

A Brief Analysis of the Cinematography in Chinese and Western Novels - a Case Study of the Golden Lock Notes by Eileen Chang and Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

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Abstract: Literature represents an Abstractand recapitulatory interpretation, on which reality is reflected through language with the spirit and sentiments of the author conveyed via characters, reproducing lives in a particular region during a particular time span, whereas, cinema shapes and demonstrates characters by audios and visuals. It is built on four points of a relatively stable quadrilateral: time, space, vision and hearing. However, it's more of a tangible interpretation and a comprehensive art including theatre, photography, painting, sculpture, music, dance, architecture and other arts, rather than merely a visual and audio art. Therefore, both literature and cinema are part of art. They may be associated with different fields with different manifestations to convey sentiments and content. Nevertheless, the two can have fascinating interactions through some certain ways. Eileen Chang can be considered as an epitome in the aspect of combining novels and films in the history of Modern and contemporary Chinese literature. With regard to her cast of mind in novels, she creatively integrated techniques of cinema into the narratives without any trace, making it a high degree of visual and expressive tension, and unique narratives with the tendency of "being cinematographic" in the history of modern novels, while Jane Eyre, one of the most famous novels that has been most cinematographed by far, has been repeatedly reappearing in light and shadow in less than two hundred years, which has a great connection with its own feature of cinematography. To reveal the relationship, which narratives being considered, between the narrative techniques of novel and those of cinema such as time and space transformation and montage, in this paper, we review the two representative novels herein from the view of cinema, which is of great significance to enhance the possibility of breaking stagnant development of manifestations of modern novels in the new stage of cultural development.

1. Introduction

Cinema is called the art of "expressing one's ways of life". In the early 20th century, when cinema was first introduced as a novelty, Leo Tolstoy made his own prediction about the development of film and literature: "You shall see a revolution in our lives, the lives of writers, brought about by this clattering gadget with a handle." Moreover, Leo Lee also said that "the popularity of the visual medium quickly led to a reverse process -- the audio-visual entered the writing, and the film became the main source of the technique of the novel." As it turns out, what the masters said was true. What has cinema, this new art, really contributed to the ancient traditional art, literature, especially novels? In line with the thinking and exploration of this question, I, again, perused the classic works and found that no matter it is western modern novels or Chinese modern novels, distinctive cinematic expressions are imitated on paper by novelists both in China and abroad. Such as the visualized construction of text, the fragmentation and reconstruction of time and space, use of various types of montage, textual presentation of composition, depth of field, sound modeling and color, etc... In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on the aforementioned film techniques and explain my own ideas in accordance with the classic texts.

2. Visualization of Text

For many literacy works, no matter how vivid the characters and how gorgeous the environment description, it's just a flat image in the reader's mind. That's why many novelists are thinking about how to give life to the characters, shape true-to-life environment, enhance the sense of presence of readers, and enable readers to get relatively consistent sensory experience with the protagonist.

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë imperceptibly added sound effects to the environment. As the senses are the same, sound effects have a certain impact on the vision, making it more expressive. For example, the description in *Jane Eyre* of the days when Thornfield Hall was in harmony with Mr. Rochester reads as follows: "Dew fell cool on panting plain and scorched summit. Where the sun had gone down in simple state -- pure of the pomp of the clouds -- spread a solemn purple, burning with the light of red jewel and furnace flame at one point, on one hill-peak, and extending high and wide, soft and still softer, over half heaven... Sweet-briar and southernwood, jasmine, pink, and rose have long been yielding their evening sacrifice of incense..." In this description, "panting" and "burning" have sound effects hidden. Just like the truth of imagining about plums to quench thirst, people will naturally hear the sound of panting for breath in their mind when they're reading "panting"; and hear the sound of the wood crackled as the fire burned when reading "burning". In this way, the plain is no longer a lifeless word, but a slightly undulating land that moves with the camera in the film, as if it breathes steadily. Together, the sunshine turns into the flame at the peak of the mountain. With the sound of the wood cracking in our mind, we seem to see a ray of light shining and dimming on the mountain.

Slightly different from Charlotte Brontë, Eileen Chang is good at turning the urban space from a visual landscape into a living space. This space often includes street, wet market, apartment and other public spaces where citizens often gather. Among them, street is a special living space often written by Eileen Chang, because it can reflect more authentic daily lives of folks. In fact, "Street Scene" is one of the favorite scenes by Chinese filmmakers in early stage. The open and bustling streets are like the miniature of the world and life itself. The streets in Eileen Chang's novels are filled with various trifles and anecdotes of daily life, which indeed made the words come to life from the paper. For example, Cao Qiqiao, a character in the *Golden Lock Notes*, has this recollection: "In front of the gravel alley, there was a sesame oil shop with aromatic smell and black, greasy counters, where wooden spoons stood on end in sesame paste buckets -- iron large and small, hung from oil tanks. Funnels were stuck in the vendor's bottle, and one larger spoonful plus two smaller made up perfectly a bottle -- equal a catty and a half. By the way, he'd call it as 1 catty and 4 liang if you were a familiar face. Sometimes she also went grocery shopping, with blue linen shirt and trousers, and mirror black stripe-embroidered blouse. She saw Chao Lu in the butcher's shop through a thick row of copper hooks that hung pork. Chao Lu called her Lady Cao with an enthusiastic set of tone. It's a rare chance to get a delightful call from him, so she slapped the hook on the back and a thousand empty hooks went up to poke him in the eye, then Chao Lu took a piece of pork fat a foot wide from the hook and threw it heavily on the chopping board..." In the description of this street scene, a film ambience is lighted up by these dynamic pictures in our mind. With every word coming into view, we can clearly feel the moving direction of the camera and motion trajectory. In this space where the people gathered, argued, talked and lived together, Eileen Chang kept packing the distance between words until they even link together, forming dynamic film scenes that flows like water, thanks to her elegant writing along with a string of verbs and the impact of colorful pictures.

3. Fragmentation, Reconstruction and Montage for Time and Space

When a writer wants to break the traditional narrative mode of the novel, change the continuous narrative trend of the novel, and achieve the purpose of "spatial form" of the novel, the most direct method is to break the time and space. "Fragmentation" involves the fragmentation of the plot, of which the ultimate form is the fragment of life. In movies, in order to present the story coherently in front of the audience, the way of systematic editing of the screen is often adopted, so that the action

of the coherent or fragment shot can give the audience a complete visual experience and movie story through a series of re-cutting, editing and assembling. In literary works, to display strange and fantastic artistic effects through montage, writers also imitate the expression techniques of movies, taking the events in life, scenes of continuous development, or a node of an event as a standard for selection, cutting and reconnecting. There are many kinds of montages in the novels, and several typical narrative montage and performance montage are selected for analysis as follows.

3.1 Juxtaposed Montage

The so-called “juxtaposition” is to break the narrative time flow and place those meaningful units, no matter small or big, in parallel, so that the unity of the text exists in the spatial relationship rather than in the traditional time relationship. At this time, the narration of the novel does not focus on telling a complete story with a beginning and an end or focusing on the description of a certain main character, but only through the juxtaposition and organization of stories from different time and space to deliver multi-layer of messages and meanings.

In *Jane Eyre*, from Mrs. Reed, whose “body is built like a clock - disease dares not close to her”, the dying man “constantly in coma or lethargy”, the young “tyrant” master with “harsh voice and swollen limbs” to the fallen gambler who “keeps running for gambling, but always losing money”, in the structure of the novel, they are not mutually set off to contrast with each other, but a “juxtaposition” in terms of their relations. Jane Eyre's memory of Gateshead is often different from the Gateshead in front of her because of the contrast between her memory. “Every piece of furniture is there,” she said. “Inanimate things remain the same; But the living things have changed beyond recognition.” It is this structure of “juxtaposition” that enables Jane Eyre to unleash more potential of the narratives for cinematography.

3.2 Repeating Montage

In movies, scenes with a specific significance will always be repeated at key moments to portray characters and deepen the theme. In the novel, this technique has developed into a re-narration or repetition technique. When repetition integrates with montage, the lyrical function of repetition technique is further strengthened, which makes the meaning of the work richer and richer, and boosts the artistic appeal, thus creating a kind of recurring beauty.

This kind of repeating montage is ubiquitous in Eileen Chang's novels. “the peddler with beancurd jelly is casually shouting, and the echo circles in the air: “jelly..... Oh! jelly... Oh!” And when you go farther, only “Oh... Oh! Oh... Oh!” is hearable.” The “oh” in each shout and each slow, long echo is a small incessant section, and every section links together and here forms a dotted line, cutting off the time and space. In addition to the repetition of words, there is the repetition of music. “She fumbled under her pillow for a harmonica, squatted on the ground, and began to play it sneakily. Hesitantly, the soft melody of 'Long, Long, Ago' are floating in the vast night.” “Hazily, Chang'an recognized the harmonica sound, slowly blowing the Long Long Ago --” Tell me the story, my favorite story in the past. Long ago, long ago...” The repetition of the music creates a musical ambience and completes the artistic construction of the novel's auditory elements. At the same time, these repetitions accompany the narrative of the story, forming a structural sense of echo before and after. In addition, in the *Golden Lock Notes*, the image of the moon repeatedly appears for five times, which is not only a powerful means for contrast and rendering, but also creates a poetic mood, adding more cinema sense to the work.

3.3 Fade-in and Fade-out

With regards to the conversion of time and space through montage, fade-in and fade-out can often save ink and achieve unexpected effects. There is a fascinating description by Eileen Chang in the *Golden Lock Notes*: “The wind blows in from the window, and the long palindrome carved lacquer mirror hung opposite was shaken by the wind, knocking against the wall. Qiqiao put her hands on the mirror. The bamboo curtain reflected in the mirror and a pair of green landscape screen is still rippling back and forth in the wind, and looking at it for a long while will give one a sense of seasickness. When she gazed at the mirror again, the green curtain had faded, and the green

landscape was replaced by a portrait of her deceased husband, and the woman in the mirror had aged ten years.” This famous transitional paragraph in the Golden Lock Notes was particularly mentioned in Mr. Fu Lei's *On Eileen Chang's Novels*, published in Wangxiang in 1944. He wrote, “This is the technique of film: space and time, vaguely fading, vaguely rising again. Clever transition technique!” We can clearly feel that the “virtual focus” lens, which is often used in film transitions, is seamlessly used here by Eileen Chang -- “bamboo curtain”, “green landscape and a set of hanging scrolls” gradually blurred in front of us, but we, when everything in sight clear again, only find that as time flashes by, green landscape has turned into a portrait of her deceased husband. In this segment, Eileen Chang skillfully uses the optical skills of the film, which not only encapsulates ten years of time, but also completes the transformation of Cao Qiqiao from a tragic figure to a tragic maker. This kind of clever cinematic editing is accomplished by Eileen Chang with skilled scissors of words and language, which is really stunning.

Fade-in and fade-out in novels and films are very similar. For example, in *Jane Eyre*: “A soft sound of rising now became audible; the curtain was swept back from the arch; through it appeared the dining-room, with its lit lustre pouring down light on the silver and glass of a magnificent dessert-service covering a long table; a band of ladies stood in the opening; they entered, and the curtain fell behind them.” This is a slow introduction in the text as a participant, creating a specific atmosphere, and then the camera unfolds, the characters appear, and the story begins. The novel then switches to a long footage, slowly pulls in to the door, then the objective footage changes to the subjective footage, along with Jane Eyre's perspective, the characters appear, and the plot of the novel gradually unfolds. “I waited till the last deep and full vibration had expired - till the tide of talk, checked an instant, had resumed its flow; I then quitted my sheltered corner and made my exit by the side-door, which was fortunately near. Thence a narrow passage led into the hall: in crossing it, I perceived my sandal was loose; I stopped to tie it, kneeling down for that purpose on the mat at the foot of the staircase.” In this section, although the protagonist leaves the scene, the music still echoes in the readers' ears. The sound wave of the vibration keeps colliding, returning and slowly disappearing in the narrow passage... This vibration is the voice connecting the two time and space vaguely.

3.4 Close-Up and Composition and Depth of Field in Close-Up

Close-up is also a kind of montage. In movies, close-up usually magnifies the fine details of the object by zooming in the camera, such as infinitely enlarging the pupil of the character or exaggerating the facial expression of the character. In novels, cinematic features separate expressive scenes or emotions from the narrative, and then show them stroke by stroke through meticulous drawing, emphasizing detail and clear visual images. There is such a text in the Golden Lock Notes: “Plum soup's dripping along the table drop by drop, like a late-night clock -- one drop, two drops... one hour, two hours... one year, one hundred years.” This is an infinitely elongated slow-motion close-up. Through this close-up, the author demonstrates Qiqiao's lethargy, loneliness and helplessness under the squeeze of gold desire in detail. Here, it can be seen that close-ups show subtle emotional changes of the characters in this way, revealing the instantaneous trends of the characters' mind, and making the audience strongly affected visually and psychologically.

The use of depth of field is an important way of composition in film close-up. Various photography techniques are used to create different depth ranges in the picture. A footage with a larger depth of field can provide more visual information from the depth of space, making a single footage have a richer meaning. In the Golden Lock Notes, we can see that Eileen Chang is like a photographer who meticulously describes changing circumstances and creates a layered environment. She constructs images with great tension on white paper. “Shifang turned around, and saw a small old lady standing at the opening with her back to the light, her face cannot be seen clearly, yet she's wearing a gray dragon palace woven forged robe, with her hands holding red hot water bags, flanked by two tall maids. It was dusk outside the door, and the stairs were covered with lake green chequered dermateen and lichen. The stairs went up step by step, leading to where there was no light.” Eileen Chang's close-ups of Cao Qiqiao's characters develop the modeling function

of light and shadow very skillfully. She uses a very visual impact effect of backlight treatment, so that Cao Qiqiao is in shadow. Because of the “dark sun”, the source of this backlight is extremely low and the shadows are stretched out longer. The whole picture is dark tone, because Shifang is sitting, so he has to look up to Cao Qiqiao. This is an upshot, aiming to deliver an obvious film deformation effect. No wonder Shifang will be “scared”, considering that weird composition angle and the application of light and shadow, paired with very stimulating red and green color impact.

4. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that the artistic technique of cinema has a great influence on Chinese and foreign novels. Under the context of continuous integration of disciplinary research and cultural development, the development of literature should not only focus on quantitative aspects, we should solve more old problems with new understandings and delve into the classic literature treasure house to constantly explore the intersection of literature and other fields, thereby expanding the development potential and development space of literature.

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