

Living and Dying Between Black and White

-- Take the movie "Green Book" as an example

Yanran Cui *

Jiangsu Second Normal University, Nanjing 2010013, China

Abstract: Based on true events, director Peter Farrelly's "Green Book" takes the deep-rooted racial discrimination in 1960s American society as the stage, using the various encounters of the two protagonists on their journey to skillfully construct an extraordinary journey of friendship across races and classes. This article observes the film from the Angle of artistic appreciation, deeply discusses the artistic and profound humanistic connotation of the film, and feels the theme of equality, respect and love through the medium of film aesthetics.

Keywords: Green Book, Role building, Art appreciation.

1. Introduction

The film "Green Book" with its own high artistic value in the Chinese and foreign film art history occupy a position that can not be ignored. Through the portrayal of the two protagonists, Tony Vallelonga, a smooth white philistine, and Don Shirley, a elegant black man, the film shows a journey of friendship across races and classes in the 1950s. The film reveals the social conditions of racial discrimination and class differences at that time, making it an art-house film with profound humanistic concern.

2. The Dance of "Race and Ladder" in Multi-dimensional Perspective

In order to reflect the serious situation of racial discrimination in the southern region of the United States in the 1950s, director Peter Farrelly chose to use film, an art that expresses the story plot with intuitive visual images, to reflect the social phenomenon and cause the reflection of the social audience. By shaping the characters and polishing the content of the film, he showed his experience and feeling of the phenomenon of racial discrimination.

2.1. The Conflict between Racial Discrimination and Equality of All Beings

The Green Book, which is the title of the film, is in reality a Black Motor Travel Green Book, a green pamphlet produced in the context of the era when blacks were discriminated against, to record the hotels, restaurants and rest stops that blacks could enter in South America, and to serve as a "survival manual" for people of color. In the 1950s, racial discrimination was still serious in the United States. Even after the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the black slavery was abolished, but the colored glasses of the black people did not disappear. The scenes in the film, such as the broken piano of Dr. Shirley on tour, the bullying of the white people in the tavern, and Tony hitting the police during the road interrogation, are all based on real events. These scenes present serious racial contradictions and reflect the serious and real social situation of that era, which reveals the false mask of harmonious coexistence between black and white people. Exposing the objective reality of the existence of

black Americans and the racial contradictions to the audience, triggering reflection and discussion from various angles in the society.

In the film, the two protagonists struggle and grow up under racial discrimination, from the initial prejudice and estrangement to the final understanding and support, there are many scenes. For example, Dr. Shirley does not want to hold the fried chicken in his hand, but tries it under Tony's persuasion; The restaurant where Shirley is performing does not allow him to eat in public, and Tony asks why; When Sherry tries on a suit and is rejected by the manager, Tony comforts him. He once gave up jazz for touring, but played jazz at a black tavern Tony took him to. The relationship between them is delicate and subtle, and Tony is slowly letting go of "racism" as he spends time with Sherry Day by day. These are objective factors. It is true that the racial contradictions between whites and blacks are true, but people are independent individuals with equal dignity. We should not judge others according to stereotypes without knowing others themselves.

The expectation of mutual understanding among nations and true equality between people is hidden deep in the film footage of the Green Book. Let the audience understand the deep-rooted and deep-rooted racial conflicts in the society at that time, and at the same time can feel the director's deep expectation of equal social relations, which is the role of the unity of subjective and objective artistic image.

2.2. The Integration of Theme Deepening and Narrative Strategy

"Green Book" reveals racial contradictions in a wonderful and perfect form, which once became a vane of photography. Director Peter Farrelly shows a beautiful camera composition in the film, using a lot of warm and cold color contrast to express the retro feeling of the 1960s. For example, the tone of the whole film is warm, but there is always a sudden touch of turquoise in the yellow and warm tones, as if through such an inconsistent contrast of warm and cold colors, the attitude of white people is expressed. They invite Sherry to play, but they don't want to eat in the same space or use the same bathroom. On stage, a beam of light was used to highlight Shirley's performance, and the audience applauded in praise; In the shabby hotel, the dim yellow and depressing light

revealed his situation of not being accepted by the white people, and he lost the applause and light. The director is very good at using the changes of light and shadow and tone to express the profound ideological content of the film. White people accept equality and art on the surface, but deep disdain for black people in their bones.

Film is an art of reproducing the plot with an intuitive visual image. If only attention is paid to the form without deepening the content and emotion of the film, a film with "empty expression" cannot arouse the viewer's thinking and feeling. The film *Green Book*, from the first meeting between the black Dr. Shirley and the white Tony Driver, alludes to the social status of the two through the form. Black Shirley lives in an exquisitely decorated house like a palace. She wears a white robe decorated with gold ornaments at the neckline and sits in a luxurious seat on a high place. His exquisite dress is in line with his status in the upper-class society. In this form, Shirley's elegant and dignified image and his inner characteristics that are unwilling to mediocrity are directly displayed, which impresses the audience deeply. While white Tony wears a simple and plain blouse to apply for the position of tour driver, portraying a philistinism rude character, it can be seen that the form can help the actor and the character characteristics more fit.

In the latter part of the film, there is a thought-provoking contrast. "The car is parked on the right side of the road. Dr. Shirley is leaning in front of the car in a tailored suit. He looks up and sees several migrant workers with the same dark skin as Shirley on the farm ahead. They looked him in the eye, dressed in shabby clothes. Behind Sherry was Tony, a white driver with the opposite skin color, who was rolling up his sleeves and lifting the hood to fix it." Such a shot is enhanced by the form of costumes and sets to achieve a good artistic effect of contrast, and Sherry now sees not only the visual appearance of a few black migrant workers, but tens of millions of black people oppressed by the social system. The same black skin, but the fate is different. The director uses silent shots to show black people in different positions looking at each other on both sides of the street. The moment is silent, but deafening. From the moment they set foot in the alien world of North America, black people of African descent began their long journey to find themselves and seek an identity. [2] Shirley seemed to break away from the black class, he hired whites, entered the upper society, wrapped himself with knowledge, talent and money, and constrained himself with the identity of a talented pianist, not to be a victim of the social class. But it seems that he is not divorced, he has no respect after he leaves the stage, his talent is used as a tool to highlight status by the white people, he is regarded as an alien by the black people... The society did not really respect him because he was excellent, Sherry is still discriminated against, just because his skin color is black, so people ignore his dazzling achievements, amazing talent, ignore his white and clean soul.

The Doctor in the movie seems to be free from his own low fate as a black man, and it seems that he is not free from the bondage of skin color. It is the struggle of being bound and powerless by the color of his skin that is expressed in many forms and strikes a chord. It can be seen that form and content resonate in order to create a classic image and achieve a film.

2.3. The Coexistence of Character Personality and Social Commonness

The redemption of the Doctor and Tony is mutual. Their

personalities were as distinct and their ideas as always opposed, as were the colors of their skin. We say that successful artistic images need to achieve the unity of subjective and objective, and need to use perfect forms to express profound content. But only so, can we depict the image endowed with independent personality charm? Whether the role is a set of distinct personality and broad social generalization in one of the role images, whether it is a personality and common unity of the role image, these factors determine whether the role image can better express the work of art. Therefore, if the artistic image has immortal artistic vitality, it is necessary to achieve the unity of personality and commonness.

Tony, the white driver who is the protagonist of the film, is a sophisticated and smooth figure. When he does not meet Dr. Shirley, like many white people, he is prejudiced against blacks. He will throw away the water cup drunk by the black repairman at home, and is a "racist". Even later, when he was hired as Shirley's driver, he would still talk about him with others while waiting for Shirley's performance, and laugh at himself as driving a "garbage truck" for black people, revealing malice and discrimination towards black people, which is the common feature of white people in the film. But unlike the whites, Tony will fight for Shirley when she is unfairly treated. There is a saying that describes Shirley and Tony's deep friendship: "With me, you'll always have a Steinway onstage." When Dr. Shirley was invited to start his own tour of classical piano music, the first stipulation of his tour treaty was that "Shirley will only play Steinway pianos," but during the tour, some promoters put him off with old and dusty pianos. When Tony asked about it, the director said, "A black man doesn't need to play Steinway pianos," even though the incoming black man was a renowned pianist they had invited, the director was dismissive. When he realized that Shirley was despised by white people, Tony directly chose to defend the dignity of doctor with his fists. He imperceptibly changed the stereotype of black people in the process of getting along with Shirley day and night, and defended him from Shirley's point of view. This is Tony's unique personality. When Shirley taught him to write letters, he would listen attentively like a child and practice his pronunciation repeatedly. He would try to understand and respect what Shirley said, and sincerely praise Doctor's musical talent; He would appreciate and encourage Sherry from the bottom of his heart, telling him that "anyone can play Beethoven, but the music you make, everything, only you can do"; He will use his own eyes to see people, rather than blindly adhere to his own prejudiced view.

Shirley, another protagonist, also embodies the coexistence of commonality and individuality. In the film, he is a noble and elegant black pianist who belongs to "half" of the upper class. Like the upper class elite, Sherry pursues a high quality of life, wearing silk pajamas even in shabby inns and drinking whiskey every night before going to bed. Shirley was an isolated man who gave up high-paying gigs in New York to tour the South, where blacks were most discriminated against, to prove himself physically and earn respect for himself. As he said, "You can't win with your fists, only your dignity can win." Even though the white class discriminated against him, the black people felt that he was untouchable and no one supported him, he still insisted on changing the social injustice to the black people. The members of the orchestra said, "It takes a lot of courage to change people's attitudes", Tony said, "People are lonely because they don't dare to take

the first step", Shirley is talented and brave, and dares to fight for the respect and understanding of the society and the nation for himself and his compatriots, which is his unique personality. But no matter how brave Shirley is, he is also afraid that he will not be accepted into any group because he is too "different". He cries helplessly in the rain: "If I am not white enough and not black enough, then who am I?" Fear is the common denominator of ordinary people. Sherry is both afraid and fearless, which is the symbolic characteristic of the character's personality and the common denominator.

Speaking about his feelings about playing Don Shirley, actor Ali said, "Shirley is a 'complex' person. He follows the rules of humiliating treatment, accepts the fleeting approval of upper-class white people, but maintains respect for himself and ultimately wins the respect of others." It can be seen that there is "contradiction" in a classic role image. He follows the humiliating rules that black people need to follow, but he also has a self-respect that cannot be ignored. Just like in the film, he eats fried chicken with Tony in the car. Tony tells him that the bone is thrown out the window directly. Even if the bones are thrown, they also reflect the elegance of his bones, which is the charm brought to the artistic image by the unity of personality and commonness.

3. The Manifestation of The Soul of Subjectivity

Art is closely related to The Times, and art works reflect people's objective real life. As early as the 1860s, Russian Chernyshevsky put forward the view that "art reflects life". Under the influence of the difficult life of black people and the superiority of white people, films exposing racial discrimination like Green Book emerge one after another. Every work of art is produced through the creative labor of artists. Only by drawing from reality and incorporating their own thoughts and feelings can artists create works of art with originality and subjectivity.

3.1. The Perspective of Artistic Creation of "Breaking Down the Secular Prejudice"

Zhao Ji said, "The country is unlucky, the poet is lucky, and the work of great changes has been endowed." This means that the social background influences the works of art to some extent, providing artists with inspiration and motivation. "In the face of ridicule and discrimination, use your ability to win respect." This is a line from the movie Hidden Figures. In the same spirit, "Hidden Mission" and "Green Book" are stories about talented black people who have been ignored and belittled, and then take the brave step to break the prejudices of the world. The main content of their works is similar, and it is also expressed through the art form of film. However, these two films are completely different in front of people's eyes. The plot of Hidden Mission is drawn from a female perspective, and the tone of the film is ordinary and warm, but everywhere is full of power; "Green Book" highlights the conflict in a witty style, and slowly opens the curtain of mutual redemption through the inexpressiveness of middle-aged men. Director Peter Farrelly is good at making comedies. As a literary film, Green Book is quite different from his previous works. At the same time, it can also reflect the continuity of the director's personal creative style without being abrupt. [3] It uses the tone of comedy to weaken the heavy topic of racial discrimination and form a unique black humor. Although Green Book is not entirely a comedy, it

conveys more artistic tension through comedy and opens a new development direction and expression space for comedy through imaginative emotional expression. The film reflects the tragic theme of "racial issues" by showing the subtle emotions in the "world of friendship", while integrating tragic and comedic elements. To enrich its cultural connotation.[4]

3.2. The Artistic Expression of "Redemption and Reconciliation"

Through the ages, there have been countless outstanding works of art. These works have survived because they exude their own unique charm, unique and irreplaceable. Driving Miss Daisy, a film with similar themes to Green Book, won the Best Picture Oscar like Green Book. Both films tell the story of black and white people forced to get along with each other under the background of racial discrimination. "Driving Miss Daisy" is the story of a proud white grandmother and a loyal black driver, while "Green Book" is the experience of a talented black doctor and a smooth white driver on tour. On the same theme, different directors have made different films. For example, Driving Miss Daisy tells the story of two protagonists who finally accept each other and become friends despite the secular prejudice. It conveys the warmth of alliance and mutual help among disadvantaged groups in different races and social status. The Green Book emphasizes redemption and reconciliation, and seeks equality and respect. The similar creation background and characters of the two films present completely different thoughts and feelings. This is the subjectivity of works of art, because of the artist's main style imprint, works of art can have a different self-expression from other works.

3.3. The "Multi-Interpretation" Perspective of Art Appreciation

As an old Chinese saying goes, "different people have different opinions, and different people have different opinions," it is inevitable that there are individual differences in art appreciation. As Shakespeare, the author of Hamlet, said, "In the eyes of a thousand readers, there are a thousand Hamlets." Everyone has his own feeling and understanding of works of art when he is engaged in aesthetic activities.

The protagonist of the Green Book, black Shirley, is a wise and talented doctor who should be shining, confident and clear. However, because she lives in the background of racial discrimination, she is bound by the thick skin color, and her bones are still inferior. White people in the upper class praised and marveled at Shirley's talent, or they were surprised that black people could have such high knowledge and attainments, instead of only doing low and cheap labor. But even though Shirley was excellent, he did not fit in. It was a great irony that white people, who appreciated his moving music in the concert hall, would not allow him to use the bathroom in the concert hall. They still essentially saw Shirley as a man to be manipulated and played with. When he was shouted down from eating in the clubhouse and only in the dressing room, none of the white people who ostensibly respected him spoke up for him. As for the main character Tony, some of the Internet posts say that he is always good, because he loves his wife, makes money and takes care of his family, and will tell his wife everything outside, even if it is a small thing like eating a hamburger; Others think he is bad, because he is rude and unreasonable, and even tried to steal a rock without paying at a rest stop, thinking that he changed in the process of getting along with the Doctor and gradually

became sincere and polite. We can not deny that Tony initially did not care about the rules of order, just like his own self-deprecation, "I live on the street like a black life", but later he was influenced by Shirley, began to learn manners, and changed himself. Everyone's interpretation of artistic image and artistic content is different, and interpretation is also our secondary creation of film art, which is the subjectivity of art appreciation. It can be seen that subjectivity runs through the whole process of artistic production activities.

4. Aesthetic Brushstrokes

Both film and TV are indispensable entertainment in People's Daily life. When the film and TV came into being, the film and television literature with aesthetic and literary characteristics also came into being. [5] The reason why film works are popular is that they can give people spiritual enjoyment, because as an art is a special spiritual production, "Green Book" as the best picture award of the 91st Academy Awards, has been appreciated and respected by many film critics and artists. What is the aesthetic value of this work? Part of the film is a natural environment. Through the lens layout and lighting, it brings comfortable and beautiful visual experience to meet the aesthetic needs of viewers. The light and shade processing of the lens is appropriate to the rhythm of the content, bringing people pleasure and pleasure in spirit.

4.1. The Unique Presentation of the "Reality and Ideal" Lens

Picasso said, "Art is the nature of man, the radiant bloom of aesthetic consciousness." Art is the process of creation and expression of aesthetic consciousness, as well as the medium of communication and dissemination of aesthetic consciousness. As a work of art, Green Book transcends the limitations of time and space, passing on the aesthetic concepts of that era influenced by The Times and culture to the audience. By appreciating this film, the audience can have a deep understanding of the history and culture of racial discrimination in the Americas, enrich their cognition, construct their world view and improve their aesthetic vision. Just as Wagner said, art is the wing of aesthetic consciousness, which takes us across the boundaries of reality to explore the endless mystery of beauty.

4.2. The Close Integration of Emotion and Philosophy

In the creative process, the director transformed "truth" into "beauty", sublimating the reality of life with racial discrimination and contradictions into the reality of art. The black Doctor in the Green Book is the aesthetic crystallization of "truth, kindness and beauty". He strives for the respect of others and strives for self-improvement. From watching the film, we can feel that he does not give up and insists that everyone's rights are equal. Because the characters have good moral character, viewers naturally realize the importance of mutual respect and understanding in the process, so as to get positive guidance. Another character in the film is also the epitome of "truth, goodness and beauty", and that is Tony's wife Dolores. At the beginning of the film, the director expresses her "goodness" through the scene in which she warmly offers a black repairman a drink of water and a rest. Unlike other white people, she does not discriminate against black people. She does not despise others easily and is always polite. After her husband applied to be a black driver, she did

not object, but encouraged her husband to go out and see the world and broaden his horizon after the doctor. This is her real way of treating people, which is "true". When she received the letter Shirley taught her husband to write, she kept it well and shared it with her sister-in-law. When the doctor came to her husband's house, she gave him a warm hug and said, "Thank you for teaching him to write." At this moment, a beautiful image of a woman's intellectual kindness jumped in front of her eyes, such a beautiful image can always impress people will be portrayed in the viewer's heart, she deserves the sentence "and you love is the easiest thing I have done", so the aesthetic nature of art in the final analysis is the crystallization of "true, good and beautiful".

4.3. The Sublimation of Aesthetic Value

As Kandinsky said, "Only when the form has an effect on the mind can we understand and appreciate a work; And only through form can we understand content and appreciate a work." Beauty in content and beauty in form go hand in hand. Sherry and Tony have seen a lot of beautiful scenery on their long tour. The director used bright colors, soft lines and changing forms of light and shadow to present the beautiful scenery like oil painting with the lens to achieve formal beauty. The relationship between the protagonist and the two is also slowly changing, from Shirley from refusing to eat fried chicken, unwilling to talk in the car, slowly into a person who can talk and laugh with Tony, eat fried chicken in the car at will, the relationship between the two changes through different light and shadow changes reflected, Shirley breaks the bondage of her own, slowly out of the lonely image portrayed. Film as a visual art form, color plays a crucial role in it. [6] As the "wind vane" of film aesthetics, "Green Book" sets off the lighting and background music to make the content more vivid. In the elegant white tavern, the cold lighting and elegant and distant classical music reflect the white people's rejection of the colored people, highlighting the deep manifestation of the black and white racial contradictions. However, in the black saloon, the warm light and bright and disrespectful jazz music reflect the mutual trust and solidarity between blacks. Even though the Doctor was dressed in a suit, unlike his casually dressed compatriots, people looked at him without discrimination. On the contrary, when he played moving, soulful jazz, people cheered him, musicians joined him, and Sherry felt his soul belong here for the first time. When the beauty of form and the beauty of content are unified, the art will have a high aesthetic value.

5. A Functional Artistic Bridge

In recent years, we can see the continuous improvement of many films with profound ideological core. For example, the patriotic series "My Motherland", "Changjin Lake" and "Wolf Warrior" have deepened the patriotic thoughts of the Chinese people. For example, "30,000 Miles Along the Yangtze River", "Ne Zha" and "Monkey King Is Back" such films represent the progress of our country's animation technology; Films such as Goodbye Mr. Loser, Hello Li Huanying and Walk Alone on the Moon trigger people's reflection through comedy. Another example is the Wandering Earth, which has become a milestone in the history of Chinese film science and technology films. With the development of economy, the development of modern film art is also very rapid, and different film and television works have different aesthetic functions.

5.1. Cognition: The Mirror of Society

Movies reflect the culture of The Times. People can construct their own world view and broaden their vision by watching movies, which is the aesthetic cognitive function of film art. We know from books or news that there is serious racial discrimination between black and white people in the southern United States, but we can't personally experience the scene of black people's survival distress under the pressure of racial contradictions. The Green Book allows us to see countless blacks suffering from the devastation of The Times, and to feel the pressure and injustice of black life in that era. Through the portrayal of the film, we can recognize the scene of the era itself and the social status quo at that time. When we watch this touching scene in front of the screen, we can realize the importance of equality, feel the harm caused by racial discrimination in that period, and understand the background of the period and the difference between the new and old cultures.

5.2. Education: The Beacon of Morality

Film art can "emote people" and reveal racial contradictions in front of the audience through the lens of real life in the film, so that people can be freely and unconsciously infected and realize the cruelty of racial discrimination in a subtle way. In "Green Book", Dr. Shirley is not respected but still insists on maintaining his own decency. The scene of him being beaten up by a group of white men in a tavern; Scenes of him playing jazz at ease in black saloons; Shots of him knocking on Tony's door on Christmas Eve and being embraced by Dolores... The presence of these mirrors makes viewers feel sorry for him, empathize with Sherry, and learn to respect others. These scenes let us know that people's self-esteem is to fight for themselves, should not give up themselves, adhere to high standards for themselves, do not have a dark truth to others, this is the true portrayal of "edutainment".

5.3. Aesthetic: Spiritual Comfort

Although "Green Book" is a heavy topic of racial conflict film, but the director Peter Farrelly is good at comedy, he uses humorous tone to weaken the heavy content of the film, with a light-hearted rhythm to reveal the heavy sad facts. The film adopts the way of double male interpretation, and combines the crude white Tony and the extraordinary black Dr. Shelly in a counterpoint. With the two perspectives of "black" and "white" and Dr. Shelly as a microcosm, it shows the audience the hesitancy and confusion of the American black group in

the face of the two cultures of "black" and "white" in the 1960s. [7] Such a special style makes the viewer's heart not dull, depressed and heavy. In such emotional experience, they can feel the injustice of Dr. Shirley under racial contradictions, and feel the redemption and acceptance of each other by the protagonists, so as to resonate with the characters and reach the "peak experience".

6. Conclusion

In the 20th century, racial segregation led to serious social class contradictions. Under the white regime, blacks could only sell cheap labor for whites to use. The contradiction between white capitalists and black laborers triggered the most important social contradiction, and the problem of racial segregation caused by the contradiction could not be ignored. [1] The director's novel portrayal of the role brings a sense of contrast to the audience, reveals the relationship between racial discrimination and economic culture, and deepens the theme of the film about love, freedom and respect. It is a deeply rooted race and ladder dance. "Break the prejudice, the world is not black and white", coexistence is the meaning of the existence of the Green Book.

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