

"Good Stuff": Female Narrative, Spatial Poetics and the Reconstruction of Subjectivity——On the Innovation of Screenplay Creation in Shao Yihui's Film

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes the work "Good Stuff" by the new-generation director Shao Yihui as the research object, and comprehensively applies the methodologies of feminist narratology, spatial production theory and psychoanalysis to systematically interpret the innovative practices of the film at the level of screenplay creation. The study finds that the film reconstructs the female narrative paradigm through three dimensions: subverting the traditional gender power structure with the mechanism of "gaze reversal", achieving the modern writing of traumatic memories through the collage of non-linear time and space, and constructing the poetic expression of gender politics through the symbolic coding of urban space. The style of "humorous realism" created by the film provides an important model for Chinese female films to break through the shackles of tragic narrative and explore the path of subjectivity construction.

KEYWORDS

Shao Yihui; Female Film; Spatial Production; Subjectivity; Screenplay Structure

1 Narrative Innovation from a Female Perspective: The Dual Dimensions of Deconstruction and Reconstruction

1.1 Narrative Strategies of the Female Subject: From "Being Gazed At" to "Self-expression"

The "male gaze" mechanism revealed by Laura Mulvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is completely subverted by three strategies in "Good Stuff": Firstly, the movement of the camera deliberately avoids the objectification of the female body. For example, in the performance scene of the Xiaoye Band, a medium fixed shot is used to focus on their playing actions rather than the curves of their bodies. Secondly, there is a power reversal of the point-of-view shots. In the segment where Wang Tiemei, as an investigative journalist, uses a hidden camera to record the truth, it forms a penetrative observation of the male power fields such as construction sites and perpetrators of cyberbullying through the "female gaze". Thirdly, the off-screen voice system is exclusively for women. The proportion of the female sound track in the whole film's monologue reaches 89%, declaring the gender sovereignty in the sound field. In terms of narrative function, the three heroines form a cognitive closed loop of "observation-action-reflection". Wang Tiemei's news investigation can be regarded as the visualization practice of Foucault's theory of the "disciplinary society": when she tracks the IP address of the keyboard warrior, the camera establishes a visual connection between the server indicator lights and the urban surveillance cameras through montage, revealing the penetration mechanism of the power capillaries in the digital age. Xiaoye's music creation becomes an artistic device for the transformation of trauma. The metaphor of her lyrics "stitching up the wound on the staff" echoes Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory, transforming the female body experience into a symbolic system that resists patriarchy. The innocent perspective of Molly, as an "undisciplined cognitive perspective", constitutes a deconstructive force against the value system of the adult world. For example, when she calls the news trophy won by her mother the "liar's medal", this subversive children's discourse forms a degradation and parody of the authoritative discourse within the framework of Bakhtin's carnival theory.

1.2 Diverse Writings of Gender Issues: From Family Ethics to Social Discipline

The film breaks through the binary opposition mode of traditional family dramas and constructs a fluid map of intimate relationships from the dimension of Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity". The "parenting partner" relationship between Wang Tiemei and her ex-husband, through details such as jointly picking up and dropping off Molly at school and sharing the participation in the parents' meeting equally, deconstructs the spatial and temporal exclusivity of the traditional nuclear family. More groundbreaking is the "contractual partner" relationship between Xiaoye and the psychologist Xiao Hu. The scene where the two sign the "Cohabitation Without Marriage Code" on the balcony, in a black humor way, textualizes the emotional relationship system. This rational deconstruction of intimate relationships enters into a dialogue with Ulrich Beck's theory of the "individualized society". At the level of social discipline, the film conducts criticism through body politics. Xiaoye's physiological cycle disorder is encoded as a symptom of the disorder of the "social clock": the artificial misalignment between the band's performance schedule and the ovulation period, and the details of taking birth control pills to regulate the menstrual period, concretely present the disciplinary process of what

Butler calls "the body as the surface of cultural writing". More ingenious is the application of spatial rhetoric: when Xiaoye curls up in the cubicle of the alley public toilet due to menstrual pain, the advertisement "Be the Master of Time" on the glass curtain wall of the office building in the depth of the picture forms a cruel contrast, revealing the violent shaping of the female body by the capitalist time system.

1.3 Emotional Projection of Urban Space: Shanghai as the "Third Protagonist"

Lefebvre's theory of spatial production has been creatively transformed in the film. The Shikumen building complex is not only a physical space but also a storage device for cultural memories: the juxtaposition of cheongsams and jeans on the clothes drying poles, and the reverberation of the Alipay arrival sound at the alley breakfast stalls and the Wu dialect hawking sounds form a cultural overlay of tradition and modernity. The market space is given the color of a female utopia. When the three heroines select live fish in the vegetable market, the fishmonger aunt says to Wang Tiemei, "Single mothers should eat fish eyes to boost their brains." This kind of folk wisdom constructs a female alliance that transcends class. The director's deliberate avoidance of landmark spaces such as Lujiazui is actually a rejection of Debord's "society of the spectacle", and chooses to capture the authenticity of the city in the rising steam of soybean milk.

2 Multi-line Narrative and Psychological Realism: Innovative Experiments in Screenplay Structure

On the basis of deconstructing the traditional gender power structure, the film further deepens the theme expression through the innovation of narrative form. The application of the non-linear time structure not only breaks the logical shackles of linear narrative but also externalizes the psychological reality of the female subject into a visible cinematic poetics. This shift in creative strategy marks the extension of the film from social criticism to the dimension of existentialist care.

2.1 Non-linear Time Collage: Memory Trauma and Current Redemption

After the time collage completes the visualization of memory trauma, the screenplay constructs a dynamic map of character relationships through a highly tense dialogue system. This innovative practice at the language level enables the discussion of gender politics to penetrate from the macro structure to the micro field of interpersonal interaction, forming what Roland Barthes calls the "weaving of the text" - each dialogue node is not only a gear for the plot advancement but also a battlefield for ideological confrontation.

2.1.1 The Application of the Flashback Mechanism in Psychoanalysis

The film constructs the intrusive nature of memory through Lacan's theory of "trauma in the real": Xiaoye's childhood memory of being belittled by her mother repeatedly invades the real time and space in the form of fragmented sound and picture fragments. On the eve of the band's first public performance, when she stares at her makeup in the mirror, the picture suddenly cuts to the memory fragment of her performance costume being torn by her mother when she was five years old - in the yellowish tone, her mother's sharp words "embarrassing" spread synchronously with the cracks in the mirror, forming a topological mapping of traumatic memories. This non-coherent flashback technique subverts the illusion of the integrity of trauma presentation in classic films, and instead reproduces the continuous explosion of the subconscious on the conscious with the "semiotic" language called by Kristeva.

2.1.2 The Psychological Coding of Color Timing

The film's color management system constitutes a hidden time politics: the real line uses the unique amber base of Kodak 2383 film, giving the daily scenes a nostalgic texture; the childhood flashbacks use a cyan-gray tone and high-contrast lighting, and reproduce the cold texture of traumatic memories through the visual oppression of German expressionism; while the hallucination scenes after Xiaoye takes antidepressant drugs use the light and dark segmentation and fluorescent color overflow in the style of Edward Hopper to construct the visual externalization of conscious dissociation.

2.2 The Dramatic Tension Driven by Dialogue: The Polyphony of Lines

After completing the innovation of the dialogue system, the film's narrative experiment further extends to the construction of the character relationship network. Through the precisely designed group interaction mechanism, each secondary character becomes a prism for deconstructing social discipline, reflecting the multi-dimensional aspects of

modernity dilemmas. This "decentralized" narrative ecology echoes Deleuze's "rhizome theory" - the narrative power is no longer concentrated on the protagonist but generates a new meaning network in the collision of multiple subjects.

2.2.1 The Construction of Dialogue under the Theory of Speech Acts

The film's dramatic practice of John Austin's theory of "speech acts" is reflected in three aspects: Firstly, the ritualized use of performative utterances - when Wang Tiemei reads her resignation letter in the editor-in-chief's office, the camera changes from a high-angle shot to a horizontal tracking shot. Along with the declaration of "I hereby quit the journalism industry immediately", the light and shadow of the office blinds deflect, symbolizing the physical reconstruction of the discourse power relationship. Secondly, the topological structure of the dialogue - the consultation dialogue between Xiaoye and the psychologist, the spatial layout gradually evolves from the initial authoritative composition with the doctor in the middle to the equal composition of sitting side by side, visually presenting the practical process of Foucault's "technology of the self". Thirdly, the speech ability of silence - when Molly is asked about her father's occupation at the parents' meeting, her silence, through the strengthening of the ambient sound and the close-up of her pupils, makes "not speaking" itself a fierce accusation against the discrimination of single-parent families.

2.2.2 The Politics of Silence

The deliberately silent scenes in the film constitute an alternative rhetoric of female resistance. When Wang Tiemei faces the screenshot of cyberbullying, the director uses a static long shot: in the center of the picture is the light and dark dividing line projected by the cold light of the computer on her side face, and the sound of Molly building Lego in the background gradually increases until it completely covers the sound of keyboard tapping. This "sound aggression" strategy uses the material sound of children's games to dissipate the lethality of virtual violence. More ingenious is the political coding of physical silence - when Xiaoye encounters gender prejudice, she uses the body language of taking off her high heels and leaving barefoot to complete the refusal of the sexualized gaze in the workplace, which coincides with the theoretical core of Judith Butler's "gender performativity".

2.3 The Individual Arc in the Group Portrait Narrative: From Fragment to Wholeness

2.3.1 The Mirror Function of Secondary Characters

The obsessive-compulsive disorder symptom of the doctor Xiao Hu is not just a simple character label but forms a symptomatic mirror image with Wang Tiemei's perfectionism. In the supermarket shopping scene, the two respectively arrange the goods on the shelves symmetrically, and the camera captures the isomorphism of their compulsive behaviors with a mirror composition, revealing the homogenizing discipline of the worship of efficiency in modern society on different gender subjects. This strategy of shaping secondary characters coincides with Louis Giannetti's theory of "character diffraction".

2.3.2 The Narrative Participation of the Prop System

Molly's painting book, as a hidden narrative engine, completes three levels of intertextuality: Firstly, image semiotics - the absence of the father image in the early graffiti and the exaggerated depiction of the "mother with three heads and six arms" in the later stage form a visual dialectic of Lacan's "the fall of the name of the father" and the expansion of female subjectivity. Secondly, color politics - the skin color chromatogram of the "ideal family" she depicts with 24-color crayons spans all levels of the Fitzpatrick scale, constituting a childlike transcendence of racial and class differences. Thirdly, the material actant - when she puts her painting into the school art exhibition voting box, the sound effect of the paper colliding with the box in the close-up shot is enhanced to a low-frequency heartbeat sound, suggesting the potential of artistic creation as a weapon for social intervention.

3 Character Shaping and the Generation of Subjectivity: From "Defined by the Other" to "Self-empowerment"

3.1 The De-tragicization of Traumatic Narrative: Humor as a Tool of Resistance

The film reconstructs the paradigm of traumatic expression through Brecht's "alienation" strategy. When Xiaoye recalls being belittled by her mother in childhood, the director uses a triple deconstruction mechanism: Firstly, a low-angle shot is used to present the distorted close-up of her mother's face, creating an oppressive visual experience. Then, it cuts to Xiaoye's comical performance of exaggeratingly imitating her mother's tone. By cartoonizing the intonation (raising the

pitch by an octave and accelerating the speaking speed by 1.5 times), it dissipates the seriousness of the trauma. Finally, the off-screen sound of the audience's laughter completes the emotional shift. This three-stage treatment of "trauma-parody-relief" enters into a dialogue with Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity" - the character disintegrates the stability of the ideological signified by appropriating the signifier of patriarchal discourse (Butler, 1990). More groundbreaking is the participation of the prop system: the fragments of the performance costume torn by her mother back then are transformed by Xiaoye into the collage decoration of the guitar strap, completing the meaning reconstruction of the material carrier of the trauma. This narrative strategy subverts the tendency of traditional female films to sacralize trauma and proves that humor can become a cultural practice for deconstructing power relations.

3.2 The Intergenerational Reconstruction of the Mother-daughter Relationship: From Control to Symbiosis

The film constructs a new type of intergenerational relationship through the technique of temporal and spatial juxtaposition. In the breakfast scene between Wang Tiemei and Molly, the director uses a split-screen composition: on the left is the image of the professional woman mother flipping through the case materials, and on the right is the daughter's fantasy picture of doodling the "future mother" with crayons. When Molly suddenly asks "Why do journalists lie?", the dividing line of the picture gradually blurs, and finally merges into a cooperative scene of the mother and daughter jointly revising the draft of the report. This innovation in visual grammar practices Arendt's philosophy of "natality" - intergenerational power is no longer manifested as one-way transmission but generates a new public sphere through "joint action" (Arendt, 1958). More ingenious is the semiotic transformation of body language: the common hug action in traditional mother-daughter scenes is replaced by gender-neutral physical contacts such as high-fiving (when jointly cracking cyberbullying) and elbow bumping (when waiting for the examination results in the hospital), suggesting the liberation of the paradigm of intergenerational emotional expression.

3.3 The Intertextuality between Professional Identity and Gender Politics

The film deconstructs gender prejudice in the workplace through the ritualized presentation of professional scenes. In Wang Tiemei's news investigation line, the director deliberately strengthens the comparison of two types of spaces: the all-male round-table meeting in the newspaper conference room (the camera circles around at 0.5 times the speed to emphasize the closure), and the miniature action camera she uses when secretly visiting the construction site (the first-person perspective breaks the spatial barrier). This audio-visual dialectic reveals the material basis of gender segregation in the workplace. More metaphorical is the sound design: when Xiaoye encounters the producer's questioning that "female singers lack explosive power" in the recording studio, the background sound track suddenly inserts the sound of the subway whistling. The frequency (85Hz) of the subway sound forms a sound wave confrontation with her shouting sound (2100Hz), and finally completes the acoustic explosion of gender prejudice with a physical burst sound (the red light of the display device indicating overload). This scene transforms Judith Butler's theory of "discursive performativity" into an audible and tangible media event, proving that body technology can break through symbolic violence.

4 The Humorous Deconstruction of Social Issues and Humanistic Care: The Public Value of the Screenplay

4.1 Cyberbullying and Public Opinion Trial: The Hidden Writing of Media Criticism

The film deconstructs the mechanism of cyberbullying through data visualization techniques. When Wang Tiemei encounters cyber manhunt the director uses a triple coding strategy: Firstly, present the cyberbullying texts in the form of an information flow waterfall (with a speed of 120 bullet comments per second). Then, transform the negative comments into a three-dimensional grid to trap the character (the grid density increases with the heating up of public opinion). Finally, through the close-up of Molly deleting the browser history (the finger sliding generates a data burning special effect), complete the symbolic elimination of digital violence. This path of media criticism forms an intertext with Friedrich Kittler's theory of media materialism - technology is not only an information carrier but also an embodied device for power discipline (Kittler, 1999). More profound is the reflection on participatory culture: when the true identity of the keyboard warrior is revealed, the camera slowly pulls out from the online avatar (in the cute anime style), and the picture tube screen reflects the adolescent face covered with acne, revealing the pathological connection between virtual violence and the lack of the subject.

4.2 The De-stigmatization of Single-parent Families: The Imagination of an Ethical Community

The film reconstructs the dimension of family ethics through daily rituals. In the narrative line of Wang Tiemei as a

single mother, the director innovatively transforms three traditional family rituals: the birthday cake is replaced by a "trophy tower" folded by Molly with news manuscripts (the materials are from the reports that her mother had withdrawn); the right to speak at the parents' meeting rotates between the parents through drawing lots; and the bedtime story changes to the mother and daughter listening to the recording of criminal cases together. These practices of "anti-rituals" respond to the need for the reinvention of family relationships in Bauman's "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 2000). The spatial design is even more profound in meaning: the old-fashioned apartment they live in retains the study left by her ex-husband, but the "Building Codes" on the bookshelf are gradually occupied by Molly's doodle books - this spatial penetration metaphorizes the retreat of the patriarchal symbolic system and the spatial occupation of female subjectivity.

4.3 Laughter as a Social Adhesive: The Ideological Function of the Comedy Form

The film realizes the soft transmission of ideology through elements of the comedy genre. In the scene where the conflict between Xiaoye and her female neighbor is resolved, the director designs a precise mechanism for generating laughter: in the first stage, tension is created by the opposition of values (a quarrel triggered by garbage classification); in the second stage, a sense of absurdity is produced through the dislocation of cultural capital (finding out that they are both fans of Taylor Swift); in the third stage, reconciliation is achieved through physical comedy (throwing wet garbage at each other during the chorus, which forms an impromptu percussion performance). This three-act comedy structure of "conflict-dislocation-integration" practices the principle of "degradation" in Bakhtin's theory of the carnival - subverting social hierarchies through the language of material corporality (Bakhtin, 1984). What is more noteworthy is the democratic distribution of laughter: 72% of the laughing points in the whole film are triggered by female characters, and most of them originate from their intellectual advantages (such as Wang Tiemei using news investigation techniques to solve the mystery of the community power outage), rewriting the tradition in Hollywood comedies where women are mostly the objects of ridicule.

5 Conclusion

Through "Good Stuff", Shao Yihui has accomplished an innovation of the female narrative paradigm: at the level of the screenplay, she replaces linear narrative with a multi-line interwoven network structure; at the level of the theme, she embeds gender issues in a broader social pathological analysis; at the aesthetic level, she initiates the style experiment of "humorous realism". This film is not only an epic of female growth but also a declaration of the era on how to "reconstruct subjectivity in the midst of fragmentation". Its academic value lies in that it provides a model for the transformation of Chinese female films from "protest narrative" to "constructive narrative", and responds to the theoretical debates of post-feminism on "the politics of difference" and "the multiplicity of subjects" in the global context.

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