

On the Media Difference and Media Resemblance from Drama to Film in “Mr. Donkey”

Siyuan Xing*

Qingdao middle school, Qingdao, Shandong Province 266111, China

xingsiyuan2021@163.com

**corresponding author*

Keywords: Mr. Donkey, drama, film, media.

Abstract: Drama and film have a lot of differences in media expression. The differences in the treatment of contradictions, the treatment of plots and the construction of characters between the film "Mr. Donkey" and the drama "Mr. Donkey" can reflect the media differences between the drama and the film. First, drama emphasizes the stage, while film emphasizes the sense of reality. Second, the conflict of drama is concentrated, while the conflict of film is progressive. Third, drama is about integrity, while film is about focus and detail. Fourthly, the climax of drama often includes the dramatic actions of characters, while the climax of film can be interpreted through audio-visual language.

1. Introduction

As visual and audio arts, drama and movie are very close to each other. But such closeness may turn out to be a restriction when a play is to be adapted to screen.

From the view of the "cross-media" theory, the film narration is no longer pure, strict or traditional, which not only contains but also crosses film-television, that is, comprising a lot of media such as screen images and mobile telephone films (including computer or Internet films) as well as display images. [1] Either the film image or the screen image or the display image has its own emphasis. This fact indicates the transformation of the film narrative carrier and the differentiation of the film narrative pattern. Also it predicates that the contemporary film narration is going from singularity to multiplicity, from simplicity to complexity, thus gradually forming a new cultural situation, in which the tendency of multiple narrative co-existing and the competition of multiple administrative levels are mutually complementary.

The emergence and development of narrative forms is not self-regulated, but under the interactive influence of the dual factors: media and genres. From ancient to modern times, images have been gradually internalized as an indispensable means of narrative reconfiguration. [2] As various experiments exhaust the possibilities of paper-based media narrative, they also make narrative forms divorced from the contents of stories, leading to forms outweighing stories.

2. Media Resemblance: the common dramatic conflict of "Mr. Donkey" between the drama version and the film version

First of all, dramatic conflict is a crucial part of a dramatic work. This is because that dramatic conflict plays an important role in many aspects. [3] Firstly, the different reactions of the characters in the fierce contradiction highlight their distinctive characters; Secondly, the spiritual core of the work may also be buried in the climax of the plot; Thirdly, the audience's emotions are highly aroused in the dramatic conflict, so that their senses are stimulated by the ups and downs of the plot, rather than tedious and lengthy feelings. Therefore, a work without dramatic conflict is a failure. [4] The importance of dramatic conflict is also above all kinds of art forms, whether it is film or drama, they must leave a place for it.

When we observe the techniques used by different art forms in dealing with climax paragraphs, it is not difficult to find that the characteristics of dramatic conflicts are similar: sharp and intense, tense progress, twists and turns. At the same time, the path to achieve its full effect has something in common. The difference between the movie version and the drama version of "Mr. Donkey" in dealing with the climax of the wedding of the coppersmith's daughter-in-law is an example. [5] At the beginning of the wedding, there is a background music of festivity. [6] At this time, the rhythm is smooth and slow. Mr. Ross wears a white dress to read the oath as the wedding witness. The whole solemn scene is more and more ridiculous. When the oath is read out, the coppersmith wants to kiss Sun Jia in the play, and the word "legal husband and wife" in the movie is still not exported, the roar of coppersmith's daughter-in-law breaks the warm picture. The ensuing chaos in film and drama scenes are same. It starts with the coppersmith's daughter-in-law snatching the pistol threatened by the Commissioner and making a gunshot, and ends with Mr. Ross standing in the middle of the stage (a close-up is given in the movie) sighing "incriminating, incriminating China". During the chaotic and noisy chase scene, the important details are laid in a leisurely manner: Yiman picks up the pistol and takes it away. So far, this exciting passage not only interprets the absurd comedy label of "Mr. Donkey" incisively and vividly, but also plays the role of dramatic conflict in promoting plot, driving emotion and connotation theme.

Another place where the film and drama are highly similar in dealing with the plot is the ending. [7] The headmaster, Zhou Tienan and Pei Kuishan held a meeting together in the classroom. They folded their hands together and called out the slogan representing the original intention of education at the beginning of the plot. Then three people couldn't help laughing wildly. The duration was just when the audience wanted to worry about their neurotic performance. A sharp gunshot sound directly shattered the audience's worries and turned their worry into deep sorrow. [8] This rhythm is so skillful that that the rhythm design of the drama is almost unchanged in the film. The only difference is that, several leading actors look at the backstage when they hear the gunfire in the play, and then the stage lights up. I think the backstage of the stage is like a natural space for the audience to imagine. In the film version, the shooting is followed by the picture of Yiman's boudoir. The pink tone of the picture, accompanied by Yiman's singing, is delicate and warm, which gives people a contrast sense of desolation.

3. Media dissimilarity: the transformation of film to drama under the support of audio-visual language

3.1. Their respective magic power: film's audio-visual cooperation of editing and drama's interest of interaction

It has been mentioned in the analysis of the commonality, the film uses the collocation of sound and picture and the movement of lens to add a more distinctive contrast element to the tragic ending of the drama. This is determined by the different limitations and advantages of these two art forms.

First of all, the film can be shot for many times, and the final work can be presented through editing and post effects. The drama is different. With the curtain opening, the story must advance in linear time to avoid the audience's ambiguity or confusion. Moreover, the actors have no chance to make a comeback. They can only do their best to show the best mental outlook to the audience. In the film version and the drama version, the creators strive to be concise and be clear to explain the background interestingly or beautifully at the beginning of the story. We can clearly see the differences brought by different artistic forms.

At the beginning of the film, the ingenious post editing makes the sound of phonograph tunes and a series of iconic pictures well matched. The pictures of cattle and sheep, rolling sand in wind, old basketball stands and flagpoles, are displayed in front of the audience with a regular rhythm. At this time, the perfect combination of audio-visual language, sound and smooth lens switching complement each other, which brings the audience into the situation, and then give the audience a comfortable audio-visual experience, at the same time, unconsciously explain the background of the story. [9]

The beginning of the drama version is quite different from it. It is also intended to show the drought and water shortage in the place where the story happened. Zhou Tienan yell to the audience: Is there any water? Do you have water? Then he runs off the stage and takes a bottle of water from the audience. This interactive design makes perfect use of the advantage of drama performance: the distance between the actor and the audience. Different from film which has a screen, the actors of drama never restrain themselves. This interaction not only gives the audience an important signal: lack of water, but also effectively enlivens the atmosphere and arouses the audience's watching enthusiasm. Additionally, it depicts Zhou Tienan as a lively and restless boy. Relatively speaking, unlike movies which are devoted to aesthetic feeling, drama is not implicit, is more straightforward, popular and interesting.

3.2. Film's focusing and drama's integrity

Lens is the carrier of film narrative, and focal length change is a common means to highlight the plot. I think the most significant difference between film and drama is their handling of details. No matter how close the distance between seats and stage is, the audience can not capture every detail of the actors. On the screen where the details can be magnified infinitely, the development of the plot, the relationship between the characters, the expression of thoughts and emotions can be vividly displayed in front of the audience through countless attentive focal length, scene and tone designs. [10]

Take a simple and typical example. In the film version of "Mr. Donkey", Pei Kuishan, who has experienced emotional frustration, puts all the spiritual support of staying in the mountainous areas to help develop rural education on the money. Pei Kuishan sits in the front row at the wedding of Sun Jia and the coppersmith. The camera first gives Pei Kuishan a close-up shot on his sight when Sun Jia walks across the red carpet. As his vision gradually turns positive, Pei Kuishan's face and a stack of cash just don't block each other due to the special layout of the picture. At this time, Pei

Kuishan looks at the gift money with a smile, and the focus moves forward from Pei Kuishan's smile to the stack of gift money. So far, the director uses a zoom and a layout in a short two seconds of the lens to accurately outline Pei Kuishan's greedy image.

Different from the details of the film, the overall picture sense of the drama pays more attention to harmony and impact. Harmony is the goal of stage scheduling. Taking a laughing point in the tension plot designed by the creator in the drama version as an example, when the wife of the coppersmith came to make trouble, in order to prevaricate her, four actors lined up a wall between the wife of the coppersmith and the coppersmith. When the coppersmith's wife moves, the wall moves, just like the four little swans. Until the coppersmith's wife came off the stage, the four actors who stayed on the stage just formed a group sculpture. At this time, the scene is very funny to win the audience's smile. It deeply reflects the strong visual impact of drama as an art form and its integrity.

3.3. Film's foreshadowing

A movie can be watched repeatedly at any time, but a play is not. We can always get different feelings after the second and third watching. It can be attributed to more mature mental and understanding ability and more details discovered and tasted by us which had been buried in the film and had not been excavated before.

In the film version of "Mr. Donkey", when the farce is over, Jiajia goes to the revolutionary base to take refuge with her elder brother. At this time, the director gives a shot with no practical meaning to Zhou Tienan: he stands at the door playing with a leaf, a gust of wind blows over to roll up the loess, which suddenly shows a desolate feeling. When I saw this film after the second time, I found that Zhou Tienan's position at this time is at the edge of the screen rather than the center of the position. The layout of this arrangement can reveal the stone wall behind him, which is written with the big word "to learn to be a man". This may be a casual design of the director, but it implies a strong irony. All kinds of details are like small treasures in the film, which are left to the interested viewers to discover. Therefore, ingenious details serve for emotion or theme, and a good movie should not be lack of details.

4. Differences in performance management: nature and exaggeration

As mentioned above, the difference between film and drama makes the requirements for actors of the two art forms far different. Drama actors are committed to putting full enthusiasm into every performance, in order to achieve perfect, unified and consistent performance effect. On the contrary, movie actors do not need a loud voice and exaggerated body movements. What they want to do is to perform in front of the camera rather than the audience. At this time, the sense of faith is more important.

4.1. Close-up and Actor expression in film

Because of the capture of the lens, it naturally enlarges every detail that the actor reveals intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, the pursuit of film performance is real, natural and close to life. Ren Suxi, who plays Zhang Yiman, has received numerous praises for her brilliant acting skills. In another movie "Nobody", Ren Suxi plays a disabled person who is paralyzed and can only move her head. During the whole process of the movie, she sits in a wheelchair without anybody movements to help her performance.

Ren Suxi conquered the audience only with her facial expression, precisely because her performance perfectly matched the performance characteristics needed by the film: authenticity and nature. The so-called "eyes and brows convey feelings", Ren Suxi has achieved with subtle

expression and manner to shape the image of a disabled person who is world-weary. This kind of performance style is unimaginable on the stage of drama.

4.2. Rich body language in drama

I think that one of the most beautiful and powerful scenes in the drama "Mr. Donkey" is the demonization of the coppersmith. The foreground is all dark, and a beam of spotlight from the high platform behind hits the coppersmith. The coppersmith leaned towards the audience and slowly stepped his head into the bucket. After a few seconds of silence, he suddenly got up. The water splashed, his hair was dishevelled, his teeth were flailing, and he was silhouetted by the warm light. It was exciting in his heartbreaking cry.

There are no lines in this plot, but exaggerated body movements play a big role. The film can achieve artistic conception through light and shadow, shading and even filter. In the theater, lights of different colors, intensities and ranges are used to render the mood of the characters. When the body movements are well coordinated with the stage design, the audience can feel a strong emotional resonance. Compared with the movie, no screen means no turning back. The actor's performance has a "fight to the death" momentum. The exaggerated expression is not abrupt here, and becomes the most brilliant place of the drama.

Some actors and some audience are dedicated to the stage play. I think that part of the reason is that drama play is more simple, more primitive and has a sense of uncertainty. When performing, actors have become masters of the play, and the enthusiastic audience has also been tense heartstrings with the body left in the seat and the spirit has been willing to be actors into their world.

5. Film's perfection and transcendence of the drama

5.1. Complete ending

As mentioned above, I think the film version of "Mr. Donkey" is more warm and delicate than the drama version. This feature can also be reflected in the relationship between Zhou Tienan and Jiajia. The drama version has designed such a simple plot: Zhou Tienan seizes the opportunity and boldly embraces Jiajia, Jiajia is scared at first, and then implicitly expresses her favor for Tienan. Again, its . Film version also uses more complete and warm body language to show their relationship. At the beginning of the film, Tienan gives Jiajia a bouncy ball in pursuit of her. Later, the two people's funny plot appears. At the end of the movie, Yiman committed suicide. All of them became Walking Dead, and the audience's heart has been filled with loss. At this time, Jiajia was sitting at the driving bike in the mountains. When she opened the box, the wheels were hit by gravel. The colorful bouncy balls rolled down the valley. It suddenly occurred to me that Zhou Tienan once told Jiajia that this kind of ball was "high-tech and comes from American astronauts.". Ridiculous lies now appear more naive and green. The kickback of this plot not only echoes the structure from the beginning to the end, but also makes the audience feel a trace of precious warmth in the ruins of the collapse of the vision of truth, goodness and beauty.

5.2. Brilliant image

In the movie, Yiman cut off a wisp of her hair and gives it to the coppersmith when he left. Later, after the coppersmith's temperament changes greatly, he asked the headmaster to cut off Yiman's beautiful hair.

In my opinion, the choice of "hair" and following intense conflict are the breakthrough of the film version. First of all, the plot the headmaster cut Yiman's hair utilizes the classic Lyric montage of film creation to show Yiman's memories and imagination: in the past, four people danced in pairs

on the playground, after the new school uniform was made, all of them took a group photo. The picture is covered with a warm color filter, and matched with the music of the old gramophone. Relying on the unique, free but coherent narrative technique, the film shows the emotional effect beyond the plot through the lens combination.

Secondly, as a feature of female image, hair fits the role of Zhang Yiman better than pen. Because of the coppersmith's obsession, Yiman quickly decided to cut off a wisp of her hair and give it to him, which clearly expressed the character's kindness and simplicity and pursuit of freedom. Later, when Yiman's long hair was cut off, the destruction of a woman's proud is the most direct reason why she lost her mind and became a madman. After being forced to have her hair cut, Yiman's various behaviors revealed that she yearned for sincere love from the bottom of her heart. At the wedding, Yiman came in with wild flowers with her head wrapped, finally fell on the ground to protect her flowers from being hurt. But her flowers were crushed by people. Those poor flowers symbolize Zhang Yiman herself—a lively, beautiful but withered early woman.

6. Conclusions

The transformation from drama IP to film has become a hot trend phenomenon in China's film industry. "Drama IP films" are not always loved by the audience, and the film market is not always in a good state. At the same time, "Drama IP Movie" needs us to fully understand and recognize, especially the cross-media marketing strategy content between drama and film. The exploration of "drama IP film" has become one of the propositions of Chinese film industrialization. It is self-evident that the commercialization strategy of "Drama IP Film" has made contributions to the maturity and development of Chinese film art in a specific period, and will also bring more enlightenment to the marketing strategy of Chinese film market.

References

- [1] Li Jiuru. *Donkey Getting Water: Historical Allegory, Enlightenment Posture and "Carving the Curious" Tragedy* [J]. *Film Art*, 2017(01):66-70.
- [2] Cai Ping. *Narrative Difference from Stage to Screen -- On the Film Adaptation of Drama Donkey for Water and Hello Madman* [J]. *Sichuan Drama*, 2017(07):94-96.
- [3] Wu Hongrui. *Visual Language Analysis of Donkey Getting Water* [J]. *Peony*, 2020(16):152-153.
- [4] Yuan Wen Tai. *Changes of "Controversy" -- Inside and Outside the Text of Donkey Getting Water* [J]. *Contemporary Film*, 2016(12):32-34+97.
- [5] Zhu Ru. *The Donkey Got Water: A New Try to Breakthrough the Domestic Satirical Comedy* [J]. *Film Review*, 2016(23):32-34.
- [6] Liu Fang. *On the Breakthrough of Chinese Comedy Films from Donkey to Water* [J]. *Journal of Writing and Editing*, 2016(06):146-147.
- [7] Chang Yanyi. *Analysis of the IP Era of Drama from the Perspective of "Happy Mahua" Donkey Getting Water* [J]. *Drama House*, 2017(07):131.
- [8] Han Yinjie. *Analysis of Narrative Space in the Film Mr. Donkey* [J]. *Journal of Wuhan Metallurgical Management Cadre Institute*, 2017, 27(02):94-96.
- [9] Tao Zi. *Donkey Getting Water Integrates Absurdity into Realism* [J]. *Chinese Drama*, 2012(11):52-53.
- [10] Jiang Jinjin. *Is a Drama and a Film -- A Brief Discussion on the Film Mr. Donkey* [J]. *House of Drama*, 2017(17):107.