

Enrichment and Development of Film Aesthetics by Digital Long Take

Lin Gao

Art & Design College
Zhongyuan University of Technology
e-mail: gaolin630@126.com

Abstract—No matter traditional recording long take or digital long take, regardless of highlighting authenticity or coherence, the main purpose is to reflect the ideology of human connotation to the greatest extent, while technique and technology only make the film better to reach a wider audience as long as the film style is appropriate for them.

Keywords—Long take; Film language; Digital technology

I. INTRODUCTION

As an ontology language of film, long take is an important form of camera language. Long take refers to a single shot that lasts for at least 30 seconds and composed of different sceneries and compositions formed on the screen by the mise-en-scene of lens internal actors and shot movement. In long take, the continuity of time and the integrity of space are realized to achieve a scene of reality without any processing. Long take theory is also known as “documentary thought”, but the average length of camera shot in American film is reduced from 10.5 seconds in 1946 to 2.9 seconds in 2006. Editing is wantonly prevalent today, whether the director can make a long take calmly?

André Bazin believed that the core theory of long take was that the use of long take and deep focus would not limit perceptual process of the audience, and long take was a potential ideographic form, focusing on revealing motives by normal state of things and complete movement and keeping the “transparency” and ambiguity of the shot. Long take will reproduce natural process of real things natural flow of things, and therefore it is more realistic. [1] Viewers can selectively watch the film and aesthetically judge it without any restriction as well as can initiatively and creatively imagine and think while watching the film.

II. TRADITIONAL DOCUMENTARY LONG TAKE

The representatives of long take are French film theorist André Bazin and Germany film theorist Siegfried Kracauer. They believed that the film was a realistic art form, and the artist should record the subject in its original state instead of changing it or interfering with its natural development and should not disintegrate the subject by montage editing, in this way, the sequence “realistically” recording and clipping which can reflect true life is a real film.

Documentary long take was extensively employed in

Elephant. Documentary long take is also called recording long take, such as following shot by shoulder camera and videotaping by portable camera. Documentary following shot can reflect the characters and events in a natural, smooth and realistic way. In Elephant, the long take was made closely behind the characters and the event was directly narrated in such a manner similar to the documentary film. The long take seemingly had no any focus or purpose. The dialogue was almost narrative, with few lines, exerting little force to put forwards the story. Just tell the whole event to the audience through one video camera in a documentary manner without symbolism and metaphor. In this film, no more shooting techniques were adopted, and the scene was only in the school.

From the opening to the end, there are three long takes were made to the sky to photographing the changes of clouds. This change in the silence indicates the danger in peaceful life. The scenery shot of sky at the end of the movie gives a space to think and reflect the whole event, letting the audience in a memorable artistic mood.

In the Elephant, long takes are transferred smoothly, and the pre-design and mise-en-scene are reasonable, especially the scene of three girls having lunch in dining hall: the camera moves left to the kitchen after shooting three girls taking foods to shoot two men smoking, then follows the men out of the kitchen, and finally turns back to shoot the girls looking for table. The camera, seaming as a silent trailer, a dispassionate observer, stands out the sudden occurrence of the event without shot processing and edition. The film is a faithful record of one morning of ordinary high school students, but makes the shooting incident more shocking! Elephant was made in low key, specifically most actors are local high school students without any film stars,, no script is prepared, and the film is made by only one camera. The camera takes shots in a simple but keen and calm way, just like a bystanders looking the event, without any emotion, however, bringing strong feeling to the audience.

Long takes made by Kenji Mizoguchi, a representative of “Japanese Neorealism” set forth his unique feature and have changes in spatial form. His theories are called as “one-shot-ism”. His representative works Ugetsu Monogatari is ended with one long take that Genjuro come home to find his wife Miyagie everywhere. This shot is a

famous long take because When Genjuro returns to the same house again, but find Miyagie is sitting in the room and waiting for him to come back. The time and space are conversed properly. The theories of Kenji Mizoguchi are quite different from Bazin's.

III. SUBJECTIVE LONG TAKE IN DIGITAL DV

With DV camera, artists and some ordinary people with alternative artistic potential have a better means of expression. DV become the same with the photographs and pens to record the artistic process. In Many DV works, especially documentary films, original state is the director, and the productions have no narrative line or assumed joy but true life. For example, to shoot a girl twenty minutes every morning and a dying sick father. However, as a documentary, absolute truth is also one scary thing, let alone movies.

Long take is always employed at the beginning of DV making, because it is unnecessary to design for shooting; simple static long take or following shot is subjectively made only to reflect which we see. Therefore, long take should be selectively used in DV making. The rhythm is controlled by alternatively using long take and editing. The long takes are highly regarded in the Italian neorealist films. In *La Terra trema: Episodio del mare* (made in 1947), *Ladri di biciclette* and other works, a shot is sometimes one complete narrative sequence. [2]

Subjective long takes are usually used in DV making. Such long take expresses the subjective feelings or imagination of the hero or director, subjectifying the expressed thing, or exaggerating, deforming, or imagining the character's emotion. It is a very expressive way of shooting. As the response of shooting individual to the scene, long take can reflect personal creative charming in all the minor details.

IV. EXTENSION OF LONG TAKE CONCEPT BY DIGITAL ANIMATION TECHNOLOGY

Long take and montage edition are two cornerstones of film aesthetic uniqueness. Montage is composed of long and short shots, serving as a basic form of camera language. Emphasizing the connection between shots and time and space conversion between shots, montage focuses on the combination of shots reflecting the life to reveal their internal relations. The complete display is broken into scenes and shot elements, and they are connected according to the theme and ideas to generate new meanings and further create new reality of the art. Montage is also a structural method and grammar rule of film language.

There is no syntagmatic relation is not between long takes but between screens. Actually long take is a montage inside the shot or a single-shot montage. Long take completely emphasizes to recapture real life and keep the continuity of time and space and the integrity of life. The school of long take ignores the discovery and creation of the artist and typical summary and artistic refinement. With documentary narrating style, long take represents the unity and integrity of space and time. Long take and montage are interrelated and mutually integrated.

Generally shot movement is divided into several distinct small units. One shot shows a lot of scenes. Although no editing used in the shot, equivalent action is expressed by the connection of shot movement, just like panorama, motion shot, lifting or expanding lens can change camera viewpoint. [3] Here we analyze the sequence, scheduling and technical features of long take on the basis of digital long take at the beginning of the movie *The Knot*.

This film is made in three stages.

A. Planning Stage

There are 60 shots with digital visual effects in *The Knot*. At the beginning, 6-minute long shot shocking Oliver · Stone gives a complete outline of folk customs in Taiwan in 1940s to reflect the background of the whole film. Director Yin Li made 8 shots which contains the unique scenes in Taiwan to the greatest extent: traditional Taiwanese drama, Taiwanese puppet shows, local marriage etiquette, street peddlers, the KMT soldiers, and Taipei architecture. These 8 shots were made separately and combined into a coherent shot by digital technology.

Therefore, editing action exists in the long shot that is composed by digital technology. How to make editing without any traces? Early planning is very important. The contents, shooting methods, and scenes of eight shots are pre-designed and investigated according to actual conditions. The nodes of digital technical connection are worked out by pre-calculation, and light changes and scene scale at the moment of connection are also considered, for instance, when making flying shot, the camera traverses and glances off the roof to continuously pass more roofs and chimneys. Early planning is made in details, and the technology is only taken to composite the shots in later stage under the premise of that the director considers to use technology in later stage and understands and masters the essentials of the technology.

B. Real Shot

For making these eight shots in *The Knot*, the photographer is required to have high competence because the shot made by him is not conventional aesthetic shot but is classified as trick photography. The eight shots mainly show the life of ordinary persons in the 1940s in Taipei, so the shots are made in alleys at different times and places.

It is difficult to adjust the scene, lighting, character arrangement, and the speed and tone of track and dolly shot. The camera is pulled out from the window when shooting by 100m cable and hung on the cable to move at uniform speed to make dolly shot on the roof.

The characters also are shot in batches. In top view of crossing alley, the camera is pulled into the alley. The children running in the ally is shot really, and the people walking outside are added after being shot in front of blue screen.

C. Digital Synthesis

As an art form with closest relationship with technical means, digital technology has brought vitality to the film, providing a powerful tool for building multi-dimensional

space and time. The computer-generated images or associated images not only show the original three-dimensional space in a more three-dimension way, but also strengthen time + space four-dimensional effect in the film. This is unthinkable in traditional real photograph of the movie, but they are connected together by digital technology in *The Knot*.

One mark of convergence of the eight shots in *The Knot* is laid between third and fourth shots, i.e., from the window to buildings. Actually the window is nonexistent, only shaped on the blue screen in shooting, and added in late stage. The black car in the first shot is also combined by shooting two alleys. The color of the sky also is post-synthesized. The feeling of being in the air by the audience is generated by the synthesis of pigeons, sky and windows in post-production.

The long take in *The Knot* is a narrative space integrating different spatial sceneries in real environment and visual scenes. The visual effects are beautiful and stunning, creating a special meaning of time and space and a psychological feeling of time effect of the audience. The long take ingratiate the requirements of the director's story narration, shooting materials, making skills of long take connected by digital technology, traditional filming technology and digital visual effects.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Technology is far from completely expressing people's thinking. The nature of film is to narrate a story. The story to tell the audience fully reflects the ideas and creation of the director. No matter traditional recording long take or digital long take, regardless of highlighting authenticity or coherence, the main purpose is to reflect the ideology of human connotation to the greatest extent, while technique and technology are only make the film better to reach a wider audience as long as the film style is appropriate. Beyond all question, *The Knot* directed by Yin Li bring us unprecedented visual experience and make a precedent for the application of future digital technology in long take.

REFERENCES

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