

The Brief Film Analysis of *Carry on Dancing/Gai Juk Tiu Mou*

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Abstract: This brief film analysis will look for a comedy *Carry on Dancing/Gai Juk Tiu Mou*, co-directed by Leung Po-chi and Kam Kwok-leung in 1988. It will provide a closely content analysis from aesthetic perspective on how the film language participates in the shape of personae for different characters. By this analysis, I aim to provide a typical exemplar on the coalesce between personae shape in textual sense and its artistic visual representation by film language in Hong Kong genre films.

Keywords: Hong Kong cinema, Film analysis, Chinese cinema, Genre films.

1. Introduction

Carry on Dancing/Gai Juk Tiu Mou, a comedy co-directed by Leung Po-chi and Kam Kwok-leung in 1988, is the subject of this film analysis. The story is about when entering a mental hospital, the lady Chieh Chang Chang switches identities with her twin sister Chieh Chi Ao, and the younger sister Chi Ao flees to locate her ex-husband in society. The two characters are both played by Cora Miao. I would like to concentrate on how the cinematography and mise-en-scene cooperate to convey different characters' personae, as Ryan and Lenos clarifies what a film analysis should do is to deconstruct the meaning of these film techniques. [1]

2. Close Analysis on Film Text

First, the camera movement and shot choice rhythmically match Cora Miao's portrayal of the sisters. The camera begins

with a medium shot or close shot to show Chieh Chi Ao's exaggerated facial emotions and body movements that indicate she is feeling anxious to portray her as extroverted, easily anxious, and defiant. While Chi Ao is rebellious in her interaction with the camera, the camera movement also wants her moving position to show the audience her anxiousness. An illustration of this is when she phones someone to locate her spouse while scowling. Then she moves, trying to flee from the viewfinder. To protest the camera to seek her anxiety, she only shows her back to the camera. Nevertheless, the camera still gives a following shot to ameliorate her position back to the center of the screen.

Similarly to the sequence above, when the quarrel happens between her and her husband, the camera follows her in a medium shot, giving a track to the right side to "correct" her position to the center of the screen as well as presents her angry face in the context of her exaggerated body languages.



On contrary, the camera adopts a steady, stationary position to capture the motions of the more reserved and introverted older sister Chang Chang: She meticulously approaches the camera from a distance while making gestures or using body language that is not as extreme as Chi Ao. Chang Chang constantly submits to the camera, so even when she departs, the camera has no desire to follow her. As a result, the camera moves in sync with the actors' motions to help create their personalities.

Cunningham notes, costumes are constructed to convey the character's personality. [2] Chi Ao typically dresses in a full skirt, a striped shirt, and a plaid blazer. The mix and match of different styles of clothing show the unconventional and individualistic self of a young modern woman. Chi Ao's complete body outfit is hardly ever seen in the movie. Instead, the close-ups always focus on a woman donning a red plaid blouse and jacket to reflect the more masculine aspects of her character, such as her drive and bravery.



The full shots for the skirt are hardly shown. This sort of decision on the shot may attempt to weaken the representation of femininity in Chi Ao's body. Hence, the engagement between the clothes and shots accurately conveys the modernness of Chi Ao's neutral gender configuration. Additionally, the blazer and shirt represent western-style culture so that the costumes also pass cultural meaning visually. Therefore, the selection of costumes for Chi Ao may imply that this 1980s Hong Kong modern woman appreciates the western cultural style more than Chinese identity.

Clothing color also visually defines characters. When a character's demeanor is depicted in red, Chi Ao typically perceives them as bold and outgoing. Chi Ao is outgoing and constantly ready to lead in social situations. Even in challenging circumstances like looking for her unfaithful spouse to file a claim, she never suppresses her rage.

Old Sugar Man's case strongly supports Stutesman: the utilize of the color and shape of film clothes can serve to augment for the thoughts on sex and authority. [3] Sugar Old Man wears the late-Qing-style coat to convey his conservatism, and old-fashionedness. The gloomy black not only suggests his old age and morbid condition but also shows

his suppression of unchallengeable patriarchy in the eyes of young woman Chi Ao. Consequently, in a full shot that is only occasionally used for Chi Ao, Chi Ao candidly confesses that he makes her think about her father and she does not comprehend feng shui while standing in front of him as he lies on the bed. This scene amply illustrates the power dynamic between the superior Old Sugar Man and the inferior Chi Ao.

Setting significantly interplays with the costumes to create a contrast between characters and environment and highlight the characters. The interior of Chang Chang's home is decorated with traditional items like bamboo wallpaper, timber seats, and writing. These clash with the contemporary clothing that Chi Ao is wearing, while suiting Chang Chang's traditional Chinese profession as a feng shui expert. Chi Ao is therefore unmistakably an alien shunned by this traditional setting. Chi Ao is, however, permanently fixed in the screen's center, as was mentioned above. Furthermore, the Chinese classical setting in the home is not shown in a pure scenery shot. Such cinematic language creates a situation where, rather than the setting, the audience's eyes are constantly drawn to Chi Ao's modern appearance.



The traditional Chinese attire worn by Sugar Old Man clashes with his home's Western-style décor. The camera tracks Chi Ao as she describes the western décor in more depth. The visual emphasis switched from objects to characters when Sugar Old Man emerged. The difference between Sugar Old Man's setting and costume also demonstrates how firmly he identifies as Chinese despite living in a Western environment and not agreeing with Western society.

3. Conclusion

Overall, the brief film analysis for *Carry on Dancing* has demonstrated that the shot selection, the camera movement, the costumes, and the color directly shape the expression of characters personae and the setting assists this expression in its engagement with other elements in the film.

References:

- [1] Cunningham, Rebecca. *The Magic Garment: Principles of Costume Design*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2009.
- [2] Ryan, Michael and Lenos, Melissa. *An introduction to film analysis: Technique and meaning in narrative film*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing. 2020.
- [3] Stutesman, Drake. "Costume design, or what is fashion in film?." In *Fashion in Film*, edited by Munich, Adrienne, 17-39. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.