

The Romantic Writing and Ethical Imagination of the Rural Movie Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan

Hao Liu^{1, a}, Jing Yang^{1, b}

¹Chongqing College of Humanities, Science & Technology; Rural Revitalization Cultural
Inheritance and Innovation Research Base, Chongqing, 401524, China

^a479092903@qq.com, ^b705535930@qq.com

Abstract

Taking "on the road" as a clue, the rural movie *Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan* contrasts the city from the perspective of the countryside, expressing life and death. On the one hand, the film presents the rural landscape through the visual form of returning to the original nature and extends the possibilities of the rural landscape. On the other hand, the narrative of film abandons the commercial logic of rebellion, sensationalism, and flow. Instead, it romanticizes the propositions of generations, life and death, and good and evil in the film, and responds with simple expressions to the ethical thinking of major propositions.

Keywords

Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan; Rural Movie; Rural Landscape; Ethics.

1. Background Color: Poetic Writing of Rural Landscape

With the advancement of the market economy, post-modern urban landscapes such as skyscrapers, traffic flow, feasting and revelry have gradually occupied the cinema screens. Infected by concepts consumerism and entertainment supremacy, the audience's aesthetic habits have become increasingly entertaining, and their attention to film content is often based on flow decorating. Therefore, urban images are also showing a trend of commercialization and entertainment.

Admittedly, urban images cannot represent the overall development of Chinese films, while rural image expressions are constructed with a "problem" thinking layout. On the one hand, the countryside has become an ideal paradise for people with urban symptoms, allowing the souls who have been under high pressure all the year round to rest. It is a perspective of "solving" or "escaping from problems". On the other hand, urban images are mostly confined to daily life under social pressure and these same urban experiences with themes centered on money, love, work, etc., evoke the emotional resonance of the audience. The comparative expressions of violence, ethics, and crime are placed in rural areas that are not directly exposed under surveillance, satisfying the audience's curiosity psychology from a "being seen" perspective, and exposing the distance from the social problems that exist in the city "circle" scene which are the perspective of "exposure" or "observation of the problem". The film *Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan* is an authentic Chinese rural movie. Young director Huo Meng won many awards including Fei Mu honor-best director in the Pingyao International Film Festival. His alternative approach is to capture the audience's rural aesthetic psychology, abandon the commercial taste of urban movies, reject the novelty seeking of traditional rural narratives, and use true and rational narrative methods to flesh out the background of the film and construct a the poetic writing mode of the rural landscape.

Dogs barking cicadas linger in the ears, the folks in the village greet casually and the summer evening heat is not exhausted, which are the film gives the audience a calm and quiet first

impression. The director preferred to choose the long-range and middle-range compositions to limn the natural rural landscape, as far as possible to present the wide view under the plain landform. He did not choose to show the vertical and horizontal ravines, ridges and rivers in the northwest, nor did he reflect the cliffs and mountains in the southwest. Instead, straight roads and regular trees show a sense of order, which is more in line with the plain tone of rural movies. This kind of scene design enhances the poetic and philosophical meaning of the film's picture, as if looking down from a distant sky to the numerous living beings on this land. When the director created the rural mood, he depicted the village, cooking smoke, melon fields, leaking roofs, and small yards. The young protagonist NingNing vomited in the yard because of car sick when he first arrived at his grandpa's house. Grandpa rushed to wash his face with water, but NingNing disliked the dirty towel, so he wiped his face with a clean one. From the very beginning of watching the movie, the audience was the same as NingNing, with a certain prejudice about going back to his old home. Then, the director used the clean composition and scene to reverse the impression, showing the tranquility and freedom of rural life, thus leading the audience to change their imagination of it. The grandfather bathed his grandson in the yard as the instruction of his son. In the countryside, one old and one young take a bath under the night sky in the most traditional way, chatting about the lonely childhood of urban child. This scene made the audience expect the grandfather's saying that he would take his grandson to "hang out". Accompanied by the cicadas and dialogue, the film picture has an aesthetic texture and internal layers. The film is no longer a cookie-cutter narrative story, but brings in the aesthetic characteristics of one side of the water and soil, the family relationship between generations, and it is a kind of rural life experience.

From the urban perspective to the rural writing, through a series of connections and scene rendering, the film transforms the stereotypical of the rural imagination, which shows that the rural is not just a chaotic fringe world, but a peaceful and poetic paradise.

2. Imagination: The Poetic Pursuit of Rural Ethics

Chinese culture originated from farming civilization, and the countryside has always been the place where the basic emotions of Chinese civilization are maintained and attached. Social transformation is reflected most intuitively in rural areas, and many memorable rural stories emerge with them. The cultural connotations and creative features reflected by them are particularly prominent, and their research value is self-evident. The general road film narrative always revolves around the spiritual exploration with "self-seeking" as the motif, emphasizing the end-finding and life comprehension driven by powerful motives. But *Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan* takes "on the road" as the theme, and the motivations of the characters are extremely "rebellious". Li Fuchang Over 70 years old, he has already seen through the world, no more growth and changes are needed. His motive for leaving was to visit his former benefactor, the old man Han Yutang Han, who was now dying, and at the same time accompany his grandson through the summer vacation. NingNing is still a child, and there is no life dilemma. The film arranges the parts of the plot that need to reflect the value of "growth" on the passers-by Li Fuchang meets, and he acts as a "guide", using his own experience to feed back passers-by in dilemma, help them solve their problems and convey the philosophy of life.

Rural ethics mainly refers to the various social etiquette, customs and habits formed in the production and lifestyle of the countryside. It is the tradition and culture in the lives of peasants, and the norms and guidelines for handling the relationship between people in the rural society, which play an important role in order of rural society and the regulation of interpersonal relationships.

The grandfather and grandson met three strangers: a bankrupt young man, a truck driver, and an elderly beekeeper. To the bankrupt young man fishing by the fish pond, Li Fuchang cited the

real experience of the acquaintance, the "dumb grandpa", to enlighten him, and used bioethics to explain the impermanence of the world: there're things that we cannot control if there're no fish in this river you won't get anything even if you stay here until you die; if there are fishes in the river, be patient, you'll eventually get what you want. To the truck driver who encountered a breakdown on the winding road, Li lent him his tricycle for him to buy auto parts in the city. When driving at night and meeting beggars along the road, he generously donated fifty yuan, and said that they must be driven into corner. He used good deeds, allegorical the truth of good. For the elderly beekeepers who live alone and have no communication, Li Fuchang gave him the most desired emotional companionship and communication, using parenting bioethics to explain live, age, sick and die: our life just as that ancient story crossing the border Zhao Guan. None of them are easy, but we'd have to pass them away. In response to the demands and situations of different people, Li Fuchang offers different ways of dealing with others, and provides spiritual guidance to strangers who have encountered troubles in reality. He is willing to be kind, and at the same time influencing others imperceptibly, infecting the people around him with simple rural ethics. As the director Huo Meng said in the interview, people always have to go through all kinds of pain, and the most important thing is to choose what mentality to live when facing pain.

Crossing the Border-Zhaoguan does not have obvious dramatic climaxes and ups and downs in the plot. Instead, the plot is laid out in a narrative way, and the passage of the three "meetings" on the way is connected. In terms of realism, it is more inclined to documentary expression. In the creation, director Huo Meng used the emotional core as the basis of the story, allowing the audience to intuitively feel the simplicity and persistence of the two protagonists. He used beautiful brushstrokes to depict the people and things in the countryside, as well as his beautiful imagination of rural ethics.

3. Conclusion

Based on his insight into the warmth and coldness of the world, the director explored the philosophical propositions of birth, old age, sickness and death, and reincarnation of destiny, realizing a spiritual journey in a rural tour. The film takes care of the rural reality, pays attention to the spiritual world and daily experience of ordinary people, which is a return to life itself. In the eyes of director Huo Meng, the countryside is no longer just to be "watched", but a radiator that evokes generations of relatives, life and death, good and evil.

Acknowledgments

Chongqing Municipal Education Commission, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Project, A Study of the Changes of Rural Society in Chinese Movies in the New Century (Subject Number: 21SKGH292).

References

- [1] Yang Haoci. The imagined homeland: the social dimension and aesthetic purport of domestic rural films, *Movie Review*, Vol. 13(2020), p.24-27.
- [2] Zhu Fangchang, Li Hongqiong. An Analysis of the Economic Function of the Local Culture Tradition[J].*Seeker*, Vol.12(2005), p.55-57.
- [3] The 24th blink. Director Huo Meng: What I value is the logic of life|Dialog [EB/OL].[2018-12-23].<https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/E1MA9xGjXas1BSMgRqbnfg>.