never stopped their exploration and innovation of film art. They try to reflect the spirit and pain of *The Times*, reflect people's thoughts and culture, and reflect the charming power and artistic style.

4. The style of shaping: the innovative leap on the three-dimensional structure

Western films focus on the shaping of style. As a unique form of artistic expression, western films, with their unique rules and norms, ensure that limited emotional experience can be elevated to the aesthetic level. Every film director does not directly copy the elements of real life as the source of inspiration. If every director had started from scratch, it would have been difficult to accumulate the aesthetic feelings and artistic experience of western films, let alone the evolution of art. Therefore, film directors draw nourishment from the rich historical heritage of western films and contemporary film and television works, learn and inherit the aesthetic essence and skills from the existing film models, so as to transcend the triviality of daily life, get rid of the bondage of practical value, and seek a purer aesthetic freedom. Of course, simply learning and inheriting are not the core mission of film directors. Just as the production of art needs to adapt to the changing environment, the vitality of western films may be threatened if they cannot adapt to the changing social environment and audience tastes. Human social environment changes much more rapidly than the natural environment, and people's inner emotional fluctuations are even more rapid. In contrast, the development of the artistic expression of western films appears to be relatively slow, and new film styles or narrative techniques often need to experience the precipitation of time to mature. The development of western films is not only marked by the change of forms. In fact, the progress of western films often requires the form to remain stable in a specific period, that is, the relative stability of aesthetic standards. But this stability is not static, but in a dynamic balance, always challenged by the content. The contradiction between form and content is eternal, because life and emotion are endless, while the expressive power of film form has its limits. The content is always active and changeable, and the formal norm is often difficult to keep pace with the content, it is always a little behind the content. Talented film directors can't constantly create entirely new forms of cinema like technological innovators, but they also can't be satisfied with just using traditional forms to present images of life and emotional states that have been played out over and over again. They need to keep the form relatively stable while constantly exploring new methods of expression to adapt to the changes of society and audiences. In the creative world of western films, it is often difficult for directors to subvert and reconstruct film forms from time to time, so they tend to tap and expand the expressive potential of existing forms. Under the common framework of film expression, any efforts to capture and display new life scenes, new emotional experiences, new theme discussions, new emotional atmosphere, as well as new combinations of images and images, even if they fail to subvert the existing formal norms or create a new mode of expression, they all succeed in shaping a unique film style. Film style is the artistic label that distinguishes each director from other directors. This label is a bold challenge to traditional aesthetic standards, and for the art of film itself, it is a vivid manifestation of creativity. If there is no breakthrough, there will be no style, and innovation will be impossible to talk about. Once a standard of beauty is firmly established in the cinematic form, it assumes a certain compulsion. It tends to subordinate content to that standard for a long time, even if it conflicts with it. Not every director finds creative freedom in the formal norms. On the contrary, many directors, while guided by the parts of the formal norms that match the content, have to submit to and be bound by the parts that do not. As a result of this constraint, the stability of the formal norm suppresses the flexibility of the content, which makes the film form fall into a pattern, the character image becomes typed, and the emotional expression tends to be simple. These traditional habits not only make the directors form a fixed creative thinking, which limits their creative thinking, but also create a psychological expectation for the audience, so that only the

film content in line with their habits is easier to accept.

In the creative process of western films, the shaping of style is not only a process of self-return and inner truth discovery for creators, but also a journey of self-purification and artistic transcendence. "The transcendence requirement of the subject can be realized, but also because the subject has the free spirit creation ability". [5]This transcendence is free, it shows the unique personality of the creator, and sublimates this personality in the realm of art. The style of the film is actually the sublimation of the creator's personal personality, and the image is the creation and expression of the creator's unique personality. However, it is inappropriate to simply equate the film style with the creator himself, which is not only contrary to the norms of artistic creation, but also inconsistent with the moral norms of society. The freedom a creator enjoys in creating his or her personal style, achieving self-transcendence, and transcending the cinematic form is relative. To a certain extent, their creations are still constrained by socio-political, cultural, ethical and other conditions. No matter how talented the creators are, their creations cannot be divorced from their social and historical background. Therefore, the creation of personal style is always closely linked to the style of The Times. Any artist who tries to ignore this risks losing touch with reality and even being abandoned by The Times. On the contrary, those creators with a sense of mission will actively seek to keep pace with The Times and blend their personal style with that of The Times, thus creating excellent works that both have their own characteristics and meet the needs of The Times. But no matter how the creators seek to transcend, their works are always nurtured in the larger background of national culture and deeply influenced by the psychological gravitational pull of national culture. This psychological atmosphere of national culture, like an invisible influence, deeply permeates every work. "It is obvious that at this time, western China has been highly globalized, Chinese films have entered the world, and western China has become an ocean for global sharing." [6]Therefore, the pursuit of absolute self-expression, in the artistic creation of western films, is often just an idealized imagination. In real life, creators may enjoy greater freedom, but when creating cinematic images, they must become spokesmen for the collective consciousness of the nation. The creator's personality and collective are not always unified, but full of contradictions and collisions. In order to better express the collective consciousness of the nation, they need to fully mobilize one part of their heart, but also need to lay down or adjust the other part, in order to achieve the harmonious unity of self and the collective psychology of the nation. In this process, the creative subject himself is not only expressing himself, but also creating himself. Therefore, we can say that in the creation process of western films, not only the creator shaped the style of the work, but the work in turn helped the creative subject to form his own unique artistic style. In the specific creation process of western films, we can observe that the formation of its unique style is closely related to the personality of the director and the historical accumulation of national culture. In *The Yellow Earth*, director Chen Kaige, with his unique artistic perspective, deeply integrates the vast geographical landscape of the West with the historical heritage of national culture, showing the unique style of western films. The director's personality and his respect for national culture contribute to the film's profound connotation and artistic charm. From this point of view, we can safely say that the more western films can dig deep into and express national culture, the more they can create an artistic style with unique charm, which often crosses national borders and arouses worldwide resonance. However, Western films also face many challenges in creating style and transcending themselves. Sometimes, due to excessive pursuit of individual expression or insufficient understanding of national culture, the works may be lost or deviated in style, and may even lose the original uniqueness and charm. Therefore, in the creation process of western films, the director needs to find a balance

between self-expression and national culture, not only to maintain personal style, but also to deeply explore and express national culture, so as to make the works both deep and wide.

5. Conclusion

Mr. Zhong first proposed in the 1980s to "face the Great Northwest and develop a new type of 'western film'". [7]Over the past 40 years, western films have continuously explored the depth of life, explored the expression of emotions, and continuously innovated in form, gradually forming a unique style. Many western films have forged ahead in the tide of The Times, not only surpassing the traditional single narrative mode, but also becoming an important window to show the magnificent mountains and rivers, colorful ethnic culture and profound historical heritage of western China. By analyzing the development of western films, we can clearly see the filmmakers' multiple attempts and innovations in reflecting the reality of life, emotional experience and artistic forms in the western region. This not only has a high value in academic research, but also promotes the development of the western film itself in essence, making it a microcosm of the diversity of Chinese culture. "Film is the youngest art among all the arts. It comes from behind because it cleverly uses the strengths of the arts, not replaces them." [8]In the context of contemporary art and within the artistic tension field formed by The Times, western films highlight their own style and artistic charm. In the expression of the spirit of The Times, the pain of The Times, the life and culture of The Times, and in the film exploration and artistic expression, they highlight their due ontology academic value. On the surface, it shapes its own artistic style and image in the combination of the contemporary film technology. But from the deep analysis, the western film has always been rooted in literature, always through the infinite exploration of social real life, the free volatilization and interpretation of art forms, so that its own style, based on the powerful construction and reshaping of "emotional painting" and "emotional boundary", make it consciously and rationally strive to move forward along the road of film art ontology. Its noumenon value prominently embodies its original creative literary depth, philosophical thinking and social truth. All these are based on the perception and experience of the creative subject from the social real life, from its inner emotional authenticity and human spiritual life, which are refined and expressed by the unique artistic methods and ways of western films, and make such film creation unique and universal. It is true that although The Times restrict or affect the creation of films, all difficulties and adveradverts give birth to the infinite creative energy and talent of western filmmakers. Between The Times and the reality, between film art and literature and even between other arts, infinite artistic imagination and artistic development space are generated, which is precisely the academic value of Western films. If western films blindly adhere to the inherent aesthetic and creation, it is difficult to say that the possibility of in-depth exploration, continuous innovation and expansion will not be ruled out, and even become a popular movie phenomenon. Changes of The Times always appear in front of film art. Western films are placed in the tension field of a specific period and context, and the relationship between realism and historicity, limitation and superiority is carefully reflected, so as to face contemporary film art and practice, reality and future, ask questions, confirm their own identity and positioning, and express the spirit and spirit of The Times. To carry the due weight of the ideology of The Times, and all these are precisely the positive development of western films.

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