The Possibility of Slow Cinema: The Return of Subjectivity

Shi Xiong

Lanzhou Univ, Sch Chinese Languages & Literatures, Lanzhou, 730000, Gansu, Peoples R China

xiongshilzu@163.com

Abstract. Under the background of modernity and accelerated society, the acceleration of science and technology, the acceleration of social change, and the acceleration of the pace of life have led to different degrees of alienation, and the subjectivity of individual human beings has been gradually lost in the process, and the individual has gradually moved towards emptiness. As a new art form in recent years, slow movie can, to a certain extent, help the subject to reach the realm of emotional resonance or even emotional release, and at the same time, help the individual to re-examine the self and the surrounding world, and rebuild the emotional connection between the self and other people, so as to achieve the effect of the return of subjectivity.

Keywords: Slow Cinema; Subjectivity; Social Acceleration.

1   Introduction

Since the term "slow movie" was coined in 2003, the "fast-slow" movie debate has become a new academic focus, but there has never been a clear standard for "fast" and "slow" movies. However, there has never been a clear standard for "fast" and "slow" movies, and the discussion of "fast and slow" has often fallen into a solid binary pattern. The unique aesthetic characteristics and viewing experience of "slow movies" have a unique impact and inspiration on the audience, and can even prompt the return of human subjectivity, which is of great significance to our understanding of "slow movies" and thinking about the "fast-slow dispute". It is of great significance to our understanding of "slow movie" and thinking about the "fast-slow controversy".

2   Lack of Subjectivity Under an Accelerated Society

The society of modernity in general has been showing a state of constant acceleration, and individuals have to face the problem of lack of subjectivity as they are carried along by the waves of the times. The acceleration of the society of modernity can be divided into three aspects according to the analysis of Rosa's The Birth of the New Alienation: an Outline of the Critical Theory of Social Acceleration[1]. The first is the

most obvious and quantifiable technological acceleration, which has brought about an intentional acceleration in the productive goals of transportation and communication. High-speed rail can get experts from big cities to the front lines of disaster zones in a matter of hours, drones can get fruit from production areas to consumers on time, email has revolutionized the old sense of slowness in correspondence, and the telephone has prompted people to be available to be called at all times. In the acceleration of science and technology, the global and the individual gradually become a whole, and the individual is included in the huge global body of time and space, and highly tends to be integrated, in which the individual characteristics are gradually covered up, and the whole is tacitly recognized as the characteristics of the individual, which leads to a kind of disinterestedness of people gradually, and they cannot find the real meaning of the individual. Secondly, it is the acceleration of social change, the progress of technology brings people faster and faster acceleration of feelings, attitudes and values, buzzwords and styles, social relations and obligations, these fixed patterns in the past long life, had to be tested and impacted in the acceleration, short videos and other social platforms can create focus one after another, challenge public order and morals, subvert the mass cognition. The constant acceleration of social change makes people have to change their speed, whether to accelerate to catch up with the change, or to face the change at an even speed, or to decelerate against the change. But at the same time the relationship between people also changes, and the relationship system between people becomes fragile and uncomfortable. There is an eagerness for a relational progress or affirmation. Finally, there is an acceleration of the pace of life. Technological development leads to progress at the social level, which in turn leads to an acceleration of social change, which in turn leads to an acceleration of the pace of life in the individual. Eating and sleeping and other daily activities began to pursue a kind of fast, businessmen's food production, therefore, there is a pre-prepared dishes, can provide consumers with dishes in a very short period of time, how to eat faster and eat faster became the evaluation of the restaurant standards. And for sleeping, the market appeared a large number of sleep aid software, through a variety of scientific ways to fall asleep quickly. The idea behind this is that people have less time to rest and have to speed up their rest in an attempt to get quality rest so they can do things properly during work hours.

Under this accelerated society, people's senses are becoming more and more convergent, and the speed of their senses is becoming faster and faster, so that they have to face a world that is becoming more and more convergent and ambiguous, instead of being able to feel a world that is clear and real, and that is characterized by their own individual styles. In the long run, it is extremely easy for individuals to lose themselves in the convergence, unable to find their own meaning, and thus falling into the abyss of meaninglessness. At the same time, the individual gradually indulges in the pleasure brought by technology, the short-lived stimulating pleasure repeatedly impacts the brain nerves, the meaning and connotation are lost, and the individual is reduced to a pleasure-consuming machine, which only consumes mechanically, loses the high-level aesthetic interest, and becomes an individual with no connotation, a kind of disconnected state.

As a result, there is what Rosa calls an accelerated alienation of society, an alienation of the subject and of society in every sense of the word, i.e., a deep, structural distortion between the self and the world[4]. The alienation of space means that in the age of digitization and globalization, physical distance and social closeness are not directly related anymore, and that convenient networks allow people to communicate anytime, anywhere, and across oceans, directly altering people's perception of physical space. At the same time, the alienation of objects also represents a change in the production and consumption of objects by human beings, and the updating of the consumption of objects is getting faster and faster, and the act of mending is disliked as too slow. In addition, the alienation of man's actions is also a result of the aforementioned alienation, the inability to genuinely do what he wants to do and thus forgetting what he wants to do and who he wants to be. That is, human subjectivity disappears in the process. The competitive pressures and consumerist values of modern society also intensify the anxiety and restlessness of individuals, further weakening their subjectivity.

As a result, subjectivity deficits have a negative impact on individuals' mental health and social relationships. In terms of mental health, the lack of subjectivity may lead to self-denial, loss of value and other problems. In terms of social relationships, subjectivity deficit may exacerbate alienation and conflict between people. Therefore, it is particularly important to find an effective way to help people return to their subjectivity. Slow movie is just such a way, which provides an opportunity for the audience to return to the inner world with its unique artistic methods and deep movie-viewing experience.

3   The Unique Aesthetic Qualities and Depth of the Moviegoing Experience of a Slow Movie

French film critic Michel Simon first proposed the concept of "Cinema of Slowness" in 2003 to refer to and describe the films of Béla Tarr, Cai Mingliang, Abbas Kiarostami and others. Whether in terms of narrative efficiency and image rhythm, or in terms of the audience's reception experience, the films of these directors all show a distinct sense of "slowness"[2]. However, the "slow" here also carries a strong impressionistic critical color, and easily falls into the subjective "fast" and "slow" dispute, which cannot provide a basic scale for film criticism and research. It cannot provide a basic yardstick for film criticism and research. Later, British film scholar Matthew Flanagan, in his article "The Aesthetics of Slowness in Contemporary Cinema", continued Simon's proposal, further clarified the basic connotation of "slow cinema", and summarized the most typical stylistic characteristics of "slow cinema": the use of long shots, the discrete and simple narrative, and the use of the "slow cinema". The most typical stylistic features of "Slow Cinema" are summarized: the use of long shots, the discrete and simple narrative mode, and the significant emphasis on quietness and routine. Since then, "Slow Cinema" has become an important concept in the study of contemporary art films, documentaries and experimental images, and has been widely noticed and discussed by many film researchers. As a matter of fact,

"slow cinema" is not a film genre, but a common aesthetic tendency in the video practice of contemporary art film creators: on the narrative level, it is prominently manifested in simple, non-dramatic storytelling, with a lack of events and actions, and often with plot breaks and gaps; on the video level, it usually employs fixed cameras, long shots and telephoto lenses, and is characterized by a lack of detail. On the image level, it usually uses fixed camera positions, long shots and distant shots, and non-continuous editing to create a slow visual rhythm; on the spiritual level, the "slow movie" highlights the perception of time in the everyday landscape and static stretches.

Unlike the formulaic plots and fast-paced editing of Hollywood genre films, the most important features of slow movies are their slow pace, long shots and static images. Narrative level usually adopts a daily narrative, the content of the narrative is mostly the daily life of the characters, gossip, walks, etc., and there are few strong dramatic conflicts. The cinematic language is mostly shot in fixed shots, with telephoto shots and long shots being used interchangeably, and close-ups are rarely used. In addition, in a few works, non-professional actors are often used, and the expressive power of the movie characters is greatly weakened, and they will not have the distinctive body movements and emotionally powerful expressions of professional actors, returning to ordinary people. For example, Li Ruijun's Hidden in the Dust and Smoke chose to let his own aunt Wu Renlin play the role of farmer Ma Youtie in the movie. Wu Renlin himself is a farmer in Gansu Province, and letting him play a farmer, although not strongly infectious, but his simplicity and realism are highly convincing, making people think about the fate of an ordinary farmer in the rural areas of Northwest China[3].

The cinematic language of slow cinema does not do its best to attract the audience's attention throughout the viewing process, does not urge the audience to concentrate on the film all the time, but gives the audience the space and time to wander into individual historical memories, as well as stagnant contemplation of the film's content, during the viewing process. Long shots and static images also allow the viewer to be completely quiet, to be able to work beyond the visual, to put their minds into thinking about the movie, thus generating a slow experience. The use of long shots also has a sense of subtlety that cannot be ignored, and can give the audience a sense of quiet and introspective experience.

At the same time, the narrative of the slow movie has always been not in accordance with the traditional single-line narrative or linear narrative structure of the story, often using non-linear narrative or multi-line narrative, providing the audience with multiple and open interpretation space[4]. For example, Quentin's film "Lowlife Fiction" uses a circular non-linear narrative structure against the norm, telling the cause of story one in the middle of the movie, and the origin of story two at the end of story one, which is interlocked to allow the audience to see the encounters of the story's protagonists in different story lines, and the goodness of human beings is defined because of the different stories. It is worth mentioning that the open-ended ending of the movie is contrary to the norm of Hollywood blockbusters, giving the audience unlimited space for imagination.

In addition, slow movies often use natural sound effects, will not add too many sound effects in the post-production period, and face the audience with the most genuine sound, whether it is its sense of realism or immersive sense can make the audience in the psychological soothing and slowing down, or can greatly enhance the audience's perceptual and emotional experience.

Therefore, slow movies can bring immersive viewing experience to the audience to a great extent, and the audience is more likely to resonate with the movie, whether it is to empathize with the characters or experience their emotions, which is an effect that cannot be achieved by the straightforward and straightforward narration of Hollywood blockbusters. In the process of watching the movie, the audience is also able to carry out self-talk, complete the real self-reflection, attention is not all consumed in real time, while watching the movie to complete the reflection of their own care, complete a sense of self-talk and self-reflection[5]. As a result, the viewers can release their emotions and feel empathy and satisfaction in the process of watching the movie, and thus obtain a kind of tranquility and balance. Slow movie is not only a kind of movie art form, but also a kind of thinking and reflection on modern people's life and values, through which the audience may re-examine their life and find the subject and meaning of life.

4   Slow Cinema and the Mechanisms of the Return of Subjectivity

In the slow movie viewing process, the most important feature is to bring the audience an immersive viewing experience, but not as exciting as a Hollywood movie, but a silent immersion. In modern society, individuals face too much alienation, but lack of real thinking about personal meaning or subjectivity. Slow movies can give the audience a haven to escape from the real world temporarily and regain the feeling and meaning of daily life, re-examining themselves and the world around them in a quiet viewing environment[6]. For example, Hu Bo's Elephants Sitting on the Ground is often criticized for its length and slow narrative rhythm, but this kind of criticism is precisely a kind of sick aesthetic in an accelerated society. It is precisely with this slow narrative rhythm and soothing camera language that the movie shows the audience the growing up environment and changing state of mind of a teenager in a sick family relationship, which gives people a strong sense of impact and empathy. One can't help but reflect on the past appreciation of comic book movies, the lack of examination of one's own heart, the lack of reflection on one's own destiny. At the same time, the movie can bring strong emotional resonance, the teenager who ran away from home, the parents who are always quarreling, and the young people who are looking for the meaning of life. They are all particles of dust in the current of the times, but every particle of dust has the qualification to search for meaning, to find the feeling that really belongs to them[7]. On this basis, the individual's emotions are resonated, the heart is released, and even the emotional reconstruction of the relationship between self and others can be carried out.

At the same time, the still and almost stagnant images in slow movies can help audiences find the ability to "see". In today's society, when we walk into exhibition halls, museums and even movie theaters, it is difficult to get rid of the rigid mode of viewing and lifting up the camera to take pictures, etc[8]. In the long run, along with people's ability to watch, there is also degradation of aesthetics, empathy and thinking power. Through the experience of watching a slow movie, the viewer is able to enter a kind of frozen time space through the continuation of time in the long shot, and expound on the meaning in boredom and meditation. On this basis, the viewer, through continuous viewing, on the one hand, restores people's most basic ability to watch, and on the other hand, guides them into the process of finding the meaning of the world, which also restores subjectivity to a certain extent[9].

The space of the cinema is also an important site of meaning, in which people watch movies, but are not as engaged as they would be if they were watching a Hollywood film, but are more aware of being in a cinema, in a black box, facing the big screen, in the stagnant, dreary rhythms of a slow movie. And the glare of the big screen prompts a reflection on the space, whether it is a site of meaning production, and whether time and space should be such a pastime. But not all slow movies are inspiring, and the individual's ability to receive and understand them is an important part of the viewing process[10]. The audience's understanding of slow cinema will affect their interpretation of the meaning of the content, as well as other people's understanding of the meaning of the content, and in this regard, the work of film criticism will become more and more important in the future.

Looking into the future, slow movie creation may become a new tendency, echoing the slow tourism of recent years, not pursuing the all-encompassing view, but enjoying the tour and finding the meaning. Slow cinema will be favored and chosen by more and more people in the future, becoming an antidote or a compass to life, helping people find the true meaning of life.

5   Conclusion

In an accelerated society, slow movies may become a way for us to recover our subjectivity, prompting individuals to mobilize their minds and enter into an aesthetic experience that inquires about the state of life, and our existence is clarified. Even after we walk out of the theater, the deep impression left by the visual and auditory senses will persist in our brains, and our emotions and thoughts will also extend. This emotional continuity does not end abruptly with the end of the image, nor does it end our search for meaning, but rather unfolds the infinite possibilities of meaning interpretation.

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