

YOLO

—Women's Stories from a Female Director's Perspective

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Abstract: Taking the film *Yolo* as the research object, this paper explores gender issues through the lens of female-directed cinema. Female directors distinguish themselves from their male counterparts through distinct approaches to character portrayal and narrative perspective. They emphasize intricate emotional depiction and deep exploration of characters' inner worlds, challenging traditional gender stereotypes by illustrating women's internal struggles and growth amidst societal expectations. Moreover, female directors innovate in visual expression and narrative structure, employing softer tones, non-linear storytelling, and unique perspectives to enhance the audience's understanding of the characters' emotional and psychological development. Through such techniques, they expand the discourse on gender issues and offer new narratives that resonate with authentic female experiences. *Yolo*, directed by a woman, exemplifies these themes by vividly depicting female characters' personalities and emotional landscapes within their real-world challenges. This approach not only enriches the representation of women's lives but also broadens the narrative possibilities for discussing gender in cinema. Ultimately, this study highlights how female directors enrich film by presenting nuanced portrayals of women and reshaping the cinematic landscape to include diverse gender perspectives.

Keywords: Feminism, Film narration, Gender issues, Lens language, *YOLO*.

1. Introduction

With the progress of The Times and society, the narrative mode of film and the construction of film characters have changed to a great extent. The construction of female images and the development of female directors into the public eye have experienced a longer and harder evolution process. Ms. Dai Jinhua once mentioned in her book *The Development of Women's Film*, in this period, in terms of social and cultural process, the emergence of the female self and consciousness is extremely difficult and slow. At the same time, it is full of misunderstandings and misunderstandings [1]. In today's female films, the creation of female roles is no longer just to meet the appearance of male fantasy, but more to break the male gaze. And focus on real women from a female perspective. In particular, the rise of female films in commercial films, such as the American female director Greta Gerwig directed the movie *Barbie*, South Korean female director Kim Do Young directed *Kim Ji-young in 1982* and so on. The film *yolo*, directed by Chinese female director Jia Ling, is based on the Japanese film *100yen love*. The film mainly tells the story of the heroine Le Ying who ran away from home

for a long time after a conflict with her sister, and she has suffered from friendship and love deterioration, sexual harassment at work and other blows. Le Ying and the same fitness coach Hao Kun after the affair was abandoned. Finally, Le Ying found herself through boxing, a sports carrier, and completed the transition from passive choice to active choice. From the announcement to the official release, the film has aroused widespread attention and discussion, especially the discussion of female roles, but also triggered the discussion of gender and gaze. This paper will explore the gender issues in the film according to the shaping of different female images in the film and the shooting methods of female directors that are different from those of male directors, as well as the significance of female stories from the perspective of female directors for the future development of female films.

2. Misogyny and Feminism in Characterization

In the traditional Chinese social rules, the moral standard of women was established by the ancient Chinese society. Chinese traditional female morality is established on the basis of patriarchy and the natural economy of small farmers. The basis of their argument was the preservation of male privilege at the expense of women's rights, which was the ultimate goal of preserving the authoritarian rule of feudal society [2]. In modern society, due to the development and influence of politics and economy, although traditional female morality has put on the cloak of women's liberation, Chinese women still wear the cloak of invisible female morality, that is, misogyny. The forms of misogyny are asymmetrical in the binary gender order, showing contempt for women in men and self-loathing in women [3]. In this film, the traditional image of misogyny from the perspective of female directors is no longer just the image of serving men in male fantasy, but the image of women themselves in human nature.

2.1. Le Ying's Sister Le Dan

At the beginning of the film, the audience can see the classic female misogynist figure: Le Ying's sister - Le Dan. From the time she appeared to the time she argued with Le Ying, she had been judging Le Ying's lifestyle with a strong image. In the film, Le Dan's line "When you get old, you will have no children, no girls, and no husband" directly expresses her social thinking of male attachment. It is also a subliminal obedience to traditional female morality in modern women. Another of her lines is "She's thin now, hurry up and find a nice man to marry even if she wins once." These lines not only place the female figure in the traditional male gaze of women, but also assign the value of women to the worship of male roots. At the same time, Le Dan's attitude toward the change of Le Ying's image is the misogyny of women, that is, a woman's sense of belonging is to be seen by men [3].

Le Dan is a single mother. In the film, the audience can learn from the dialogue that Le Dan asked Le Ying for a house for his children to go to school that part of Le Dan's divorce was caused by Le Dan's marital infidelity. It seems that Le Dan's divorce is Le Dan's problem, but it implies many women's problems in society. For example, women's desire for good men is a kind of shelter that women seek from men with high social status because of their low social status, and it is also women's self-worth and fantasy of men under the male gaze. According to the lines and images of Le Dan, it can be understood that Le Dan's interpretation of derailment in her mouth is that she has charm, and he also has male fantasies about the object of derailment. As for the "inheritance" of female virtue thought in social development, Le Dan's social pressure is also the pressure of most mothers in modern society. Such as taking care of children and parents, working and earning money, etc. In the social life of promoting gender equality, most men still choose to ignore the important role of women in the role of mother, or use the importance of this role to discipline women with more responsibilities. Although the appearance of Le Dan's role has the lack of expression, the appearance of this image is

worth people to think about the real social value of women. It is also more worthy for film creators to think about the expression of female images in female films.

2.2. Le Ying's Friend Lily

In the part where Le Ying's best friend Lily is having an affair with her boyfriend can be seen that Lily's pajamas are leopard print. In the male fantasy of women in clothing, leopard print clothing shows the wild (sexy) women. Women wearing leopard print clothing will make men more conquest, intended to show that women are men's prey, and meet and accept men's curiosity and peep [4]. In the film, the gesture of Lily snuggling up to her boyfriend in a leopard print dress not only objectifies women, but also reflects the worship of the male root culture [5]. Lily's "kindness" and moral abduction of Le Ying not only explain the gaze and criticism of women in social life, but also directly reflect the competitive relationship between women in the book *Misogynistic* [3].

From the perspective of character relationships, Lily is a good friend of Le Ying, and also the third party in the relationship between Le Ying and her ex-boyfriend. In the general film and television plots, most of the expressions of the third-party female characters will criticize them as emotional interveners, or give them a tragic ending. The character of Lily represents a section of women who are defined as slutty, bitchy women. However, her character image is not the slender and weak female image shown in the general film and television plot, but a relatively powerful woman. The appearance of this image breaks the traditional male fantasy of the female third party. Lily's bland happy ending in the film also breaks the discipline of the male gaze on women.

2.3. The Values and Practical Significance of Le Ying's Cousin Doudou in the Film

In the film, Dou Dou's identity is the director. This identity not only helps to complete the mental stimulation of the protagonist of the film, but also represents that the construction of female identity by the media in the current society is still influenced by the patriarchal culture [6]. The role itself deceiving Le Ying into appearing on the show to achieve her own employment in order to work is also the dilemma faced by women in the current social context.

2.4. Le Ying

In the shaping of the character of the protagonist, the early Le Ying is a typical "pleasing personality". The appearance of Le Ying controlling the TV remote control with her feet and picking up the blanket with her toes directly shows the audience an image of laziness and self-abandonment. This has also caused many viewers to be uncomfortable with the depiction of women's "defects". This part of the audience is affected by the formalized male expression, and can only accept the virtuous wife who is weak and kind, the mother who is hard-working and selfless, the woman who is ignorant and calculating at the bottom, and the woman who is naive and stupid to the man in the high level. Only the formulaic female characters of the Madonna and the siren, these stories that revolve around men, will be accepted by the majority of the audience. The female characters in this film have broken the female image of male fantasy. They all put their own interests first, which is the female subjectivity. They exist alone as a person, not bound by status, living only for themselves. "Cheating in marriage", "being a third party for love", "doing whatever it takes to improve social status" and other behaviors are often "taken for granted" behaviors in male groups.

In her view of women's gender attributes, de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* mentions that "she is obsessed with the vain pursuit of existence through narcissism and love; As a producer and an active person, she regains transcendence; She feels her responsibility in relation to the purpose she pursues, the money and the power she gains [7]." The image of Le Ying is directly transmitted to the public women's consciousness of sex themselves. When Le Ying's life focus is no longer around love,

friendship and career, but chooses to ignore the TV cycle to broadcast their own evil cut programs, ignore her emotional bestie and ex. And in the face of Haokun once liked, Le ying followed her own heart to choose to see the mood of the answer to reject his invitation. Through the sport carrier of boxing, the female image of Le Ying has completed the transformation from the object to the subject. The shaping of this role is not only the awakening of female thought, but also the embodiment of feminism.

Yolo is not a traditional feminist film. It is different from the concept of female film as a kind of melodrama in Hollywood mentioned by Wang Lingzhen in *Female Film and the History of Chinese Female Film 2* [8]. It is also different from the concept that female directors place women at the center of the universe mentioned in narrative film gender and genre [9]. Female director Jia Ling's expression of female roles in the film *Yolo* is a good interpretation of the current struggle between feminism and misogyny.

3. Lens Language from the Perspective of Female Directors

3.1. Role Naming

In the character naming, the character's name "Le Ying" is spelled in pinyin and the director Jia Ling's "Ling" character is the same. In a way, the director Jia Ling is Le Ying in the film. The character Le Ying undergoes a huge change in appearance, using boxing as a sports vehicle to give herself a win in her life story. Director Jia Ling, like the character Le Ying, not only experienced the same changes in appearance and movement carrier as the character, but also won once on her way to directing. She made the film's tidbits a part of the film - because that was the end of the character of Jia Ling. The final presentation in the film is a surreal, arranged to become thinner and stronger Le Ying saw her past self on the glass, so that the past self said to her refueling, vertical thumb. See the past year, and the past self, not excited, nervous, proud, is the last time in the timeline to "look back". This is a very restrained and precise perspective presentation. This should also be the reason why she cried in the video, because Jia Ling in reality must have seen herself a year ago, which makes the second half of the movie is high and effective, and also makes the video become part of the movie story, and even that is the real ending, and suddenly a sense of power.

3.2. Dressing for the Mirror

The scene in the film where Le Ying combs her hair in front of a mirror is highly ironic. In the past film and television expressions, most of the women to the mirror-dressing lens are beautiful, letting people feel pity. The footage shown through the female perspective in this film is a more real state of women's lives, which is also more ironic.

3.3. Expression of Sexual Harassment Scenes

For the common social problem "of sexual harassment", female director Jia Ling directly presents the real, unsugarcoated sexual harassment in the film. The film does not focus on the expression, skin and body of the harassed person, nor does it create an atmosphere of ambiguous relationships, no condemnation of the victim, and no justification of the perpetrator. In the film, the fist that Le Ying hits the molester is more like breaking the part of the interpretation of women under the male gaze.

3.4. Lines

The line "You are so man" appears twice in the film, both as the female character worships the male character. The man who did the man thing in the film was not the man who tried to show his hormones, but the heroine Le Ying who tried her best to "win once". As mentioned earlier, *yolo* is an

adaptation of the film, and the lines at the end of the film are very important for the change of Le Ying's ingratiating personality. It is more like female independence than the end of the original film. A female individual who is no longer attached to a man goes from being chosen, to being seen, to actively choosing. At the end of the film, the time-space interleaving lens shows the sexual desire of the "fat woman" very well. Female roles no longer passively accept men, but the pursuit of their own inner desires, showing women's strong individual consciousness and self-assertion [10]. The appearance of this close-up shot pulls the audience into the world of feminism.

3.5. Sound Shaping

In the shaping of the character's voice, after Le Ying became thinner and stronger, her voice was still humble. She did not speak loudly because of confidence, and she did not become a sunny and cheerful image. This is not in line with the tension of traditional movie characters, but more in line with the natural state of man.

4. Conclusion

Finally, the different female images in the movie *Yolo* show a more real female life, breaking the fantasy of female identity and status under the male gaze. The female image is no longer a single mother without dependence, no longer a femme fatale who destroys relationships, no longer a pure and flawless intern, and no longer a working woman who swallows up sexual harassment in the workplace. The movie *Yolo* delivers a powerful punch to the real-life issue of the superiority of men's rights over women's rights. For example, the problem of women being sexually harassed in the workplace, and the abduction of women's body appearance and beauty in life. All these problems serve men, and the expression of female director Jia Ling in this film shows these problems one by one, and provides a way for women to deal with these problems through the perspective of female directors. The film *Yolo* takes "love yourself" as the narrative entry point, sincerely and delicately demonstrates the power of women, and creates a more three-dimensional group image of female characters. The film carries the cultural sustenance of the current era, and the female film also has the mission of feminism. The film *Yolo* has had an impact on women's films that cannot be ignored, while also expanding the social context for more female creators.

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