

The Combination of Camera Language and Narrative in Wong Kar Wai's Films—Take the Example of In the Mood for Love

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Abstract. According to Wong Kar Wai's camera language and narrative structure to study the significance of the different shots in the film and the content expressed, mainly to study the camera language of *In the Mood for Love* as an example. It mainly uses several important episodes in the film to analyze the use of camera language and the narrative structure of the whole film in the context of the overall story, and focuses on the climax of the film and the use of the camera. The conclusion is that the narrative structure is very consistent, and that the echoes that appear before the movie are explained later on, and the language of the camera is very detailed, from the use of empty shots to imply only one intention, to the fact that each thing that appears in the shot is extremely detailed and has a different meaning. According to the study, it is also clear that Wong Kar Wai is extremely sensitive to the use of light and color in his films, and has provided new ideas for others to make films.

Keywords: Camera language, different emotions, the role of intention, use of lighting

1. Introduction

In the Mood for Love was released in Hong Kong in September 2000 and a remake was premiered in 2020 in the Cannes Classics section due to its excellent reception. This movie is mainly about Su Lizhen and Zhou Muyun in their respective love life found their respective spouses have an extramarital affair, their two talk to each other under the discovery that it is actually each other's husbands and wives, with more and more contact between the two people, and gradually produce feelings for each other's story. This movie is also known as "The Best Chinese Movie", and is also the most classic work of Wong Kar Wai in the eyes of the public.

Wong Kar Wai innovated many new camera languages in this movie, making the characters' movements as well as their backgrounds extremely subtle, with each scene serving a different purpose. Wong Kar Wai has said that he didn't make *In the Mood for Love* as a romantic movie, but as a suspense movie. Among them, Su and Zhou are sometimes themselves, and sometimes they play each other's spouses to simulate the process of cheating on both of them, but the two of them don't realize that they have gradually developed feelings for each other in the process of imitation [1].

2. Analysis

From the beginning of the movie, the director uses the fact that the two families are moving and as a result, the things of the two families are mixed together as a metaphor for the fact that the marital relationship between the two parties will also be misplaced. The director sets the stage for Zhou's late emotions with a sequence in which Mrs. Zhou squeezes him off the poker table. Scene switch, this is Zhou asked Su out to dinner a scene, this scene to empty mirror opening, the whole picture is false, but the focus is on the upper left corner of a wisp of smoke, accounting for the most important intention of the scene, then Zhou and Su began to test each other, the first panoramic account of the spatial relationship. At the same time, the director used a clever composition to make the seat cover Zhou's mouth, which also reflects the cover-up and tentativeness of Zhou's speech, and there is potted plant behind the camera, through which the contrasting colors of red and green also reflect Zhou's inner emotions of struggle at this time: The red color indicates impulse and desire, which the green color indicates repression and restraint, Zhou restrained himself to make his performance appear calm and decent, through the conversation both of them confirmed that their partners were cheating on each other. The details are Zhou first tried to find out where Su's bag was bought, in fact, he saw his wife had an identical bag, and then in the subsequent conversation with Su, Zhou smoked frequently, and the cigarettes indicated a cover-up in this scene. Then Su also told him that the bag was not for sale in Hong Kong, clearly telling Zhou that her wife has cheated on her husband. The camera switches to a close-up of Su stirring her coffee, and through both Su's attire and her hand movements there is a clear contrast with the attire of Zhou's wife in the previous scene. Zhou's wife wore a sleeveless dress and the part of the body exposed is obviously more than Su, which also set off Su's cheongsam is more dignified and decent, but at the same time also reflects her inner repression and bondage [2]. Originally, Su waited for Zhou's reply, but Zhou had already achieved the purpose of this meal and did not reply, which inspired Su's dissatisfaction, so with words to stimulate Zhou. The camera quickly panned to Zhou's face also let the scene of the conversation situation has shifted. At the first time, it was just Zhou's initiative to test, but he did not know Su has long known that her husband has the problem, in the form of a euphemism suggesting that Zhou's tie was the same as her husband's, and that the other partner gave the gift for all the same reasons. Then the camera switched to Zhou's face with a long shot to reflect Zhou's subtle changes in expression, through the conversation with Su see Zhou's character extremely stoic restraint, inner repression but the appearance of decency, after figuring out the truth is the step-by-step, which is very consistent with Zhou's later on Su launched the image of revenge. The last shot of this scene also stays on the cigarette in Zhou's hand, and the cigarette in his hand is not only an important intention of the whole movie, which embodies an extremely typical trait of Zhou: concealment and disguise, and in contrast it also seems that Su's character is more real and more courageous.

After the smoke shot, the director gives a 32-second long shot, which gives very little information, but the director uses such an image to explain the core idea of the whole movie as well as letting the audience savor the image. Zhou road continues to smoke cigarettes, while Su is elegant gait, the two just strolling in the night street, the front of the picture reveals half of the broken car, for the whole picture to add meaning to the sense of mutilation, and in the rear view is a brand new car, like it is ready to start a brand new journey. The background music is using the Spanish soundtrack *You Said You Loved Me*, from the picture to the music, it fits the whole temperament of the movie very well, so called "in the mood for love" is also that period of time that fades away and leaves both beauty and pain in the same place, that period of time that cannot be returned to the lack

of time. This 32-second long shot also echoes the end-of-credits paragraph that reads, “That time has passed, and everything that belonged to that time no longer exists.” [3].

After this conversation, the two began to speculate constantly on how the other’s partner had cheated on them on the way back, and so they simulated their cheating on the road. This also ushers in a very classic piece of camera language design in this movie, where the director uses shadows and real people to differentiate between the two people out of the scene and into the scene, where Su plays Zhou’s wife, while Zhou plays Su’s husband. The director used shadows, clothes or bodies to show that the two men were not themselves in the play at this time, and the two men entered the picture at the same time to show the closeness of the relationship, and it was only from these two men’s faces entering the picture that it indicated that the two men’s faces entering the picture that it indicated that two men were out of the picture [4]. When the actor’s faces are framed within the painting, there is always only half a person in the foreground in the shot of either Su or Zhou, and the director uses the visual incomplete presence to show that the two are estranged from one another; When the camera only frames the torso, Zhou will put his hand on Su’s hand, indicating that this time is role-playing, when the cut back to Su’s face, Su draws away her hand, Zhou was framed out of the picture, Su leaned against the other side of the wall with a cold expression, indicating that at this time, she had been out of the play. Su was out of the scene frequently in this scene, she could not do joy and anger, she would not be as stoic and restrained as Zhou, she would gradually lose herself in the process of role-playing, so she was also out of the scene very quickly every time, trying to restrain her emotions. In this night of temptation and conversation, Su denied that her husband cheated on her first this point angered Zhou, Zhou from here is also precisely the beginning of the revenge plan.

3. Discussion

One of the most iconic scenes in the movie is where Zhou and Su often meet and act in the back, and where Zhou builds his revenge plan—it is an old wall and a row of old buildings. Zhou came to this place just after he was sure that his wife was cheating on him, and it was also the first time that this scene appeared in this part of the movie, and the composition of this scene was extremely skillful, with half of it being a wall and half of it being a building, Zhou standing behind the wall to do thinking, such a composition and then combined with the back of the plot can be understood Zhou behind the wall when it is behind the scenes in the idea, and once he has a story in front of the building then Zhou must be in the play, it is the plot of the novel he came up with. For example, in the movie, Zhou catches a cold in the rain and deliberately calls Bing to “visit”, invites Su to “write a novel” and confesses his love to her. Zhou had already thought of all this: “Get cold” that day Su heard Bing say that Zhou had a cold, and she who had never cooked, specially boiled a big pot of sesame paste for Zhou, and after a few tries in the evening’s conversation between the two under the roof, Zhou succeeds in inviting Su to write a novel with him, which means that Zhou’s revenge plan has already succeeded by a large margin.

While the conversation inviting Su to write a novel together is going on, the director uses an iron fence as the foreground, implicitly expressing that Su is walking step by step into the cage Zhou has set up for his without realizing it. There’s also a subtle camera switch in this conversation under the roof, where the two men separate at the end of the conversation, and here the director uses a motion-still-motion editing technique, according to common sense, should be the first mirror after the third mirror to show a coherent leave action, but the middle of the quiet just to the three mirrors here to add a dazzling visual effect, intended to highlight Su that seems to be calm and cold under the appearance of the heart has long been panicked and agitated.

In Su promised him to write a novel after the two long-term cooperation, the director through a montage of editing techniques to give a few brief shots, Zhou smoking cigarettes crouched in front of the table, the smoke floating in the air in the background also reflects the dark part of his heart, he also still maintains his very decent and elegant image to write. While Su is fully concentrated on the table lying down to write a novel very seriously, at this time the foreground of the camera is still the iron fence, meaning that Su has been bound by this trap very tightly themselves but do not yet realize. They go from writing separately to writing together, and their relationship grows closer in the process. The director frames Su and Zhou with a door frame, which means it is a show for Zhou, while Su gets deeper and deeper into it [5].

Since then, they have a second role-playing, camera scheduling as well as composition and the first time exactly the same, but the difference is that the former is only a virtual play, while the second time has become a reality, they from the investigator into the derailer, which is what Zhou wants to achieve. Zhou wants to further develop his relationship, but Su rejects him out of her own sense of morality. Immediately after the scene, the camera cuts to Zhou himself going to a hotel to open a room. The red curtains represent desire and temptation, while the tiger orchid in the foreground reflects Zhou's state of mind at this time-depressing and lonely. The lighting upon entering the room was also extremely elaborate, the director used yellow-green lighting to emphasize its depressing mood, while the lighting counter used a kind of light source that would often be used on the villain's face, which was more like hitting the shape of a skull, and it also gives this telephoto lens more compression [6]. When Zhou's face turns to the left, most of the face is in heavy shadow, and the dark side of the character's heart is also revealed through this already implicit.

They came to the "stage" set up by Zhou for the last time, and the camera followed him from "behind the curtain" to "in front of the stage", and then stopped at the position where half of the wall was left, emphasize the nature of the stage on the right side of the frame. Through the panoramic view of the camera we can see the stark contrast of emotions between them, Su looks worried while Zhou has a smug smile with the corners of his mouth raised slightly. Su is very struggling in her relationship, not want to break through the moral line to divorce Mr. Chen and be with Zhou, but also not willing to break up with Zhou just like that, on the contrary, Zhou is satisfied with the success of his plan. In their conversation Zhou threatens Su in his words, intentionally or unintentionally-"It is because you won't get a divorce, that is why I am getting a divorce." Another camera language here is after Zhou's confession, Su's hair and shoulders have long been strewn with rain, as if the rain has fallen only on her, and Zhou is step by step inducing her to step into the moral trap, and this camera language also clearly reflects the impact of Zhou's words on Su [7]. After the rain stop it also means that the moment has come for them to part, and the long shot that immediately follows becomes a microcosm of the whole story, with the iron fence still in the foreground, and Su taking a step towards the depths, followed by Zhou appearing in the depths of the scene. This also means that Zhou is no longer the one leading Su into the trap, but rather Su voluntarily walks into it. The repeated shaking of the camera and Zhou's on-again, off-again presence in the painting also account for the emotional pull of them and their tangled inner worlds, then Su's shadow briefly stepped into the painting and went out again, leaving Zhou alone, which also meant that he ended up stepping into the trap he has set with his own hands alone to be imprisoned here for a long time, this mirrors a quote from the beginning of the movie:" It was an embarrassing confrontation, and she kept her head down in shame, giving him a chance to approach. He didn't have the courage to approach. She turned away and walked away." [8].

The film employs a number of novel camera languages and lighting techniques, and that is what makes this movie worth analyzing in depth and watching over and over again.

4. Conclusion

In the Mood for Love has a deeper meaning in almost every shot, and the back-and-forth structure is so consistent that the movie can be viewed just as a rom-com without over-interpreting it, a deeper analysis of the camera language and the color scheme of each sequence reveals that it is more of a suspense film than a romance. Watching how Zhou set up a perfect trap and how it would end up. There are a lot of novel lighting techniques and compositions used in the movie, which are also very worthwhile for those who make subsequent movies to learn form and reference. Wong Kar Wai's using of camera language and sensitivity to the presence of color in the film is also evident to the audience, with the tones throughout the film fitting well, while also mirroring the characters' state of mind at different times, and all of these potential hints enhance the analytical value of the film, it also helps more filmmakers in the future to focus on the camera language and various small details they can use in their films.

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