Research on the Mechanism of Film Communication During the Cultural Revolution

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Abstract—**The current discussion of films in the "cultural revolution" period usually starts from the aspect of art, and combines the symbolic interpretation of the objects and means of expression with the extreme political environment in the special period to finally completing the dialysis of political metaphors. This paper tries to take the political environment as the background and highlight the "film communication", which is less involved in the field of film research at present. Through the investigation of special individuals and individual cases, the paper analyzes the film phenomenon in that special period.**

Keywords—film communication; "Cultural Revolution" film; mathematical model; "model" film

I. INTRODUCTION

The pattern of film communication in the period of "Cultural Revolution" was developed on the basis of inheriting the pattern of film communication in the period of "seventeen years". Many characteristics of film communication in the period of Cultural Revolution are the result of "historical accumulation" and "realistic conditions". Those who try to summarize the films of the period by looking at the current discussion on the history of Chinese cinema tend to describe it with the words "stagnation", "regression", "chaos", "scenery shot" and "imprison", etc., which also explains from one aspect how the characteristics of film communication in the period of "Cultural Revolution" reflects the situation of film development at that time.

II. GUARANTEE OF PRECISE CONNOTATION — ESTABLISHING UNIFIED CODING PRINCIPLES

A. The Principle of "Three Emphasis"

The application of the principle of "three emphasis" in the film creation during the "Cultural Revolution" is not only represented in how to shape characters, especially heroes, but also in a series of means of expression in the process of characterization, such as clothing, lighting, scenery and camera scheduling. This series of instructions delivering the principle is a summary of the creation experience of the revolutionary modern Peking Opera model opera, but it was highlighted as the only criterion for the shooting of "model" film by Jiang Qing. Since the "three emphasis" principle

lacks systematic and concrete operability as a theoretical basis, it is often found in a large number of related literature materials that Jiang Qing would personally give instructions on the shooting of "model opera" films. Some scholars believe that the reference system of Jiang Qing's instruction originates from two different aspects, "traditional Chinese dramas on the one hand, and world films in the 1960s and 1970s on the other." [1] If these instructions are looked at closely, they cover almost every aspect of film production. Since many of Jiang Qing's instructions are based on off-the-cuff opinions, some people might consider them "petty opinions". [2] Taking color as an example, the application of color in films under the principle of "three emphasis" is also forcibly incorporated into this coding rule. Color is marked by class attribute, that is, "all positive characters must use warm color, red and every negative character must use cool color like blue or gray. Such rules must be used no matter under what specific circumstances and light sources." [3] As a result, in the later shooting practice, these rules became axioms in the minds of the film crew. Whenever a villain is captured, the camera will rise and cast the character down with cold light; and whenever a heroic figure sets up, the camera will lower its position, lift him up and warm him up. [4] Since many of Jiang Qing's opinions on the film were strongly personal, it seemed bizarre when they evolved into instructions. A typical example of this in terms of the use of color in filming is "greening". According to Jiang Qing, only through "greening" can the whole picture show the gradation and can foil the vigorous revolutionary outlook of the heroes. In the shooting of every "model opera" film, accusations for not being "green" enough from Jiang Qing can often be heard. She once said to the film crew of The Red Lantern, "I did everything possible to arrange a little green color for you, but you just failed to apply it. I matched some pieces of green patches on the broken door curtain, but you didn't

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[1]   Xu Feng. Language system of the film "Cultural Revolution" [C] Lu Hongshi, Ed. Chinese film: description and interpretation. China Film Press, 2002, pp. 367

[2]   See: Lin Yingzhi, narrative and rhetoric of model opera films [C], Yang Yuanying, Ed. History of Chinese film major: film culture volume, China Film Press, 1st edition, March 2006, page 383.

[3]   He Yujie. On the use of color in films [J]. Art film, no.5, 1979, p. 81.

[4]   Zhai Jiannong. The red past: Chinese films from 1966 to 1976 [M]. Taihai Hublishing House, 2001, p. 107.

catch the color..." [5] So when the Peking Opera Red Detachment of Women was shot, in order to emphasize the green color, the film crew added green ground in the first, second, fourth and sixth scenes specially. [6] And the film Sparkling Red Star that was considered as "treasure", "What a beautiful picture!", "How lyrical is it!" by Jiang Qing should also due its favor from Jiang Qing to the efforts of the whole crew to "revivify the green correctly" by positioning green as the color motif of the whole film. [7] The same "instructions", such as the general techniques of expression in film creation like "low-density exposure method" distinguishing the tone level of the film and then distinguish the positive and negative characters, and the "catchlights" highlighting the glorious image of the hero, etc. became a yardstick to measure the quality of the film and even a yardstick to determine the political nature of the film. Thus film crews had to think hard about it and use it. Therefore, the "three emphasis" principle and other creation rules derived from it, together with a series of instructions from Jiang Qing, formed the basic principles of film coding in this period. Although there are a lot of personal interests of Jiang Qing in this system, the core of all these "instructions" and "principles" revolves around "how to highlight positive characters and heroes".

B. "Restoring the Stage" and "Dramatizing the Stage"

The principle of "restoring the stage" and making it "above the stage" can be regarded as a bridge transferring Jiang Qing's instructions from the creation of revolutionary modern Peking Opera model operas to the creation of "model" films. Jiang Qing believed that "model opera" was "the cutting-edge, example and direction", and "our revolutionary model opera" should be spread to all corners of the country through various ways, mainly through filming." [8] If it can be thought like this: In essence, Jiang Qing did not intend to make any film creation, but used the extensive influence of the film to effectively spread her instructions and the political discourse behind the instructions. Then, the "model" film would have to follow the "the cutting-edge, example and direction" that had been set up on the stage. "Restoring the stage mainly means faithfully restoring the revolutionary spirit of the model operas, the revolutionary passion of the heroes, and the revolutionary atmosphere of the stage performances and the remarkable achievements of

the model operas in artistic creation." [9] Xie Tieyi, a director who has made several "model" films, recalls, "Because of the lesson of 'keeping its shape' in Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy, the art designer even carefully measured the coconut trees in The Red Detachment of Women and even an extra centimeter must be sawed off at once." [10] The instruction "full of enthusiasm and doing everything possible to shape the proletarian hero model" in the creation of revolutionary modern Peking Opera model opera was also followed in the creation of "model" films. [11] "Dramatizing the stage" requires the use of film arts to further shape and highlight the proletarian hero image, to make up for the limitations of stage performance conditions, and to re-create. [12] In this way, the "model" film has gone beyond the scope of simple stage documentary and become a second creation of the original dramatic art by means of film art. "Restoring the stage" is the basis and purpose, and "dramatizing the stage" is the way to achieve "restoring the stage".

In order to ensure that the template could be copied uniformly, the coding uniformity must be guaranteed first. In order to ensure the uniformity of coding, Jiang Qing did work in the following aspects: first, the combination and deployment of personnel. The shooting members of the "model" film are composed of two parts: one is a "shooting team" composed of professional film shooting personnel, and the director is usually those "artistically acceptable", "no fault in politics" personnel "approved" by Jiang Qing, such as Cheng Yin and Xie Tieli. The other part is the "model troupe", mainly responsible for performances. Most of them had rich stage performance experience in "model operas", and they were the "lineal troops" cultivated by Jiang Qing in the process of "modern Peking Opera revolution".

In addition, Jiang Qing would lead the film's main cast and crew to observe and discuss the original or Chinese and foreign classic films before shooting to find inspiration from them. The western films that were viewed and emulated were called "internal films" or "internal reference films". The observation and emulation of "internal reference film" played two roles for the cast and crew at that time. The first was to "perceive with heart" and to grasp the intention and

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5   Gu Baozi. The red stage of telling the truth [M], Guizhou People's Publishing House, 2012, page 164.

6   Zhai Jiannong. The red past: Chinese films from 1966 to 1976 [M]. Taihai Hublishing House, 2001, p. 105.

7   The creation group and film crew of Sparkling Red Star in August First Film Studio. "Winning glory for the proletariat on the silver screen — some creation experiences on the Sparkling Red Star" [C], originally published in the 12th issue of the Red Flag in 1974, quoted from "the Sparkling Red Star commentary collection", Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1975.

8   "Jiang Qing's speech at the symposium on literature and art in Beijing (excerpt) (9, 12 November 1967)" [C]. Selected speeches of comrade Jiang Qing, People's Publishing House, 1968. Research materials on Chinese films, 1949-1979, vol. 2. Wu Di (Qi Zhi) Ed. Culture and Art Publishing House, 2006, page 156.

9   The film crew of Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy in Beijing Film Studio. "Restoring the stage and dramatizing the stage — This is how we bring the modern revolutionary Peking Opera Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy to the screen" [C], originally published in the 3th issue of the Red Flag in 1971, quoted from Restoring the stage and dramatizing the stage: commentary on revolutionary model operas, no. 1, People's Literature Publishing House, 1976, page 2.

10   Li Duoyu. One hundred years of Chinese cinema: the first edition (1905-1976) [M]. China Radio Film & TV Press, 2005, page 373.

11   Chu Lan. "Ten years of revolutionary Peking Opera" [C], The Red Flag, 1974, no.7, reproduced from "commentary on revolutionary model operas", Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1976, page 17.

12   The film crew of Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy in Beijing Film Studio. "Restoring the stage and dramatizing the stage — This is how we bring the modern revolutionary Peking Opera Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy to the screen" [C], originally published in the 3th issue of the Red Flag in 1971, quoted from Restoring the stage and dramatizing the stage: commentary on revolutionary model operas, no. 1, People's Literature Publishing House, 1976, page 2.

specific form of Jiang Qing's instructions; the second was to "widen horizon", laying a foundation for the film development in the new era after the end of the "Cultural Revolution", thus some people regard the "internal reference film" as an "unlocked door" to the developing films of the world. According to Li Wenhua's recollection, Jiang Qing once said, "I'm sure you can do a good job. I'll show you some American films by myself before shooting. We do not learn the content and ideas of these American films; we mainly learn its skills and techniques. For example modeling, lamplight, scene dispatch, scene, all can be used for our proletarian films." She also concluded, "We must also gather some strength and make the good skills of others for our own use." [13]Here the first role needs to be analyzed, that is, how Jiang Qing passed her instructions to the film crew through the observation of "internal films". This kind of "observation" would be labeled as "business observation", which included not only repeated watching, but also the communication after watching. This kind of communication was carried out in the way of "Jiang Qing talks" and "creators' talks". Most of the films watched were famous Chinese and foreign films, such as: Women Generals of the Yang Family, The Magic Box, Knife in the Water, Jane Eyre, The Red Shoes and Heart of Stone and so on. [14]Watching the film is a way of transmitting instructions through audio-visual stimuli, and the subsequent communication was a kind of "domestication", that was, Jiang Qing's "release" and "explanation" of these instructions. Due to the difference in political status, the top-down "domestication" effect would lead to the imperceptibly obedience of these actors and actresses in their future creation, so as to ensure the actual effect of Jiang Qing's instructions. From another perspective, the film of "cultural revolution" had become "a testing ground for Jiang Qing's prescriptive practice of her own sense of film language established in western films of the same period". [15]

Therefore, Jiang Qing ensured the unified implementation of her instructions as far as possible through the above several measures.

III. GUARANTEE OF ACCURATE TRANSMISSION — SUPPORTING THE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

After establishing the coding principles, the next thing to consider was how to propagate the code. The codes developed in the coding stage must rely on certain technical means, because the film has emerged as a technology since its birth. The technical means involved in the transferring phase of film transmission actually include two aspects: tools and techniques, namely, "what are used for codes transmission" and "how to use these tools".

Sometimes when it came to the development of film technology, Jiang Qing's opinions were more in line with the special situation of film. For example, on June 28, 1969, in the Great Hall of the People, the relevant leaders of the central committee heard a report by the film equipment investigation group, and instructed the national defense industry office to be responsible for the construction of film factories and printing plants in the third-tier areas. At the meeting, Jiang Qing pointed out that "the film factories and printing plants should be built in the three-line areas, and we are to make small and exquisite products." "The equipment we produce by our own have to be lighter than that produced by current film factories." [16] The so-called "small and exquisite", "portable" equipment by Jiang Qing, in fact, is the technology contributing to the wide dissemination of the films. This was closely related to the reality at that time. Due to the polarization of geographical environment and economic layout, as well as the severe international political environment, the status of "workers, peasants and soldiers" as the main body of national strategic construction of "independence and self-reliance" had spread from the political field to the art field, and gradually became the main object of film service and performance. [17]Therefore, there must be a kind of technology to support the film to go deep into the masses of "workers, peasants and soldiers". It was in this context that films of the "8.75 mm" were on the agenda. It is a more portable film projection system with Chinese characteristics. Only the following two aspects of example are cited to illustrate how this film technology was adapted to the special needs of film transmission in China at that time. First of all, in terms of cost saving, in the case of the same length, the 8.75 mm film can copy 5 times the length of that of the 35 mm film. Secondly, in terms of the portability, since the films were mobile screenings for the grassroots, the lens focal length was designed short. Its lens length is one half to one third of 16 mm film projection lens, and one third to one quarter of 35 mm film projection lens. In addition to the screen and the tripod, the full display device is only 15 kilograms. [18]To summarize briefly, the 8.75 mm film system has two characteristics of convenience and cheapness, which made it popular in the film communication during the "Cultural Revolution" period. And what played a decisive role in the popularization and application of this set of film system is known as the "June 28" meeting of the national film work collaboration conference. At the meeting, the policy of developing the 75-millimeter film equipment under the premise of ensuring quality was established. [19]Around

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[13]   Li Wenhua. Watching American movies with Jiang Qing [J], Southern Weekly, June 4, 2009.

[14]   Fu Xiaohong. A life of two steps: an oral record of Xie Tieyan [M]. China Film Press, 2005, page 118

[15]   Xu Feng. The language system of the "Cultural Revolution" film [C]. Chinese cinema: description and interpretation. Edited by Lu Hongshi. China Film Press, 2002, page 370.

[16]   Feng Dalin, Zhou Enlai's concern about the site selection of the second film factory [J], Century Review of the Communist Party of China, no.12, 2002, page 9.

[17]   Xu Min. "Model film": film industry, textual politics and national rituals of the devotees [J]. Literature & Art Studies, 2007, 4 (1): 91.

[18]   See: Ye Yonglie. Film knowledge [M], Science Press, 1979, page 246; Editorial board of the Dictionary of the Film Art [G], 1986, page 31; Di Shijie, Ed. Technical manual of film and television [G], China Film Press, 1987, page 332; The great victory of Mao Zedong thought's — selected edition of technological innovation achievements of Shandong Province's industry and communication front [G], October 1970, page 74.

[19]   Tian Jingqing. History of Beijing film industry: 1949-1990 [M]. China Film Press, 1999, pp. 163-165.

the meeting, Jiang Qing was impressed by the superiority of the 8.75 mm film equipment in the film transmission and considered this kind of equipment as a convenient way for the transmission of the "model" film, so she urged the relevant departments to step up efforts for developing the film. [20] With a projection equipment relatively more suitable for China's national conditions and actual needs, a certain material guarantee was provided for the extensive dissemination of film.

In addition to ensuring the universality of communication, Jiang Qing also provided support from another aspect. Although the development of the film industry had been regarded as a cultural cause at the time, the film had to be supported by industrial technology if it were to be transmitted by the masses, especially before the age when the electronic media was born and widely used. Unlike the "micromanage" of the coding process, Jiang Qing was often generous with the technical needs in film shooting. Once, when Jiang Qing was told that a dancing & singing performance created and performed by the workers themselves was to be adapted to film, she gave her own approval of the film in person of giving imported color film for two hours to The East Is Red Film Studio in one breath for shooting the film. [21] Something similar happened in the shooting of the film the Great Wall in Nanhai. At that time, in the stage of actor's film trial, domestic Acfa film was used, which was prone to color bias and distortion in the imaging effect. After watching the film, Jiang Qing was not satisfied and asked to replace it with Eastman film produced in the United States. Jiang Qing then put pressure on the relevant departments of the central military commission, contributing to the solving of matter as soon as possible. [22] In addition to the quality of film, the quality of the film processing technology is also related to the accuracy of the restoration of the movie. There are four advantages of color printing to print color copies of films: good color reduction, long storage time, low production cost and less harmful "three wastes". Also at the meeting of the Central Cultural Revolution in February 1969, Jiang Qing instructed Liu Xianquan, Shi Shaohua and others, "Liu Xianquan and Shi Shaohua are responsible for the investigation and research on film dyeing and printing method, film machinery and the

future supporting production, and Liu takes the overall responsibility." "On the eve of the national film work coordination conference held at the end of the year, after the central leaders watched China's first color-coded film, The Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Jiang Qing suggested to Zhou Enlai that "we should use our own film and dye the film with our own method for the teaching film of the revolutionary model film The Red Detachment of Women instead of using foreign productions and methods, so we're going to urge them to do this." [23]

IV. CONCLUSION

Jiang Qing's influence on the spread of "Cultural Revolution" films mainly focused on the "copy" link, that is, the "copy" of the "model" films as the "mold" and the "copy" of each film. At the same time, another aspect of the influence was the film review, which became the tool of "the film as a tool". The aesthetic principles formulated by Jiang Qing glorified their own position and attack the opposition, thus dominating the film criticism in both positive and negative aspects[24]. The first "model opera" films were most closely associated with Jiang Qing, as she needed to lay the foundation for her future activities from art to politics carefully. Therefore, Jiang Qing's influence in this period was almost omni-directional.

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[9] The film crew of Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy in Beijing Film Studio. "Restoring the stage and dramatizing the stage — This is how we bring the modern revolutionary Peking Opera Taking Tiger

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[20] About the rise of 8.75 mm film equipment, another possibility is that it was contributed to by the former deputy minister of culture Situ Huimin. See: anthology of cultural history of Beijing ·history of Beijing film distribution and screening units (volume ii), page 72. The author thinks, the two kinds of view are two sides of a question and do not contradict each other. Jiang Qing was mainly responsible for macro command, while Situ Huimin and Liu Xianquan, Shi Shaohua who were then in charge of the State Council Cultural Group and others are responsible for the specific operation. According to the Historical Record of Beijing Film Industry: 1949-1990, page 161, Jiang Qing said to Liu Xianquan, Shi Shaohua and others at the meeting of the Central Cultural Revolution in February 1969, half a year before the June 28 conference, "I am in charge of the film, and you will report to me about this issue in the future. The report will be signed by you two." As for the 8.75mm projector, please have a look first and select one and send it to us later.

[21] Li Zhongshi. A film of "Cultural Revolution" [J], Red Rock Spring and Autumn, 2003 (2), page 23

[22] Zhai Jiannong. The red past: Chinese films from 1966 to 1976 [M]. Taihai Hublishing House, 2001, p. 26.

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