

Shallow Analysis about Majid Majidi's Film Artistic Style

—Taking *Children of Heaven* as Example

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Abstract

As the leader in Iranian film industry, Majid Majidi attracted the international film forum by the unique folk custom and consciousness of humanity for many years. His movies often concern adults' world from the perspective of children to show mournful but not distressing firm belief. This paper will deeply analyze Majid Majidi's representative—*Children of Heaven*. From the perspective of audio-visual language and religious faith, it dissected the film's artistic style.

Keywords

Children's Perspective, Audio-Visual Language, Religious Faith

1. Introduction

Majid Majidi was born in Tehran, Iran, on April 17, 1959. He is an Iranian film director, writer and producer. In 1992, the director of his first film, "brothers and sisters", was selected to be screened in the "director's fortnight" unit of Cannes International Film Festival. In 1997, the drama "Children of Heaven" was nominated for the 21st Montreal international film festival America award and the 72nd academy award for best foreign language film. In 1999, he won the 23rd Montreal international film festival America award for his drama the color of heaven.

With the "A Separation" gaining Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film Award, Golden Bear and Golden Ball Award of Berlin International Film Festival, Iranian films entered into human eyesight with the mighty posture. It did not have gripping plots or splendid Oscar actors and teams. It seems simple, boring and even stupid, but it applies the simple and real lens language to impress hu-

man's heart deeply. Iran, covering over 1.6 million kilometers, belongs the third countries as well as possess the serious film censorship. Why the Iranian directors could break through under such narrow space and serious system? In the final analysis, it deviates from that the film incessantly shows the folk belief and consciousness of humanity. It uses the simplest method to demonstrate the deepest feeling. And Majid Majidi and his movie *Children of Heaven* are the outstanding ones (Bazinl, 1980).

"Children of Heaven" is directed by Majid Majidi in 1997. This movie played an epoch-making significance to Iranian film forum for it was the first movie to gain Oscar of Best Foreign Language Film Award. As well, it also means that Western language system led by Hollywood started to accept Oriental mirror images. The film narrates the story about two children and a pair of shoes. Ali took back his sister's repaired shoes but lost it when he passed the market. Being afraid of parents' accuse, he came into the agreement with his sister that they wore one pair of shoes which cause many troubles of their life. Moreover, Ali found the notice of city that the third winner of long distance race will award a pair of shoes, which rekindled his desire. Owing to his beg, the teacher finally agree to let him to engage into the competition. During the running, he channeled all efforts to complete the little commitment. Finally, he gained the champion and missed the pair of shoes. Before the camera, he bowed his head down and cries sadly.

Many of his works look at the world through the pure eyes of the children, often in the family background, to discuss the warmth and heavy blood relationship through a simple plot. Starting from the perspective of children and world, they expressed their dense nationalism. This paper will take Majid Majidi's "Children of Heaven" as the example from the perspective of folk custom and consciousness of humanity to make a simple analysis of his artistic style.

2. Simple and Unadorned Audio-Visual Language

Majid Majidi's artistic style of audio-visual language deeply shows in his works. Different with the Hollywood's dazzling special effects and complicated themes, the Iranian movies represented by Majid Majidi always demonstrate the real life situations and original nature scenes. Meanwhile, in the films, they also launched non-professional actor to perform. To some extent, Iranian films are the best example for realism film. In the "Children of Heaven" directed by Majid Majidi, it greatly applied full-length shot methods. Andre Bazin, the creator of full-strength shot, believed that "film shooting object and nature endow it with reliable quality which painting and other create do not contain, "the objective world was shot by automatically rather than human interference. At the beginning of the movie, the director applied a group of full-length shots to demonstrate the real sites about repairing the shoes. It seemed that audiences were personally on the scene which also implies the film's theme. In the films, many running scenes also demonstrated by the full-length shots which also make the

audiences associate the other leader of Iranian film-“Where Is the Friend’s Home?” was directed by Abbas Kiarostami, Ahmed ran on the hillside along the winding river which shot by the full-length shot. Their running not only shows the simple meaning of running but also bears the hope and belief of running. Through the demonstration by the full-length shots, it nearly uses the line drawing to show director’s reflection about Iranian local conditions and customs leaving the long-lost movement with the quite lens language. In addition, there are many scenes about the goldfish in pond as well as the sister and brother blowing bubble which demonstrates the hope and desire. It applied the montage methods to performance. Matching the winding road, lush forest, stagger alleys and other poetic natural landscapes, the perfect combination of realism and freehand add the beautiful feeling in the film.

For the application of film’s sound, Majid Majidi also inherited his consistent unique style to apply lots of lyric sound to show figures’ inner world. For example, in the “Children of Heaven”, the background music when Ali and his sister washed the shoes, the gold fish swimming speed and sprightly rhythm by plucked instruments matched. They prominently stresses they sought joy amidst sorrow and their pure. During Ali engaging into the long distance competition, the director amplified Alie’s gasp sound and matched the chorus, integrating organically the scenes and sound. They thoroughly show Ali’s hardship and difficulty as well as his persistent quality (Fang, 2005).

3. Ubiquitous Religious Faith

Iran is a country with unification of the state and the church so that the religious faith is vital for them. As one of the three methods for human to master the world, religion faith is a psychological requirements as well as a unique cultural imagination. Iran cherish Islam which is the sovereign faith for them. For this point, Majid Majidi’s films and even all Iranian films demonstrated incisively and vividly.

Firstly, Islam “initiate middle courses” thought. This thought asked that people should start from the “middle courses” to endeavor to pursue the fair, justice and harmonious social environment and a kind of free and harmonious living state. In this movie, the sister ran quickly after the school and desired to change the shoes with her brother. For the improper of the shoes, she fell into the gutter way. At that time, as one of the vulnerable groups, she did not be looked on coldly but gained the earnest help. When they found that the shoes lost, they did not get back without thinking. Although they are poor, they had no heart to ask back the shoes from the people who live the harder life than them. This expressed Islam religion—grace and harmony. Secondly, Islam believes Allah and they thinks that the Allah is the sovereign deity and has the right to control human’s life. In the film, the family worked at home. The father wanted the daughter to give him some sugar and the daughter told her father to fetch by himself. At that time, the father spoke justly that “They belong to Masjid and we

just keep them temporarily.” When Ali’s father sang in the house, a strong determined person cried sorrowfully just like a child. From these details, they could be sufficient to demonstrate Iran show extreme faith to Islam and Allah. And then, Islam also advocates “Emphasizing the Past and Present and call that the Muslim not only endeavor to create happy life”, but also channel great efforts to prepare the condition for fate return and the two supply each other. In the film, Ali’s father rode and carried Ali along the winding road. The father and son were so delighted for gaining the payment of labor. The father said, “I will gain much money so that we could buy many things for your mother, such as scooter, cabinet, electric iron and we even could rent a big house ...” These words all demonstrated Iran’s firm and optimistic folk spirit and desire for happy life with the leading of Islam doctrines. Although they did realize these dreams and even suffered from much more difficult troubles, they still remain the optimistic attitude to welcome the baptism of life.

4. Simple and Delicate Linear Narration

The films shot by Majid Majidi always left people feel simple and unaffected on the whole, to a large degree, this is due to his adoption of linear narration in terms of structure of the film. Linear narrative structure is a film narrative structure that is led by logic sequence, which is different from non-linear narration (Huang, 2002). It is a transition surrounding the conflict of drama, and is a common narrative approach in Hollywood films. Linear narrative structure is normally clear and concise, never beats around the bush keeping the cause and effect as well as the logic between the plot chains; Meanwhile it is unfold according to sole linear time, scarcely setting extra paragraphs that cut off the uniform time line. This narrative approach that seems to be dull and singular helps the director to focus their perspective of narration on the characters and incidents in the story, maximally ensuring the uniformity of the movie’s plot and coherence of the time and space. They are neither like commercial films that are detached from real life on its hypothesis and estrangement, nor like “essay film” and “artistic films” which excel by strangeness and alienating effect, “Classic narration” is based on shaping of the personality of characters, taking linear story as the plot, social history as the background, dramatic destiny as the frame, the mainstream emotions of truthfulness, kindness and beautifulness as the theme, stressing the cause of narration, transforming the whole narrative process through cause and effect into an organic and unassailable entirety. Engage the audience into the film with full attention through audio and visual effect that is real to life so as to finish the characters’ consistent and unified pursuit in the story.

The linear narrative sequence in the films of Majid Majidi started with a crisis, or a crisis emotion in the mind of the characters of the film. The plot of the story thus unfolds till the crisis is solved. Similar to the singular narrative structure, the story is composed of four parts of beginning, development, climax and end-

ing. For instance, the film “Stepfathershot” by Majid Majidi is a classical case of linear narration. The story fans out the points to an area, and the contractions also grow in size, and develops progressively, while the contradictions are also sharper and sharper till the key point. In the evolution of the story, instead of displaying by direct narration, it tells the story in twists and turns, in good control, and evolves gradually. The story begins with Muluola a boy working in town, who picked out gifts for his mother and sisters, returns home joyously while finding that his mother had been remarried, an emotion of crisis was born in him, drawing his remarried mother and sister out of the mud of remarriage. Two contradictory threads develop from the story, the main thread is the protest and hostility between Muluola and his stepfather, while the other line is the fury and dissatisfaction of the biological mother. The author interviewed by the two thread began to earn his living, he renovated the old house with his friends, hoping that his mother and sister can live in their former house again., so as to solve all the crises and difficulties. Later on Muluola was ill and was taken home by his mother for delicate caring. By accident he stole the gun of his stepfather, a policeman, and decided to make his living with his friends, saving his mother and sisters with success and fame. The stepfather woke up and found out, in surprise and anger, he took the road of looking for his son and gun. To this point, the movie reached a climax, the conflict between Muluola and his father also turned white-hot and anxious. In the double-folded seeking, Muluola kept escaping and being found by his stepfather, the two parties kept quarreling and abusing each other in anger, the motorcycle, as the only traffic vehicle broken down on the road by accident, In the end, two people walked with difficulty in the desert, and fell to ground due to lack of water for a long time. While Muluola realized his own absurdity and naivety, so he dragged his dying stepfather out of the desert.

The director shows an emotional road in the movie from the the protest of a remarried mother to the break of bias, completing psychological rite of becoming adults, finally accepting the kinship that transcends blood tie l. The linear narration in other movies is as clear-cut ad this film, without a trace of sloven or beating around the bush. Take “pursuit” as the main thread, connecting the cause and effect and the plot of the story while telling the story with a simple and unaffected language including the beginning, development, climax and ending. The linear narrative structure of the director is different from the delicate design of Spielberg and the deliberate design of Akira kurosawa in oriental movies, the director peels off and gives up the complex and wired narrative structure, telling a most authentic story in the most simplistic way, but leading to the deepest emotion.

5. The Skills of Blank Space That Is Intriguing

In his film, the narrator is not an omnipotent God, he is also a person in doubt himself. The director uses open ending while gives up the happy ending in the

style of Hollywood, enforcing his own consciousness and feelings on the audience. This is not only due to the respect to the aesthetic and comprehension capacity, but also enables the audience to fully use their own imagination to fill in the ending that is full of strong effect of alienation, inspiring the viewers to realize that the pursuit of the characters is just as unending as in real life, while the open ending is also an outstanding artistic method used by Italian new realistic films. Zavattini once said: "The creation of films should not leave the audience with the solution to problems." Therefore in the ending of the film "The Man Who Stole the Bicycle", the hero and his son walks into the crowd, this open ending that leaves no answer urges the audience to think and consider while guides the audience on reading and creating the text of the movie once again.

The director designs the ending as one that harbors unique meaning, except for placing his own beautiful expectation for the characters in the drama, contains the thinking and consideration on the road of exploration. In the end of the film, "Baduk", the director did not indicate whether Jaffa can find his sister after crossing the ocean, but in the boy's eyes that have no hesitation and doubt, it can be inferred that in a life harboring dangers and crises, a persistent audacious and steadiness are needed, even if it is a long road that has no answers. The film "Baron" ends with the subjective view of Latif, whose beloved Afghan girl left her last steady and lonely footprints on the complex and dark land of Iran. It is unknown to the director and the audience whether the family of Baron could return safely, how long it will take ethnic equality and peaceful road in the country to come. But the epitome of the refugees of Iran, the family of Baron and the selfless and dedicated Iran teenager who faced life with strong will and positiveness are just as steadfast and long-lasting as the footprints deeply printed in the muddy soil. While the open-ending of the director and the meaning of the blank space reached their top in the movie "The Color of Heaven", the realistic film ends with the director's idealistic vision. The commanding lens gazes at the father and son on the beach who suffered from disasters, and finally ended on the mildly rough hands of Mohammad. The small hands trembled slightly reflected by the deliberate shadow and light, stirring the mind of everyone who cared. The heaven covered with kinship that the director realized and pursued with heart became real in the last moment, the beautiful trust offered by the director through the open-ending, expands and lifts up the movie like reincarnated phoenix, symbolizing the end and another beginning of the beautiful road of pursuit by Mohammad, resonating endlessly with the melodious music that is distinctive with ethnic style (Xing, 2003).

In the choice of subject matter, Majid Majidi avoided all the taboos that might conflict with censorship, including politics, society and religion. The film reflects the innocent and considerate heart of brother and sister through a pair of tiny shoes, which makes us feel the warmth in the world of brother and sister.

Majid Majidi's films and Abbas's films are different styles, He is not as ob-

scure as Abbas, and he does not blindly pursue realistic records, but he pays much attention to storyline, adept at incitement and a dramatic climax.

6. Conclusion

On the whole, his films are full of strong personal styles: First, the full use of full-length shots; Second, the presentation of children's perspective; Third, the expression of realism.

Someone said that without tasting the lowest people's living state of country, they could not mean the real realism. Thus, Majid Majidi had done. He applied his simple and unique view, plain and even coarse the method to narrate the most real and plain angle of the remote and mysterious Islam country. With huge folk cohesion, the deficiency of material would not shake the Iran firm faith. In the end of the film, just like the free goldfish in the pond, the ebullient scenes left lots of space to imagine. Majid Majidi integrated the folk custom and consciousness of humanity into the film, moving but not affection. The beauty of humanity was demonstrated incisively and vividly. From the strict significance, in this film, traditional bad guys are absent. Everyone inherits his principle, even the dean of students. In the film, all show the poverty, hardship but also the warm and hope. Maybe it also is the great skill of Majid Majidi or Iranian movies—poor but not sad and mournful but not distressing. Sometimes, adults world may be too numerous and complicated. Returning to children's world may be able to gain the pure emotion and most sincere faith. And the sister and brother always will run on the road of belief.

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