

Re-enactment and Osmosis: The Expression of Female Consciousness in Female Documentaries

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Abstract: The French documentary "woman" focuses on the voices of women all over the world, exposing the injustices suffered by women around the world, and feminist ideas are spread by the media through artistic processing. The space of the screen reproduces women's lives and constructs each other, constituting a new type of female discourse space. The new creation concept and method of the new documentary movement coincided with the concept of the feminist movement, and its new creation concept accelerated the penetration of feminist thinking. The arrival of the fourth wave of women accelerates society's thinking about digital feminism.

Keywords: The Gaze Theory; Theory of Mirror Phase; Female Documentary; Female Consciousness

Introduction

The French documentary "Woman", which records 2000 women's self-evaluation, forms a shocking "self-portrait". In recent years, as the gender affirmative movement becomes more and more diverse, women's self-awareness begins to awaken, and the voices of women and diversity are gradually brought to the attention of society. Through this documentary, the director of "Woman" hopes to find solutions and try to reconcile the more fundamental issues between the sexes, such as sexual violence, pregnancy, education, marriage, economic independence, body shaming, menstruation and sexuality. The documentary features narratives and portraits of people, with women's experiences from different countries, colors, and ages divided into different themes. The emergence of feminist documentaries breaks the object status of women as gazed at and landscaped under the dichotomous paradigm of feminist film criticism constructed by basic psychoanalytic theory.

1. Reproduction of real life: the mirror image of women's existence in the screen space

In the real world, women face the dilemma of losing their voices, and in the field of video, patriarchal culture is dominant. The emergence of women's documentaries has made it possible to re-present women's consciousness, and the entry of women's perspectives has brought documentaries into the "her" era. 2019 saw the release of the French documentary "woman" in French theaters and at the Venice Film Festival, which quickly resonated with women. The documentary, which documents the current situation of more than 2,000 women in more than 50 countries, takes the form of group interviews. The black background of the interview room symbolizes the depressing reality, and the one-on-one face-to-face interviews allow the interviewees to reveal themselves more openly, while the high-definition camera captures the subtle changes of expression on their faces. "Woman" uses equal treatment of different identities in the same scene, with fair close-ups of each woman, amplifying their long-neglected emotions and listening to their forgotten voices.

If literature is a dream, then documentary is a mirror - a mirror of human existence. On the perceptual level, the viewer is not "gazing" at the real screen image, but at his or her own shadow, illusion or replica in a new mirror. In other words, the viewer projects her will and purpose onto the film to gain acceptance of the values and ideas conveyed by the film. To a large extent, "Woman" has generated much discussion among women's groups because the documentary covers a variety of topics and even forbidden areas, achieving an orgy of freedom of expression for female subjects, with interviewees ranging from children to old women, from white to black, and from all colors on five continents, in which everyone can see their own shadows. A large number of close-ups are used to record the self-reliance, struggle and self-help of women from different backgrounds.

Using the body as a metaphor is one of the main forms of expression in feminist literature and film. "Woman" opens with a long shot of a nude woman floating in the sea, a delicate woman dancing with the ocean fish, a sense of loneliness and powerlessness. The director places the female body in the natural landscape, interspersed with transitional shots between different subjects. The camera is the extension of our eyes and the carrier of our thoughts. The transitional shots in the different themes of the documentary "Woman" are delicate, subtle and sensual, and the female body under the camera is presented in a way that focuses between realism and idealism. Foucault once pointed out that "the body is the field of activity of many forces (discourse, institutions, power)"^[1], and the body is second to the spirit and more vulnerable to the control of power. Women often play the role of being coveted and spied on, and the female body is an imaginary symbol full of sex and eroticism in the images. In the documentary "Woman", women dominate, they no longer reject themselves and confront their bodies. "Now I can shape myself to my liking, I look to please myself, not others, and reconcile with myself, that's the key." These sober and confident statements proclaim women's dominance over their own bodies, breaking the taboo of the reproduction of patriarchal culture in the video medium and the bodilization of patriarchal society, and forming a paradigm for a discourse of resistance to male authority. Along with the development of documentary video, the director reflects on the interpretation of female body symbols in his works, presenting a more diverse female body through the language of video, no longer limited to the aesthetics of the times, and completing the gender narrative with the body as the carrier through the medium of video.

2. Feminist penetration: a new record concept for a new expression of female consciousness

The new documentary movement is more concerned with the lives of ordinary people, and the creators reflect their social responsibility and attitude in their works through a humanistic perspective. Driven by this philosophy, documentaries are gradually emphasizing the representation and reconstruction of the self, in line with the concepts advocated by the feminist movement. This new way of documenting and recording concept truly reflects the existence of women, and the feminine consciousness penetrates into it intentionally or unintentionally. Women's consciousness refers to the consciousness that women can consciously recognize their own gender, identity and social status, which is the first stage of subjectivity construction for women as social individuals.^[2] The connotation and extension of women's consciousness can change under the effect of various factors such as ethnicity, region, culture, and society. As the women's movement achieved certain results, feminism gradually evolved into femininity in order to avoid the movement being too radical. Whether it is the feminist movement or femininity, their basic starting point is "the recognition that men and women have unequal rights regardless of time and place; from this comes the belief that men and women should be equal."^[3] In the practice of women's documentary discourse, directors avoid making the female body the object of male scrutiny, but instead convey women's values and life encounters with the intention of showing their self-esteem and self-love and self-empowerment. Female documentary filmmakers may not all be feminists or familiar with feminist theories, but they all express a feminist stance in their works. As subjects of discourse, female directors, based on their female nature, instinctively feel sympathy and compassion for the protagonists of their films, and have an innate empathy and understanding for the characters in their films, which is also an intrinsic motivation for their creations.

The women's documentary "woman" breaks the traditional grand narrative model, with women as the central focus, women of different races, colors and educational backgrounds tell the happiness, pain, trials and struggles they will experience in their life. The contraction in the narrative approach of "Woman" does not mean that its connotation is narrow; it does not deliberately exaggerate the suffering caused by gender, nor does it reinforce the propaganda of female superiority, always maintaining a calm and objective stance. The film describes the disgust of sex, such as incest, subterfuge, rape and other social topics, but also states the love of women for sex; describes the hatred of domestic violence husband, but also describes the love of the bride's soon-to-be-married husband. The film allows women to make different voices and portrays women in multiple perspectives in three dimensions. It also uses sound elements to convey the psychology of women, and the three types of sounds - human voice, sound and music - are paired with each other to form the overall sound effect of the documentary. The fine processing of sound in women's documentaries can more accurately convey the state of mind of women in the film, thus giving full expression to the female consciousness in the work. To avoid the intervention of creators' subjective consciousness, women's documentaries rarely use narration or even discard it outright, for example, the vocals

in WOMAN are mainly monologues, and the vocals in Project Mercury 13, Thirty-Two use monologues, dialogues or interviews. "Giving 'their own voice', is a way for women to reacquaint themselves, discover themselves, and write about themselves." [4] In documentaries, women are able to give voice to themselves and show their true selves, and the act of connecting documentaries with original voices is inherently feminine.

Feminist ideas are disseminated through the media in the form of art, and are discussed through the reproduction of the screen space, where the media space and the real space are mutually constructed. Women are breaking away from the traditional state of women's self-pity in their lives, and are becoming freer, more active and full of vitality in their lifestyles and emotional aspirations, and are striving to realize their personal and social values. The producers of Woman say, "Some women will tell people in writing that they are in a similar situation in their families. This film inspires people to think and to build things differently - because women are a key group that can make 'change' happen. Our sponsors provide us with funding without asking for anything in return. That's how we were able to shoot around the world and do a lot of screening work with NGOs and create an NGO called WOMAN(s)." "With this, we will fund women all over the world and provide them with professional knowledge. This way they can pass on the information themselves and act as a kind of virtuous circle, no longer limited to the documentary itself, and that's where this film goes beyond previous productions."

3. Writing on Gender Issues: The Way Forward for Feminism in the Digital Media Era

The initiators of the women's movement explored and explored possible avenues for feminist practice at all levels of society. For example, American family planning pioneer Margaret Sanger, who called society's attention to women's reproductive issues through the creation of her magazine, went on to fight for women's rights through words and language. Sanger's success inspired feminists to continue their struggle and to realize the impact of discourse on rights. They tried to create their own discourse by proactively shaping women's media discourse in order to have sufficient discourse rights at the political level. In the path of feminist practice, different voices will prompt them to introspect and grow. Opposition and criticism can diagnose the root cause of the repeated failures of feminist causes, and can pierce the unrealistic ways of practice in the affirmative action movement. For example, Mrs. Shraffley's single-minded efforts to scuttle the Equal Rights Amendment led to the abortion of the ERA, the second most important achievement of the American women's movement.

The fourth wave of feminism, which uses digital media as a medium to fight cultural taboos, refers to the Internet-based women's voices represented by "me too," in which women speak out against sexual harassment on social media and support the first woman to speak out against sexual harassment. As a social movement, the "me too" movement is short-lived, but its effectiveness is undeniably significant, rebalancing the relationship between hierarchy in the workplace. The practice of new generation feminism is characterized by digitization, networking and cyborging. The public opinion formed by online solidarity defends women's rights, but at the same time the openness and interactivity of the network can lead to harassment and threats to those who voice their opinions. Sue Jackson focuses on the ridicule and hostility to feminists, but still emphasizes the cohesive power of digital networks in linking women's power around the world and forming collective action.^[5] The development of digital network technology accelerates the spread of feminist ideas, and the interactive and two-way nature of the medium broadens the channels for effective dissemination of feminist consciousness. The Internet will become the newest way for feminists to practice.

Conclusion

Women are often confronted with a mirror existence - a dilemma that comes from the prison of language and norms on the one hand, and the difficulty of self-identification on the other.^[6] Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey has proposed a "gaze theory" of cinema, arguing that "cinema is determined by a patriarchal consciousness that produces and reproduces the male gaze, a gaze that is both kinky and worshipful."^[7] The significance of women's documentaries is not only to awaken women's values, but also to make them visible. The significance of women's documentaries is not only to awaken women's value, but also to break the gender inequality. Women's documentaries convey real women's lives through the medium and convey women's consciousness in a subtle way; women's documentaries may not immediately awaken women's sense of autonomy, but they can plant a seed of self-respect, self-love and self-improvement in women's heart.

In the context of the fourth wave of feminism, "Woman" opens a dialogue among all human beings, witnessing the development of the women's movement in the new century, in which ordinary women are listened to and presented as independent individuals, a new milestone in the free expression of women's subject status in the screen space. Today, with the rapid development of digital media technology, new media forms allow people to quickly access information and actively participate in the feminist movement, but the power of a sensation can easily fade away. The road to feminism in practice is long and arduous, and only a clearer picture of the "female subject" can better facilitate the development process of gender relations and human coexistence.

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