

The Film Elements in Wang Meng's Novels - The Influence of Film on Wang Meng's Creation and Its Acceptance Mechanism

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Abstract: As a writer with a broad range of literary and artistic influences and a solid reputation in the field, Wang Meng's novels exhibit a rich and diverse array of artistic elements. Among them, the film elements run through Wang Meng's seventy years of creative career, which has had a wide and profound impact on Wang Meng's novel creation. Therefore, this paper focuses on the film elements in Wang Meng's novels and systematically studies the influence of film on Wang Meng's creation from three perspectives: creative skills, plot construction, and creative concept. First, this paper carefully collates the development of Wang Meng's film acceptance. Second, we read the text carefully from Wang Meng's specific works. Ultimately, this study seeks to thoroughly investigate the impact of Wang Meng's engagement with film on his novel writing. It seeks to reveal the profound interaction between film and literature in the creative process, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of Wang Meng and his works.

1. Introduction

It can be found that the word "movie" appears very frequently in Wang Meng's novels, literary criticism, and autobiography. In his autobiography, Wang Meng recalled that during his childhood, he was "taken to see the movies many times" and that movies were "the main entertainment" during that period. In Wang Meng's life, the film has always occupied an important position. Therefore, the acceptance and absorption of the film inevitably affect all aspects of Wang Meng's creation. The exploration of the film elements in Wang Meng's novels can connect the writer's life with the creation and has a unique significance for the study of Wang Meng's novel creation. However, academic circles have seldom conducted specialized research on the film elements in Wang Meng's works. Therefore, this paper will examine Wang Meng's acceptance of film and its influence on his creative practice from three aspects: creative skills, plot construction, and creative concept.

2. Film Elements in Wang Meng's Novel Writing Skills

In his acceptance and review of the film, Wang Meng emphasizes the creative skills involved and is dedicated to their adaptation, transformation, and application in literary creation, achieving an excellent expressive effect.

2.1 Elements of Film Lens

First, Wang Meng's novels show the strong presence of film lens elements, which is reflected in many works. Taking *The Butterfly* as an example, the novel begins with the description: "Beijing brand off-road vehicle is driving fast on the road in the countryside." Obviously, it is an aerial perspective, much like the beginning of the road film, which places the moving car in the vast countryside and sets the grand prelude to the entire story. At the same time, it is also a specific lens language. In other words, Secretary Zhang in Beijing was sent to the countryside and underwent a transformation there, which altered his personality. This is also the main plot of the story. This brief description has a strong lens sense that reveals the style of the entire story, promoting a strict structure that mirrors the perfect loop at the beginning and end of the novel [1]. The following description from the car's perspective is like a set of smooth, long film shots. With rapid scene changes and detailed

descriptions, it vividly depicts the dynamic transformations in the environment surrounding the car as it travels, effectively conveying a rural atmosphere.

2.2 The Use of Montage

Wang Meng pays special attention to montage in movies and applies it to the creation of novels. In "On the Path of Exploration," Wang Meng mentioned the great influence of the arrangement and combination of pictures on the expression effect: "We are sitting here, and no one can see anyone's hair turning white. However, if you juxtapose one's childhood photos and their remains through focus, photography, or novels, you will evoke a range of associations, including mourning, sadness, or excitement." The essence of montage lies in the unconventional arrangement and combination of shots.

For example, in *Changing Shapes of Activity*, Wang Meng narrated Ni Wucheng's suicide. He chose not to describe Ni Wucheng's struggle with death, opting instead for a psychological montage. After Ni was slapped, painful memories flashed back in his mind. In this description, Wang Meng did not use a linear narrative that progresses in a step-by-step fashion. His account of Ni's suicide is very disjointed. Still, through the psychological montage and the disorderly arrangement of several scenes, he turned his spirit into chaos and madness in an extremely painful and contradictory state of mind and finally went to extremes. This psychological change state was presented completely and accurately. In addition, in *The Butterfly*, Haiyun is classified as the right-wing, and the author inserts a description that seems to have nothing to do with the theme: "The car is traveling at a speed of 60 kilometers per hour. The train is moving at 100 kilometers per hour. Meanwhile, the plane cuts through the sky at 900 kilometers per hour, and a satellite launches at an astonishing speed of 28,000 kilometers per hour. It's an impressive display of speed accompanied by a majestic noise." This is an application of metaphor montage [2]. The cars, trains, planes, and satellites mentioned in this paper all share a similarity: "high speed", which has formed a subtle and profound analogy with the rapid development of Chinese society under the backdrop of the novel setting. At that time, Chinese society, just like these high-speed vehicles, moved forward on the track of the times. Additionally, all fields were undergoing rapid changes and development. However, this speeding development has also brought some problems. Through the use of montage, Wang Meng effectively integrated his reflection on society into this description, which has a pronounced expressive effect [3].

2.3 Structural Realism

Wang Meng absorbed the creative skills of "structural realism" from movies and applied them to novel writing. In "The Possibility of Fiction", he mentioned that this creative skill was embodied in the Albanian film *Footprints*, and he paid special attention to the application of this method in the novels *Changing Shapes of Activity* and *Hard to Meet*. He employed a writing method that acknowledges different people have varying views on the same thing, which makes the characters more complex. For example, in *Changing Shapes of Activity*, Wang Meng intentionally illustrates the significant differences between a couple's personalities, aesthetic tastes, knowledge levels, and values [4]. They highlight the insurmountable communication gap between them and reflect the deep-seated contradictions in their marriage that lie behind the quarrels.

3. The Film Elements in the Plot Setting of the Novel

The integration of films within Wang Meng's novel plot structure is subtle. He skillfully internalized his accumulated experience from watching movies and made it an organic part of the novel's plot. Additionally, Wang Meng's acceptance of movies can be inferred by deeply analyzing the film elements repeatedly presented in his novels. This research interprets the author Wang Meng and the rich connotations behind his literary creations through the deep interaction between film adaptation and novel creation. For example, the line in the movie *The Case of Xu Qiuying*: "I am an unfortunate seed, suffering from the pain of not sprouting." This sentence appeared three times in Wang Meng's works. The first time was in *Changing Shapes of Activity*. Because Ni Wucheng thought highly of himself but had accomplished nothing, Ni Zao, who observed his painful situation,

sometimes believed that Ni Wucheng truly had talents but had no outlet for them. So, he used this sentence to describe Ni Wucheng's state. The sentence also appeared in his other book, where the character Qian Wen and others from the city's devolved cadres to see the open-air film *The Case of Xu Qiuying*. When they saw this sentence in Xu Qiuying's diary, "that kind of feeling and this expression almost made Qian Wen cry." The last time it appeared in China's Secrets: I Want to Talk to You about Politics, it was mentioned that the prototype of *The Case of Xu Qiuying* was exposed as a fake case after the reform and opening up. Still, Wang Meng wrote: "What about the statement that it can't germinate? Anyway, this is a wonderful sentence. A seed cannot germinate, which makes people feel sorrowful." Although the movie's story was altered, Wang Meng still remembers this sentence, which reveals his deep feelings for it [5].

The reason why Wang Meng has such a deep feeling for this line is closely related to his personal experience. During the Cultural Revolution, Wang Meng had no way to read and write, which not only stifled his talent but also dealt a great blow to his spiritual world. He mentioned in the interview that he had lost all his pens at that time, so he borrowed them from his son when he needed to write something and returned them after he had used them up. This repression of creative instinct is a true portrayal of the pain of "cannot germinate". Therefore, Wang Meng is the "unfortunate seed" that "bears the pain of can't germinate". The repeated appearance of this line in Wang Meng's works not only reflects his profound resonance with it but also reveals the internal relationship between his personal experiences and his creative output [6].

Another film often mentioned by Wang Meng is *The Fall of Berlin*, which has appeared in Wang Meng's works for nearly 20 times. For the public in his novels, *The Fall of Berlin* is synonymous with advancement, romance, happiness, and revolution. The film is no longer just a simple work of art but the embodiment of a lofty ideal. It is also Wang Meng's emotional projection of Soviet movies. It stemmed from the friendly international relationship between China and the Soviet Union at that time, as Soviet cultural and artistic works poured into China, providing fresh and unique audiovisual experiences and spiritual enrichment for the Chinese people [7]. The cultural wave had a profound influence on Wang Meng. The revolutionary ideals and passions depicted in Soviet movies have a strong resonance with his inner revolutionary beliefs and his desire for an ideal future, making them a model for him to envision his life. Therefore, movies hold a sacred significance far greater than mere entertainment.

However, behind this fanaticism is the one-sided understanding and worship of ideology, which may eventually lead to the terrible consequences of radicalism. Through the film elements in Wang Meng's plot setting, we can also see Wang Meng's self-examination and reflection. The characters in Wang Meng's books precisely highlight students' passion and lofty ambitions. However, people may easily develop an over-idealized perception, viewing movies as symbols of an idealized ideology that mirrors life [8]. They may struggle to distinguish between fiction and reality, becoming caught up in fanaticism and extreme behavior. Therefore, the film elements in the plot of the novel also reflect the Wang Meng's cultural examination and self-reflection.

4. Film Elements in the Theme of Novel Creation

The acceptance of movies also directly or indirectly influenced Wang Meng's creative theme, which fundamentally influenced Wang Meng's works. First of all, Wang Meng's childhood interest in movies led him to pay special attention to women's writing in his creation [9]. Wang Meng mentioned in his autobiography that he was often taken to see the movies when he was a child. The young Wang Meng came to a conclusion from the experience of watching movies: "Women are beautiful. Women are unlucky. Women are vulnerable to men." Therefore, he vowed that from now on, as he grew up, he would treat women with respect and never do anything wrong to them. The acceptance of movies in his childhood influenced Wang Meng's choice of creative themes. In the creation of novels, Wang Meng is particularly fond of portraying female characters, showing their beauty, wisdom, and strength, as well as their sufferings, especially those caused by men. In *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*, Zhao Huiwen is an intelligent and sensitive woman with a rich inner world. She is the only person in the organization department who resonates with Lin Zhen, but she is in an

unfortunate marriage. In addition, in *Long Live Youth*, the author has created a group of high school female students with diverse personalities, energy, and ambitions.

Second, as a teenager, Wang Meng watched many Soviet movies and maintained his love for them throughout his life. We advocate that this is one of the important sources of revolutionary romanticism in his early creation, which deeply influenced his early creative style. Wang Meng often mentions Soviet films, such as *The Brave* and *The Fall of Berlin*, which are stories that portray heroes' struggles for their ideals and revolutionary beliefs, filled with a strong conviction in achieving revolutionary victory and a desire for a better future. This spirit deeply influenced Wang Meng, inspiring him to express his enthusiasm for revolutionary ideals and yearning for social progress in his work [10]. For example, in *Long Live Youth*, Wang Meng depicted a group of middle school students with great ideals and passions. They actively devoted themselves to the birth of a new China, striving to acquire knowledge and help one another by constructing the motherland as their ideal and goal. Heroes in Soviet movies often possess firm beliefs, noble qualities, and selfless dedication. In *The Young Newcomer in the Organization Department*, Lin Zhen and Zhao Huiwen demonstrated their enthusiasm for their work and persistence in upholding their ideals. Their images resemble the revolutionary heroes depicted in Soviet movies.

Finally, Wang Meng's works are always close to life and the public, and it is always his creative theme in the novels to convey the voice of the times and the voice of the people. Wang Meng observed in *Ambiguities in Literature* that literature gains vitality when it resonates with the public. This concept encourages him to pay more attention to real life in his creation, choose subjects and themes that are relatable to people, and convey profound ideological connotations through accessible language and vivid, engaging stories [11]. For example, many of his works reflect the changes in contemporary society and people's living conditions, such as *The Season of Mannerlessness* and *The Season of Hesitation*. Through the portrayal of the struggles and triumphs of everyday people amidst changing times, the author highlights the backdrop of social development, as well as the strengths and flaws of human nature [12]. It allows readers to resonate deeply and feel a strong connection between literature and life. This distinctive creative theme, to some extent, also comes from Wang Meng's acceptance of movies. In Wang Meng's speech "Forever Literature" on the theme of literary function, he specifically mentioned the scene of his aunt watching movies as a child: "When I was a child, my aunt lived a particularly unfortunate life. She got married at the age of 18, lost her husband at the age of 19, and remained a widow for life. What she likes best is going to the theatre and movies, especially tragic movies. She brought several handkerchiefs in her pocket when she left, and she cried throughout the movie, which acted as her psychological catharsis. The existence of literature enables life to be preserved, memory to be preserved, and our emotions to be pinned and improved." Therefore, Wang Meng, who has witnessed movies, plays, and other artistic works as spiritual sustenance and emotional export since childhood, is also committed to providing emotional resonance and spiritual comfort for readers in his work, making literature a bridge that connects individuals with the times, life, and ideals.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, movies have influenced the artistic elements of Wang Meng's novels through various means, including the subtle appropriation of creative skills, the hidden infiltration of plot construction, and the foundational development of creative concepts. Through the careful and in-depth analysis of the film elements in Wang Meng's novels, this study clearly outlines the unique landscape in which film art and literary creation are intertwined in Wang Meng's works, which is a key to our in-depth analysis of Wang Meng's works. But more importantly, through the interaction between movies and Wang Meng's creations, we can gain insight into the spiritual core of his works, thereby understanding Wang Meng from a brand-new perspective, not just his works. As Belinsky, a Russian literary critic, said, "Any great poet is great because his pain and happiness are deeply rooted in the soil of society and history so that his works can represent the voice of society, the times, and even all mankind." By examining the film elements in the novel, we can gain insight into Wang Meng's understanding of life and human nature. His reflections on himself, his era, and society reveal his deep concern for

individuals caught in the historical currents, which demonstrates Wang Meng's true greatness as a writer.

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