

A Brief Analysis of Hirokazu Kore-eda's Image Style

-- Taking the Film "Our Little Sister" as an Example

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Abstract: In the late 1990s, Hirokazu Kore-eda was praised as the embodiment of the "new wave of Japanese cinema." From the earliest *"Magic Light"* which won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, to the widely spread *"Walk"* and then to the Palme d'Or winner *"Shoplifters"*, all of these prove that this Oriental director full of life philosophy has brought his lifelong thinking about life and death, family and society into his plain and warm works, which have great research value. This paper will discuss the screen structure of *"Our Little Sister"*, starting from the audio-visual language, narrative structure, and spiritual core that the director wants to convey. It can be concluded that the film *"Our Little Sister"*, directed by Hirokazu Kore-eda, has a warm, natural, fresh, and lively image style that is delicate and close to life.

Keywords: Our Little Sister, audio-visual language, aesthetics of mourning

1. Introduction

Cinema is the seventh art form, and compared to the other six, it is more expressive. The picture style of a cinema work is intimately tied to the creative notion and aesthetic sensibility of the director. This paper will use Hirokazu Kore-eda's film *"Our Little Sister"* as an example to analyze Hirokazu Kore-eda's image style and explore how he creates a film world with his personal style through lens language, visual symbols and other means. Those who know Hirokazu Kore-eda know that his films often include long shots, funerals, cooking and meals, etc., so it is particularly important to understand the director's thinking behind these elements. This paper will analyze some classic and obvious details and elements in his films, so as to better understand his philosophy of film creation, as well as discuss and think about related issues such as film language and image narration.

2. Unique Audio-visual Language

Hirokazu Kore-eda's preference for long shots, depth of field shots, and fixed shots is a must. He is obsessed with using simple and impersonal shots to express the unique meaning of his films [1]. Hirokazu Kore-eda once said in his autobiography that movies are not meant to criticize people, and the director is not God or judge. He hoped that when people return to their daily life after watching his movies, their views on life will change [2]. This may be an opportunity for audiences to observe daily life with a critical perspective. So, this shooting method also makes the actors can put more into

their emotions, let their emotions flow in the shot, restore the plain and plain life scene to the maximum extent. This can be best seen in the following two long shots of the *Hay Street Diary*:



Figure 1: Image of four sisters standing together at the window looking at the plum tree.



Figure 2: Picture of four sisters walking on the beach together.

The two most memorable scenes in the entire movie are formed by these two calm, complementary shots. Figure 1 is a long fixed shot using the frame-in-picture method, which frames four half-sisters in a narrow space that is small but not crowded. Instead, a sense of happiness arises spontaneously because sisters get together. The continuous shooting of long shots can completely convey this warm atmosphere to the audience through the actors' continuous performances, as if the audience can also be a member of the family and feel the happiness on everyone's face. The long moving lens in Figure 2 also plays a role in creating a realistic effect. The scheduling of four people in the picture is very interesting. From left to right, there is the eldest sister, the second sister, the third sister, and the fourth sister Ring. The blood ties became even more precious after these funerals. The four sisters later realized that only their relatives are the staunchest havens in the world, so that later, in the long shot lasting half a minute, Wayan slowly said: Father must be a gentle man, although it is quite useless. At the end of the film, although Yukiko has not completely forgiven her irresponsible father, she has completely made peace with life and then walked away with her sisters. These pictures that seem to happen every day and grow around ordinary people are exactly the best bridge linking the film and the audience.

In addition to the cinematography, of course, voiceovers, filters, a soundtrack and the occasional metaphorical montage are all important factors in the film's success. The cicada chirps at the beginning of the film, which shows that Hirokazu Kore-eda is a very clever director. He thought of giving clear information about the time of year through voice-over. More importantly, it enriched the layers of the picture, and even made me think that the picture had "synaesthesia". From this film, we can see a vibrant island scene through the chirping of birds and cicadas and the sound of sea waves

outside the picture. We can also feel the gentle sea breeze blowing from the end of the picture. The filter of the film starts with a blue-blue color, which has a refreshing taste of traditional Japanese style. In the end, it turns into a blue-white color, which is a bit overexposed, but the texture is still clear. Compared with Hirokazu Kore-eda's other film "*Walk Without a Stop*", the color of "*Our Little Sister*" is fresher and brighter[3]. After all, the main character is a girl, but the overall color is elegant and low saturation, and the audience can obviously feel the pure sense and dynamic life of Haijie through the tone of the film.

The occasional metaphorical montage is actually an important part of Eda's audio-visual skills. For example, when Wayan and Wayan see a chimney on their way home after attending a funeral, the slow smoke from it is actually a metaphor for their father's fading life, which is similar to the broken tiles in the bathroom. The latter is a metaphor for the discord in the family relationship, suggesting that the family is about to move towards a state of disintegration. All in all, it's a restrained expression of negative emotions.

3. The Spiritual Core Behind Hirokazu Kore-eda's Works – The Aesthetics of the Matter of Sorrow

The word Muai originates from the Tale of Genji and means to feel about all life carriers except human beings. In the Tale of Genji, it is written: "The wind rises by chance and dissipates." The lament over the mysterious fate extends to praise for death. This "still dying" meaning is mostly reflected in artistic works, which are full of mercy and compassion, which is exactly the underlying logic of the aesthetics of mourning [4]. The word "sorrow of objects" is a literary concept put forward by the Japanese classical master Honju Xuanchang. It is not only a lament for the things that will pass away, but also contains a kind of Zen meaning of the unity of heaven and man [5]. The aesthetics of mourning are reflected through food in *Our Little Sister*. In *Our Little Sister*, good food is not only carefully cooked food, but also memories left by the family. There are six ordinary meals in the film, and the culture of the home is also the culture of the table. For Xiaoling's first meal at home, Wayan made tempura with an old pot, a creaking oil pot and steaming fried food, full of fireworks and a sign that life at home would be more lively. In the canteen she used to go to, Xiaoling found that the fresh fish toast her father used to make for her was originally created by the canteen man. Wayan's seafood curry was the only dish her mother, who didn't like to cook, taught her. The third sister, Qianjia, is handy with the fish steak paella made by grandma. All the food connects the memories of the four sisters growing up. The aesthetics of "loveless" embodies the process of keenly experiencing and peacefully appreciating things, and food just fits this feature. Good food will disappear as it unfolds, but it can bring people great comfort and enjoyment. In "*Our Little Sister*," the characters' loved ones inherit and remember their daily meals. In each meal, the characters' bland dialogue reveals their memories of their loved ones. A series of delicious foods explain the aesthetics of "mourning but not hurting": enjoying the food intently and calmly accepting the lost time [6].

There are three funerals in *Kaijie Diary*. In Hirokazu Kore-eda's opinion, funerals are a part of life, and death is a part of life. At the end of the film, the four sisters walk along the beach after attending the funeral. The slow-moving long shot follows the footsteps of several people. The abandoned eldest sister has been holding a grudge against her father, but because of the arrival of the four sisters, she opens her heart and slowly reconciles with life. At the same time, the film also shows a lot of fleeting images: fireworks, cherry blossoms, etc. Hirokazu Kore-eda managed to wrap hope in sadness and call for beauty with simplicity. All these are the embodiment of the aesthetics of sorrow in his images.

4. Conclusion

This paper analyzes Hirokazu Kore-eda's image style one by one from the aspects of lens language, real scene and characterization, detail processing and so on. Hirokazu Kore-eda once said in his autobiography that movies are not meant to criticize people, and the director is not God or a judge. He hoped that when people return to their daily lives after watching his movies, their views on life would change. This may be an opportunity for audiences to observe daily life with a critical perspective. So we can get a general idea of Hirokazu Kore-eda's creative style from this passage, which is to tell a fictional story in a calm and objective way like a documentary. Of course, there is some spiritual core that Hirokazu Kore-eda wants to express, which this research haven't covered yet. For example, his thoughts on unconventional families, which musical instruments are used in these films and what effects they can bring, have not been analyzed in detail. Therefore, the research on Eikazu Eda's films has a strong Japanese view of life and death. Family values and the aesthetics of mourning are very worthy of further discussion.

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