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AN ANALYSIS OF THE FEMALE IMAGE AND NARRATIVE IN JIA ZHANGKE'S FILMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FEMINISM

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Abstract:

Jia Zhangke's film works present the living conditions of marginalized groups in society with a unique realistic aesthetic, among which female characters are particularly eye-catching. Not only are they on the periphery of the social structure, but they also endure multiple identity dilemmas amid the drastic changes of the modernization process, revealing a neglected yet highly symbolic female experience. This study, based on a feminist theoretical perspective and employing textual analysis, focuses on the following core research questions: How are female characters depicted in Jia Zhangke's films? What complexities do these female roles exhibit at the social, cultural, and psychological levels? How do they seek subjectivity within the macro-narrative of modernization? To answer these questions, this paper selects films such as "Xiao Wu", "Still Life", and "Unknown Pleasures", and conducts an in-depth exploration of the female characters within them. Through the analysis of character construction, narrative strategies, and visual expression, the study reveals how these women seek subjectivity in the interstices of social gender norms and economic changes, while also examining their complexities in terms of spatial mobility, emotional attachment, and individual resistance. The research finds that Jia Zhangke, through his delicate cinematic language and non-traditional female narratives, presents the coexistence of passivity and agency of women in social transformation, reflecting the deep contradictions in gender relations during the process of modernization. This study aims to further deepen the academic discussion on female characters in Jia Zhangke's films and promote multi-dimensional research on the interwoven influences of

gender, class, and modernity, providing important insights into the survival status of contemporary Chinese women.

Keywords:

Jia Zhangke's Films, Female Image, Marginalization, Mobility, Fortitude

Introduction

Since the 1990s, Jia Zhangke, as an important representative of the sixth generation of Chinese directors, has paid attention to the living conditions of the marginalized groups with realism aesthetics, in which the portrayal of female roles is particularly striking. These women are often at the edge of social change, ignored by the modernization process, and at the same time show their unique survival strategies and subjectivity construction. Their existence not only reflects the changes of social and economic structure, but also reflects the deep contradiction of gender relations in contemporary Chinese society. So the images of women, jia zhangke film will not only help to understand the director of artistic expression, also for the analysis of the contemporary Chinese social change of female survival state provides an important academic value.

The core questions of this research include the following three aspects: First, how are the female images portrayed in Jia Zhangke's films? Second, how complex are these female characters on social, cultural and psychological levels? Third, how to understand their mobility, marginalization and subjective expression in the process of modernization? In order to answer these questions, this paper combines feminist theory and text analysis, focusing on the analysis of "Xiao Wu", "Still Life", "Unknown Pleasures" and other representative films, and discusses around the "marginalization", "mobility" and "subjectivity" three core concepts.

In order to ensure the clarity of the concept, this paper first defines the core terms. "Marginalized" refers to a group in the social, cultural or political system are excluded from the mainstream, lack of voice or subjectivity (Ferguson et al, 1992). In film studies, the marginalization of women is manifested by the fact that their roles are usually limited to private spheres such as family and love, while men dominate public Spaces and social actions (Marshment,1997). Mobility refers not only to migration in a geographical sense, but also to shifts in social identity, psychology, and emotion (Martel, 2024). (Ballaster, 1991) In the context of contemporary social change in China, the mobility of female roles has become thinking and entry point to understand the change of social structure. The female characters in Jia Zhangke's films often seek a sense of belonging in this fluid process, while facing an identity crisis. "Subjectivity" is embodied in women's search for self-identity and survival strategies in the tension of social discipline and personal fate, including adaptation to realistic difficulties, as well as resistance or negotiation against social structures.

Based on the above concepts, this paper adopts text analysis and combines feminism and psychological analysis to conduct a multi-dimensional research on the female images in Jia Zhangke's films. The structure of the thesis is as follows: The first part reviews the relevant literature of feminist film research, defines the core concepts, and elaborates the research methods. The second part uses text analysis to discuss the narrative function, visual expression and social cultural implication of the female characters in Jia Zhangke's films. The third part of the feminist analysis how the female characters in social change in multiple identities, and

their psychological dilemma and subjectivity. The fourth part summarizes the research findings, discusses the enlightenment to the living state of contemporary Chinese women, and puts forward the future research direction.

The research finds that the female characters in Jia Zhangke's films not only bear the impact of social changes, but also show tough vitality and subjective demands. Their plight is not only the result of social and economic changes, but also closely related to the historical inertia of gender power relations. With his delicate camera language and profound social insight, Jia presents the audience with a diverse and real world of women. This study hopes to deepen the academic discussion on the female image in Jia Zhangke's films, and promote the multidimensional research on the interwoven influence of gender, class and modernity, so as to provide important inspiration for understanding the living state of contemporary Chinese women.

Literature Review

As an important representative of the sixth generation of Chinese directors, Jia Zhangke pays attention to the marginalized groups in his films with realism aesthetics, especially the portrayal of female images (Zhu, 2013). However, although a large number of studies have explored the narrative style, realistic expression and the reflection of social changes in Jia Zhangke's films, there are still some limitations in the study of his female roles. Existing studies tend to focus on the overall sociological analysis of film texts, while the specific shaping of female images, identity and expression of subjectivity are relatively scattered. In addition, the existing literature mainly adopts descriptive analysis on the female characters in Jia Zhangke's films, but lacks systematic critical discussion. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this academic gap by exploring the social, cultural and psychological complexity of female roles in Jia Zhangke's films on the basis of feminist theory and text analysis, as well as their marginalization and subjectivity construction in the process of modernization.

Since the birth of Chinese films in the early 20th century, the shaping of female images has always been deeply influenced by traditional social culture and patriarchal ideology. Confucianism is deeply rooted in Chinese society, in which the "husband as wife principle" (Xiao Hang, 2014) emphasized in the "three Principles and five permanent principles" constructs a strict gender hierarchy order, requiring women to absolutely obey male authority. (You Fei&Cai Wei,2002) believes that the roles of women are highly condensed into visual symbols full of metaphors, and they are carried with the thinking of "big self" and "resistance" from the grand historical perspective of great national character. This idea directly influenced the shaping of female images in the early stage of Chinese films, making female characters exist as appendages or emotional projection objects of male narratives for a long time. (Xu, 2024) research has shown that the fifth generation of director's work, the female characters are highly symbolic, with national fable or a symbol of rebellion consciousness appear, and the lack of specific individual expression. Although the female image in this grand narrative background reflects the social change to some extent, it still does not get rid of the passive role positioning under the male gaze.

In contrast, the sixth-generation directors have broken this traditional mode of expression in their creative ideas. Influenced by Italian neorealism, the group of directors represented by Jia Zhangke adopted the documentary style and the concept of "authorism" (Lin Hua, 2007), took individual experience as the narrative core, and paid attention to the bottom and marginal

groups of society. Jia Zhangke once said, "In fact, no one has the power to represent the majority of the people, you only have the power to represent yourself, and you can only represent yourself. This is the first step to free from the shackle of culture, it is a kind of knowledge, and it is also a kind of living habit "(Cheng Qingsong&Huang Ou,2002). Jia Zhangke's works are different from the historical metaphorical expression of the fifth generation of directors, but show the individual living state in a calm and objective way, so that the female characters get rid of the simple symbolic expression and gradually gain more subjectivity. The female characters in her films not only bear the impact brought by social changes, but also show strong life resilience and self-identification demands, which is of great significance in the narrative development of Chinese film history.

Methodology

From the perspective of feminism, this study systematically studies the female images and narrative strategies in Jia Zhangke's films using text analysis method. As an important method of film research, text analysis can deeply interpret the visual style, narrative structure and role shaping of film texts, so as to reveal their deep social and cultural significance (Bateman Schmidt, 2013). In this study, text analysis not only focuses on the performance of female characters in the film, but also explores their unique expression in Jia Zhangke's works by combining the audio-visual language, narrative logic and social background of the film.

The films selected in this study are based on the following criteria: First, the films should have prominent female characters to ensure the pertinence and representativeness of the analysis. Secondly, the selected films cover different stages of Jia Zhangke's creation, in order to observe the changes in his female image shaping and the evolution of his narrative strategy. In addition, the film should have strong social reality concern and be closely related to the social changes in China, so as to explore the identity and living conditions of women in the social transition period. Therefore, nine representative films of Jia Zhangke are selected as the objects of analysis in this study, including "Xiao Wu" (1997), "Unknown Pleasures" (2002), "Still Life" (2006), "A Touch of Sin" (2013), "Mountains May Depart" (2015), "Ash Is Purest White" (2018) and "We Shall Be All" (2024). These works not only show the living conditions of women in different historical stages, but also reflect Jia's continuous concern for the fate of women.

In the analysis method, this study mainly from the image analysis and narrative analysis of two levels. Image analysis focuses on the use of audiovisual elements such as composition, color, light and shadow, and camera movement in films to explore how directors create female images through visual language (Lacey, 2018). For example, in the Three Gorges, Jia Zhangke uses long shots and low saturation colors to create a visual atmosphere of flow and uncertainty, which reinforces the adrift feeling of the female characters. In the film, the director expresses the psychological process of women in different identities through the change of cold and warm tones. Narrative analysis focuses on the development track of female characters in the story, including their identity construction, emotional relationship and interaction with the social environment. For example, the female characters in The World show the plight of women in the era of globalization through trans-regional flow, while Mountains May Depart uses trans-time and space narration to depict the identity flow and emotional struggle of women in social changes.

In addition, this study combines feminist film theory to interpret the text, focusing on how female characters are constructed in male-dominated narratives, and whether the director provides a female perspective different from the traditional male gaze. By analyzing how Jia Zhangke's films break traditional female stereotypes and show the complexity and agency of individual women, this study will explore how directors give more subjectivity to female characters with delicate image language. This study not only hopes to reveal how the female images in Jia Zhangke's films reflect the realistic problems of Chinese society, but also attempts to explore the unique contribution of Jia Zhangke's works on gender issues from a feminist perspective.

Analysis

The Development Of Feminist Theory In Film And Television Art

The change of female image and the proposal and development of feminism are constantly changing with the development of history and film and television industry. The formation and development of feminist theory roughly went through four stages.

From the beginning of the 20th century to the 1960s, female characters basically appeared on the screen as stereotyped images, and they were the objects and attachments of male desires. Such as the birth of a nation (1915) with female characters, but the body is in men's consciousness of leading down to development of the story, although in some European avant-garde movies has some female image set to break all the rules, but has not formed the system theory. In the 1960s and 70s of 20th century. Laura Mulvey published "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Film". She proposed the theory of "male gaze", pointing out that traditional films put women in the objective position of being watched through the lens language, and satisfied the visual pleasure of men watching, laying the theoretical foundation of feminist film and television. At the same time, Claire Johnston put forward the concept of "women's film", advocating the creation of films with women as the main body to counter the male hegemony in the film. In the 1980s, 1990s and the 21st century, with the rise of postmodernism and queer theory, feminist theory flourished, and feminist film theory also had a diversified breakthrough, and began to focus on identity diversity, consumer culture and the development of globalization. Among them, some scholars, such as Atlee Spivak, criticized the hegemony of Western feminism from the perspective of post-colonial feminism and paid attention to the existence of women in the third world in film and television. Susan Douglas proposed "enlightenment feminism" to criticize Hollywood commercial films for packaging gender stereotypes with "female empowerment"; Judith Butler proposed that gender is a "performance" of cultural construction (He Chengzhou, 2010), and film and television works can break the binary opposition of biological gender and social gender through role shaping. During this period, female audiences began to actively interpret films according to their own experiences and positions, and female directors and practitioners gradually increased in film and television creation. A large number of films representing female expression appeared, such as Thelma and Louise, The Piano Lesson, The Hurt Locker and so on. In the 21st century, feminism has entered the stage of digitalization and activism. With the promotion of social media and MeToo movements, feminist film theory has entered the stage of popularization and activism under the cultivation of feminism, and the film and television industry has become one of the main battlefields of gender issues. Streaming media platforms provide more ways for female creators to show. The establishment of "Time's up" organization (Fin Cullen, 2010)

requires gender equality in Hollywood's production system. The development of activism was more concrete at this stage.

In the formation and development of feminist theory in these decades, it has experienced the criticism of the male gaze (Li Wenbo, 2013); Socio-cultural and performative gender construction; The intersection of multiple oppression of culture, psychology, race, class and gender; The reconstruction of female subjectivity (Zhang Guangli, 2003), the gendered criticism of the production system and many other diversified theoretical directions. In general, the core of film and television feminism theory lies in revealing the gender power structure on and off the screen, criticizing objectification and marginalization, and reconstructing female subjectivity through creative practice. His views are always in a dynamic development, expanding from single gender criticism to multiple perspectives of intersectionality, technical ethics and global justice, trying to achieve true gender equality in the cultural field of film and television.

The Representation Of Female Characters In Jia Zhangke's Films

As a member of the sixth generation of Chinese directors, Jia Zhangke has always been a very representative character symbol. His childhood life experience and observation of urban change have always been the core of Jia Zhangke's film art creation. On the basis of combining the author's discussion and documentary aesthetics, he formed his own unique creative thinking, and expressed his creative techniques such as improvisation and documentary through unique narrative means. A series of films such as "Xiao Wu", "Platform", "Still Life", "A Touch of Sin", "Mountains May Depart" and "Ash Is Purest White" appeared. It gives the audience a deeper understanding of marginalized social groups and the current social situation in China.

In Jia Zhangke's works, most of the male characters are the narrative subject, such as Xiao Wu, Han Sanming, Liang Zi, Binbin, Zhang Zhensheng, etc., while the female characters mostly appear in the form of feeder or male appendage. When it comes to the female characters in his films, the first one that comes to mind must be a series of characters played by his wife Zhao Tao - Yin Ruijuan, Shen Hong, Shen Tao, Qiaoqiao and so on. The lack of female characters does not mean that Jia Zhangke lacks creativity in his portrayal of characters. He is not a radical feminist. He tries to objectively, calmly and comprehensively present women's life status, present their most authentic and unique life experience, and touch their deep existential crisis. In his works, female images are more mature and resilient than men. In the face of survival difficulties, women are often more calm and calm, and they radiate kindness, tolerance, tenacity and other good qualities all the time. (Zhang Na, 2019) Although the setting of female roles in each work is different, we can also find some commonalities among them, which enable us to see Jia Zhangke's deep thinking on female images.

Female Characteristics 1.: Marginalized Social Status

"Marginal" characters fill each of Jia Zhangke's films, and women who sell their bodies and sex for a living are among the marginal characters he mainly portrays. These characters are used by men as tools for emotional release. They are bright in appearance, but their income and living status are extremely unstable. The singing girl Hu Meimei in "Xiao Wu", the wild model Qiao Qiao in "Unknown Pleasure", and Rong Lian in "A Touch of Sin" are all bottom-class people. The emergence of such figures is closely related to the development of social times. Since the late 1980s, with the comprehensive development of reform and opening up,

the rapid development of market economy, the entertainment service industry has ushered in a boom period. Such an economic environment also provides a hotbed for the erotic service industry, and the number of female figures engaged in the erotic industry has increased. All kinds of stores are spread out in every corner of Chinese cities, and this era is the background of Jia Zhangke's artistic creation. After experiencing the period of strict control of political ideology on literary works, these women who rely on men to survive naturally become one of the main breakthroughs in his artistic expression. Different from other creators' depictions of characters, Jia Zhangke infuses the bodies of these marginalized women with sincere and candid quality and a soul full of warmth. They are no longer mere vase images of empty shells, but individuals with independent thinking and will. Their presentation makes us have a clearer understanding of the society in that diversified period. (Li Jiayi, 2022)

Their social status is very low, these roles live in the dark corners of society, by the mainstream society ridicule, oppression and even legal sanctions, the same class of personnel will be bullied and insulted them, respect for the word rarely appear in their lives, even so, they are still trying to grow up, try to survive.

For example, in the "Xiao Wu", a closed and shabby singing room, with dim bright red lights, on a shabby sofa, accompanied by Hu Meimei for the first time, she kept petulant, singing also just to coaze the strange Xiao Wu around. She is a student who wants to further her study at a film and television academy. Becoming a star is her dream. May be due to the pressure of life, he chose to come to the remote Shanxi county, secret family made a song girl, she tried all kinds of ways to make their life better, but the only way to achieve this desire is to rely on men, so when she and Xiao Wu familiar with, half-joking said "then I beside you ah" words, she said sweet words, snuggled up to Xiao Wu's leg, Tease the mood of Xiao Wu, this is the most direct way for her to get value, so that in Taiyuan boss appeared, she found more convenient to get the value of the shortcut, without warning with the boss ran. After seeing the gap between reality and ideal, she always suffered and struggled in her heart. She once said helplessly, "I like singing too, you know? Some people say I look like Wang Jingwen, but I will never be a star in my life." (Lin Xudong, Zhang Yaxuan& Gu Zheng, 2003) This brief encounter may be love for Xiao Wu, but for Hu Meimei, this is their survival rule. She may still be pure and kind at heart, but her marginalized social status can only allow her to achieve her goals in this way.

In "A Touch of Sin", the appearance of Rong Lian and Meimei is not quite the same, she appears in a clean and sunny bullet train carriage, clean and simple dress, a pair of clear eyes, which forms a sharp contrast with the seated lady. In the nightclub, she and the waiter Xiaohui had a good impression, two young people living at the bottom of the cold society to find a gentle rely on, in the face of the impact of love, she directly rejected Xiaohui - "my dictionary does not have the word love", humble work and the role of mother pulled her back to reality, in order to raise a three-year-old child, She had to sell her body, servile service every boss, give up romantic love elopement. Jia adds more complexity to the character, a pure and sweet image that contrasts with her showy career. Borrowing from Wu Yonggang's "The Goddess," Jia also blends the roles of mother and prostitute into one person, making the sacred and the humble coexist. The complexity of the characters makes us more deeply feel that they are in the marginal social status, without any choice, love, happiness and dignity are crushed in the face of reality. (Zhou Yulei., 2014)



Figure 1: Rong Lian Says To Xiaohui: "Love Is Not In My Dictionary."

Source: Jia Zhangke's Film 《A Touch Of Sin》

Zhao Qiaoqiao in "Unknown Pleasures", no fixed work, in front of the wild model, dancer and host, walking in the size of the stage between the towns, accompanied by social personnel Qiao three side. The surface looks bright and beautiful, but in daily life, she is more like Joe San's toy, Joe San let him kiss Xiao Ji, she kissed a mouthful; Being pushed back to the car by Joe three times to collapse into tears, and then need to stand in the back of the truck to perform dance; Dancing with other men in the ballroom, somehow will be separated; Marginalized social attributes make her powerless to resist, the internal and external struggle never stopped, but in the face of the strong pursuit of small Ji, she also showed the softest and purest side of the heart, she is sincere and kind, but also look forward to the arrival of romantic love.

In Jia Zhangke's works, these women become ordinary people with flesh and blood. Facing the cruel social reality, they try all kinds of ways to get some breathing space. Although life is hard, they still pursue their families, dreams and love. In short, there is still a hot core of life in their tiny bodies. When shooting marginalized women, Jia Zhangke takes an attitude of caring for the reality, and makes a record description of prostitutes, wild models, dancers and other roles with a level eye attitude. This cold perspective from an observer weakens the social moral criticism and the concept of social crime, reveals the background of their lives, and also sees their helplessness and misery in the process of maintaining their existence. ((Feng Feng., 2012)

Female Characteristics 2.: Life Experience Of Mobility

In the transitional stage of Chinese society, people's values and lifestyles are also changing along with the changes. This impact brings about the life pace of wandering state. In this situation, uncertain life trajectory and confused life state coexist. Jia Zhangke shows the living situation of these characters on the screen without reservation. In the case of inner confusion and external environment interference, as a single individual, "they" become powerless. They are eager to find a stable living space in the of the transformation of The Times. The life track of "fluidity" has become the fate of every character in Jia Zhangke's works. The female characters in his works have always been in this state, and wandering and drifting seem to have become the main melody of their lives.

In "Xiao Wu", everyone is looking for their own emotional habitat, Meimei and Xiao Wu seem to find emotional support, Meimei also in the conversation exposed their family situation and personal dreams, which seems to be a natural to find a stable ending, but in the end Meimei in the temptation of money and social status and Xiao Wu left without saying goodbye, Meimei's choice is correct? Will she experience more drifts later? Jia Zhangke did not give too much explanation, but calmly recorded the helplessness after the result appeared, perhaps this kind of flow is the normal state of her life.

In "A Touch of Sin", everyone is a rootless state, and the sad jade is the embodiment of the fate of the tragedy of mobility. Wanting a child and a stable home, she keeps in touch with a man who runs a factory in Guangdong Province for several years, and is finally beaten by his wife to end this absurd relationship. When he was working in a bath center, he was molested and insulted by a male customer, and after being fed up, he killed the molester with a knife. Xiao Yu's appearance time in the film is not much, but more than half of the time she is on the road, walking in the airport underpass home; Walking in the narrow streets of the urban and rural fringe; The mountain path between the construction site and the town. The state of walking also suggests that she can not avoid the flow of life. After being released from prison, Xiaoyu went to Shanxi County. On the stage facing the yellow sand, she saw an excerpt from Jin Opera "Jade Tang Spring". When she sang, "Su San, do you know that you are guilty? ! o you know that you are guilty? !" In front of a stone-faced audience, she suddenly realized that the experience of imprisonment and release was destined to make her spend her life wandering, and the fluidity of fate, like the prophecy in *Odious the King*, has been imprinted on her life. (Men Xiaoxuan, 2020)

In the "Still Life", Jia Zhangke is directly about a "wandering and looking for" event, Han Sanming wants to find his wife who was bought by him 16 years ago and then ran away, Shen Hong wants to find his husband who not seen for two years and then divorce, two parallel lines so came to Fengjie, they each look for, met all kinds of "flowing" bottom people, Showing a panoramic miniature of the social form. In this process, the result of the search does not seem to be so important, they in the process of a concrete to dissolve their confusion, find the current life goal, the search itself has become the meaning. (Jili Yangyang, 2019) This fluid living state seems to have become their daily life and the only way to solve problems.



Figure 2: Qiao Qiao Says To Brother Bin: "I like someone else."

Source: Jia Zhangke's Film 《Still Life》

After entering the new century, the global flow of population has become a trend, and the separation between people brings more sense of wandering. In the "Mountains May Depart", Jia Zhangke expands his perspective and is no longer confined to the small town of Shanxi. The emotional lines of Liang Zi, Zhang Jinsheng and Tao are scattered in the intersection of Fenyang. To the three person brought only the sense of loneliness and drifting. Among them, in the character setting of Tao, Jia Zhangke used more profound thinking, and unlike the previous female image, Tao is the only person stationed in the town and has achieved economic success. She is not a marginal figure, she is even more mainstream than the average mainstream character. However, her sense of loneliness and mobility is stronger than the previous characters, her father died, the husband and wife divorced, the children are far away in Australia, and the close relatives and friends around her are few and far between, although the economy is rich, but the state of no home and no roots makes her heart destined to drift without relying on. Jia Zhangke uses an internal perspective to understand modern people. Mobility no longer simply refers to changes in people and the environment, and is no longer the distinction between mainstream characters and marginal characters. The inner drift and flow is the most disturbing state, which makes people unable to let go. (Li Yizhou& Ye Lan, 2016)

Female Characteristics 3: Tenacious Character Quality

De Beauvoir said in *The Second Sex*: "Women's living conditions not as subjects but as objects mainly depend on their living environment, especially their economic status. Whether women can liberate themselves mainly depends on whether they can get rid of their economic dependence." (Zheng Min, 1993) Although women's social status has been obviously improved nowadays, their dependence on men has not been completely eliminated. However, in Jia Zhangke's female characters, they have created an image of the courage to break away from the state of attachment. In the face of the suffering of life, they are more resilient than men. They never complain and accept what life gives them, and their inherent tenacity has become their biggest common character and background. During the filming of "Ash Is Purest White", Jia Zhangke once said, "I didn't know how to write this. Because at the beginning of writing the script, I thought that the men and women in my script were the same Jianghu character, but at the end of writing, I found there was a kind of interdependent change, men became more and more fragile, women became more and more strong... Men will be more lost in the river and lake, because the mainstream value gradually becomes money and power, the emphasis on emotion, the loyalty to the self will often go with the flow. But I find that women seem to value their relationships more and are more true to themselves." (Bai Ruiwen, 2020) "Ash Is Purest White", in the brilliant time of bin brother, all men and women are a feeling and righteousness of the appearance, Bin brother fell, the tree fell monkeys scattered, only a desolate scene. And bin brother's woman Qiaoqiao, in order to protect bin brother, decisively opened a gun in the street, alone under the crime, prison for five years, after being released from prison was the bin brother merciless abandonment. But she did not give up, in the hometown town started a small business. She never had a family in her life. After she saw Bin brother sitting in a wheelchair and becoming disabled, she still had no conditions to take care of him. She from rich to poor, from love to abandonment, after experiencing ups and downs of life track, finally lonely back to the origin of life, but she did not lose hope for life, from the beginning to cling to Bin brother to later independent survival, she has been quietly tough life, she is the real "Jianghu children", her heart of morality and love more real than other men, The moral and love in her heart are more real than other men, more pure. (Zhou Shuhong, 2022)

Nana in "24 Cities", the post-80s girl, she introduced her own situation in a self-described way. She has a clear understanding of herself and independent thinking. Although her parents put her in a good school, she also knows that she is not the material to study. She yearners for freedom, unable to work steadily in a state-owned unit like the previous generation. She dares to contact new things, rushing between Hong Kong and Chengdu, and earning a high income by bringing goods to the rich. She is confident and independent and dares to challenge, although she has never done catering, she believes she can succeed, and dares to follow the changes of The Times. She is kind and filial, hardworking and tough, and dares to take on responsibilities, with the spirit left by the previous generation. She wants to buy a new house for her parents. She believes that she can fulfill her dream by working hard. Nana's life experience and attitude towards love, family and career are expressed in the simple dialogue. This is a woman of the new era, whose confident, sunny and tough character makes them dare to break the rules and express themselves.



Figure 3: Nana Says: "Maybe I will become a strong woman after all."

Source: Jia Zhangke's Film "24 Cities"

The Xiao Yu in "A Touch of Sin" introduced earlier and the Qiao Qiao in "Unknown Pleasures", one is the front desk of the massage shop, and the other is the wild model in the town, both of these marginal characters belong to the vulnerable groups in terms of social status and physical function. Although they are weak, but they never give in, in their body can feel a unique female stubbornness. In the closed male-dominated space of the massage room, in the face of the harassment of the rogue bullies, Xiaoyu did not compromise, and continuously slapped to dizziness, she still turned her head to stare at each other fiercely, and her firm eyes were full of feminist resistance. In the compartment of Qiao San van, Qiao Qiao was pushed to the seat again and again, in the face of more powerful male power, she was not afraid, and stood up and rushed to the car again and again, she was escaping male control, she wanted to complete the expression of self-consciousness. The weak body of these female characters can not compete with the strength of men, but they are not fragile, their inner tenacity is that men can not reach and beat.



Figure 4. Xiao Yu Said To The Rogue: "I just won't do it."

Source: Jia Zhangke's Film "A Touch Of Sin"

As a male director, Jia Zhangke projects his thoughts on men and women in these images. "A man's morality and tenacity are mostly in his mouth, while a woman's morality is mostly hidden in her heart, in her emotions, her family and what she believes," he once said. "A woman is purer than a man." (Zhou Hua, 2012)

In the rapidly changing and impetuous social life, Jia Zhangke still tells each story calmly and calmly with a caring perspective, he believes: "the compromise of the living environment and habits is actually a very great commitment. For those who live in the county, there will be no more miracles and no more possibilities. But self-esteem, impulsiveness, and a deep-seated upbringing are the charming nature of our friends in the county." (Lin Xudong, Zhang Yaxuan & Gu Zheng, 2003) These characters gradually broke the will and ability to control their own life, and the female images also jumped out of the simple abstract symbols, and reduced to a real, comprehensive and rich texture of life individuals. Reflecting his respect for life and pursuit of documentary aesthetics. In his films, we can see the humble nature of their marginalization, see the helplessness of their flow and change, but also feel their tough and warm heartbeat.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in the winter of 2024, Jia Zhangke brought "We Shall Be All", which he has made for 22 years and has a limited release of 22 days, to the public. He used a most ritualized form to make an affectionate confession to the past of We Shall Be All. In bin brother and Qiaoqiao decades of feelings on the entanglement Middle, Qiaoqiao in the continuous separation, transformation, growth, she said nothing, but in the non-stop farewell. At the end of the film, Qiaoqiao left Bin brother into the stream of people, "all go, do not look back", just like the theme of the fixed file poster, her eyes forward, firm and powerful, completed the film's only loud cry, so far, 22 years of the story came to an end, the female role's self-awareness has also completed a transformation from no to awakening.

The Conclusion

From the perspective of feminism, this study systematically discusses the female images in Jia Zhangke's films and their narrative strategies through text analysis, and reveals how these images reflect the living state and identity construction of women under the background of social changes in China. It is found that the female characters in Jia Zhangke's films are often

in the social fringe, and their fates are affected by the changes of The Times, urban and rural mobility, and the reshaping of social structure. However, unlike the symbolic and passive female images in traditional Chinese films, Jia Zhangke gives female characters more subjectivity. They constantly seek identity in the of flow and change, and resist the compression of their living space by the social structure with tough vitality. This focus on women's individual experience not only continued the critical writing of the social reality by the sixth generation of Chinese directors, but also expanded the boundaries of feminist film studies at the visual and narrative levels.

The conclusions of this study not only respond to the research question of how Jia Zhangke's films shape female images and their social significance, but also provide a new analytical framework for understanding the evolution of female roles in contemporary Chinese films. Through image analysis and narrative research, this paper reveals how directors break through the traditional model of the male gaze in visual language and give female characters a more complex social identity in narrative structure. This shows that Jia Zhangke's film works are not only a reproduction of the real society, but also a profound reflection on women's living conditions.

However, there are some limitations in this study. For example, the study only focuses on Jia Zhangke's works and does not make a comparative analysis of the portrayal of female images by other directors of the same period. In addition, although this study is an in-depth interpretation of film texts based on text analysis, future studies can introduce audience research or sociological investigation methods to further explore the acceptability of these female images in audiences and their sociocultural impact. Future research directions may include the horizontal comparison of female images in the films of the sixth generation directors, the dialogue between Jia Zhangke's films and global female films, and how contemporary Chinese films shape female subjectivity through new media, so as to deepen academic discussions on gender, film and social change.

To sum up, this study not only enriches the academic interpretation of Jia Zhangke's films, but also provides a new perspective for the study of Chinese feminist films. It is hoped that the analysis of this paper will stimulate more in-depth discussions on gender, identity and social change, and promote the further development of Chinese film studies in the global academic system.

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