



Analysis on the Basic Narrative Structure of Short Films

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Abstract: This paper makes a basic analysis on the narrative structure of short films. The first is to analyze how roles setting promoted the development of the story; the second is to analyze mainly three acts on narrative short films; the third is to analyze narrative structure on Melodrama which is a kind of genre convention adopted by most popular movies. Through the above three aspects, the basic narrative structure of short films upheaval is revealed.

Keywords: short films, narrative aesthetics, dramatic conflict

1. Roles

Plot is developed by roles' activities. In a sense, roles would reflect their inner world to their real life objectively. A good role can let audience put themselves together with the figure, experience happiness and pain with your figure. Their wishes and needs of the role, in some extent, are the common aspirations and demands. Great characters are all ingenious. The short films usually show the drastic changes of the characters. People hope to see characters' transition and growth after having been through great changes of life. Short films tend to describe intense emotional changes, but with few site changes. This means you have to deal with issues from the perspectives the characters.

Short films do not have much time to develop complex plots, so they have to be more dependent on characters. It is always more important for a character to do something than to say something. For example, in the classical cartoon "Tom and Jerry", the value of major cartoon images is very high, although its plot is very simple. So, if we want to create the classical character images, we must firstly set some "glittery" major images in the setting of scripts.

The motions and gestures of roles are the figures' second expression and the outward manifestation of the roles' inner characters and emotional characteristics at the same time. We often convey the roles' psychological characteristics, emotion changes and so on to audiences through the roles' motions. In addition, role settings as well as the action designs of roles are closely related to the roles' identities, personalities, professions, genders and regions. People with different personalities will have different responses towards the same matter, and their actions will also be different. When performing identical movements, there can be different movement forms because of inner joy or fear, which fulfilled movie rolls with rich connotation and vitality.

2. Plots

Plots are series of events which happened in the roles. Narrative short films mainly have three acts.

2.1 Beginning

We usually meet the leading actor quickly and understand his thoughts and wishes in conflicts as well as difficulties that he is going to face. In short films, each line and each move should help to push the movie forward quickly instead of wasting time on unimportant plots. Main conflicts are the key goals of plots. And then introduce supporting actors, who reflect the standpoints in heroes' world from the side.

2.2 Difficulties, interactions and contradictory conflicts

The second scene is about the characters facing difficulties, the communication and interaction between them and other different figures in different scenes. They solved contradictions and conflicts. At the same time, they push the plot towards to the climax and make the episode more blood-and-thunder. The middle part of the story is a turning point or an unexpected plot, which drives the epitasis into a new direction.

The number of conflicts in a movie determines the number of audience's interest points. "Dramatic conflict" is one kind of art form in the visual performance. To express the dramatic conflict, roles are often given definite character orientation. It's also including vivid negative roles, prop obstacles, psychological levels, mysticism, unexpected happenings, outsiders, errors and misunderstandings, and etc. Therefore, this can mobilize the mood of audiences. It's good way to use coincidence properly and add dramatic sarcasm, such as the occurrence of good things, however this also suggests that the same negative effect is generated.

2.3 Climax

The third act is the climax, which is the most excited moment of the story development in the whole play. It is also the most difficult part to complete. Leaving the best in the end will make the third act stronger in impact. Solutions to the contradiction must be dealing with a tough question or an unexpected result. This moment summarizes the implication of the whole movie and serves the underlying theme. Suspense is not disentangled at the climax. The problems to be reflected and the fact to be revealed through the theme are often revealed in the end. If the role experienced big reverse in the climax, then he/she would often appear in a new image after the climax. For short films, turning endings and great twists are very essential.

Story narrative is generally composed of exposition (beginning), conflict (middle) and Resolution (end). According to Bruce Block said in his book, the terms used to describe the three basic parts of a story's structure also apply to visual structure which is composed of visual exposition, visual conflict and climax, visual resolution.

3. Melodrama

Melodrama is a kind of genre convention adopted by most popular movies. Strictly speaking, melodrama is a mainstream narrative structure. This routine is typically embodied in various love movies, ethical films, youth films and family films. In the history of movies, no matter "Intolerance", "Casablanca" or "Titanic" and etc., they are all classical works in melodrama.

The formation of American classic film style has a kind of close relationship with the development of melodrama. In most of the melodrama films, there always are dangerous incidents which create strong dramatic effects. Constricted space and events, closed character relations and predetermined destiny are all preconditions for a melodrama to get a sensational dramatic effect. The stories of indulgence and return, stories of terror and escaping from terror, as well as stories of loss and reunion told in melodramas are all manipulated by the narration, which has been designed by scriptwriters and directors at beginning. Melodramas are meant to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience. "Sensation", from a positive view, is the motivation to promote the constant development of the classical styles of movies. "Touching" is always the most significant success indicator for melodramas. Characters in melodramas usually share the feature of being typed, which means a specific story plot strikes a specific character. For example, richness is usually bound up with demoralization, and the poor may be more honorable. For another example, when two women fall in love with the same man at the same time, there is always a woman to be quitted. A melodrama usually adopts sutured structure, and it happens between shots, scenes as well as causes and effects, while the purpose of suture is to provide a kind of fluency so as to urge audience to neglect the fictionality of the film.

Theme: There are some common themes, for example, love conquering all, goodness defeating evil, finding the meaning of life and so on. Many themes can be simplified to a single word, such as love, greed, mercy, loyalty or desire. A theme can make a movie engraved in people's heart.

Usually, at the start of a story, a theme will naturally emerge, and then, you can carefully put the main ideas layer after layer in every part of the film. The theme needs smooth, soft approach and subtle expression. The best theme come from true feelings, experience and understanding about real life. If you do not believe in your own movie's theme, the audience will not accept it either. Usually, there is only one theme in one movie, otherwise, the meaning expressed in the movie would be scattered.

Contradictory conflict: All difficulties and obstructions suffered by the positive role when he/she tries to reach the goal.

Interaction: The ideas exchange, connect and separate among characters. Not all the stories are merely based on conflicts. In most cases, the communication between characters in short films will directly give rise to conflicts, discoveries or decisions. The most ideal creativity is to resonate with the audience. With the development of the plot, the audience can laugh and cry, be worried about the characters and feel lost in the whole fictional world.

References

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