

# The Human Sensory and Visual Representation of Realistic Films: A Case Study of 'Green Book'

**Abstract:** The choice and development of human nature are both biological presuppositions and compensation for cultural and ethical activities. In the process of expressing human nature, film art inevitably involves both the preset biological characteristics of characters and cultural activities. Realistic electronic art emphasizes the use of detailed visual elements to showcase the two humanistic influences of physiology and culture. However, the awkward situation in the creation of Chinese reality themed films has always been characterized by hollow characters, marginalized themes, and direct imitation of the narrative structure and creative thinking of foreign classic commercial films. This is also the breakthrough to improve Chinese reality themed films. This article takes "Green Book", which recently won the Best Picture award at the 91st Academy Awards, as an example to analyze the tradition and innovation in the narrative structure of this film. Based on the visual expression of the humanistic value of films, this study aims to explore the spiritual core of the creation of realistic films, hoping to provide some useful references for Chinese realistic films in their search for international "language" creation.

**Keywords:** Reality themed, Philosophy of human nature, Rational spirit.

On March 4, 2019, General Secretary Xi Jinping made an important speech on the current requirements for artistic creation during his visit to the members of the literary and social science circles who participated in the second session of the 13th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. He emphasized, "All valuable and meaningful literary and artistic creations and academic research should reflect and observe reality, and should be conducive to solving practical problems and answering practical questions <sup>[1]</sup>. In the past, reality themed films had to use word-of-mouth marketing to achieve "popularity" due to investment pressure. However, in recent years, many reality themed films have unexpectedly gained good reviews, which have led to their vigorous development in China. At the national policy level, there has been a continuous increase in investment and attention to "reality themed" films to create more excellent reality themed works. Therefore, "reality themed" has become the main focus of film and television creation. However, what exactly is "reality" and whether the "reality" in film works and the "reality" in real life are the same cognition? What is the new significance of combining reality and art in films today?

---

<sup>[1]</sup>Huang Rui, Xi Jinping visits literary and social science members attending the CPPCC meeting [DB/OL], Xinhua News Agency [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019lh/2019-03/04/c\\_1124192099.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019lh/2019-03/04/c_1124192099.htm), 2019-03-04

These are all issues that current filmmakers need to constantly consider and advance.

## 1 Visual Perception and Realistic Representation of Skin Color Differences

Just as bone cells differ from brain cells, they express their shared genomes in a differentiated manner and interact differently with the extracellular environment. The visual art of movies also requires careful observation and clear definition to be understood correctly. Films possess the essence of artistic representation, as they exhibit the most prominent mirror world feature during their early birth, which is the objective replication of the real world. Realism has always been a central issue in the fields of painting, novels, drama, and other fields in the latter half of the 19th century in the West. Although André Bazin, the "father of the New Wave spirit" and a famous French film critic, did not use this situation as the basis for inducing films, his unwavering praise for adventure films such as "Eternal Silence" and "The Adventures of Kon-Tiki", as well as his unabashed criticism for "The Untamed Adventure", were enough to show his admiration for the true aesthetics of films. Until today, there are still many film critics who are loyal supporters of the realism viewpoint of film ontology. The discussion and criticism of different methodologies such as "montage supremacy" and "film ontology" in the film industry have never stopped, and have sparked discussions on to what extent "reality themed" films need to reflect reality. As Bazin said, "The memory of the brain is the most faithful film..., but who would ignore the difference between memory and the objective image that makes memory eternal and concrete <sup>[2]</sup>. Therefore, reality themed films that depict, reflect, or criticize negative phenomena in real society have never been positioned as either black or white. They are more like films in a gray area of white and black, observing the various events that occur in this world from an objective perspective, and emotionally delivering the observations to the hearts of the numb masses living in this real world. This precisely reflects Éric Rohmer's viewpoint: "When viewing an oil painting, one must maintain a distance from the painting to appreciate the content clearly. However, in today's reality, people's vision is almost blurred due to the posture of 'closely adhering to the oil painting' " <sup>[3]</sup>. When necessary, it is necessary to use fictional stories to help the audience have a clearer understanding of the current reality and perceive the warmth and coldness of human relationships happening around them. Therefore, the authenticity of "reality themed" films is not the focus of

---

<sup>[2]</sup>André Bazin, "What is a Movie?" translated by Cui Junyan, Commercial Press, 2017, p. 30.

<sup>[3]</sup>Wang Fang, "French Films in Shanghai 2010-2012", Shanghai Sanlian Bookstore, 2013, p. 229.

this article. The true value of a good work of art lies not in how accurately it replicates or restores the original appearance of reality, but in how much it evokes empathy in the audience through the mapping or re creation of reality, that is, the reflection and empathy of human nature towards itself in the universal values of the masses. Therefore, the observation of "people", more specifically, grasping the broad concept of "human nature", should be the focus of all films based on reality themed and reflecting real life to stimulate thinking.

The film "Green Book" revolves around white driver Tony and black pianist Shirley, revealing the different forms of discrimination faced by white and black people in American society. Since African slaves were sold to the Americas, black people were forced to lose their freedom and dignity, becoming objects of exploitation and oppression. They have lost their homes both materially and spiritually, been marginalized, and become isolated islands in American society. In this context, black people were forced to engage in arduous labor, but were deprived of their basic human rights by society due to their slave status. In the years following the end of the film, social events constantly reminded people that the struggle of the black community was far from over. At the end of May 2020, Floyd, a 46 year old black man, died in Minneapolis, Minnesota after being kneeled and pressed on the neck by a white police officer for over 9 minutes. Before his death, he pleaded, 'I can't breathe'. In early March 2023, Otino, a black man suffering from mental illness, was also killed by multiple police officers kneeling on his way to the hospital for treatment. According to Otino's lawyer, Otino was handcuffed on both hands and feet before his death and was kneeled down by seven police officers. After Otino stopped breathing, the police did not immediately take any medical measures. Both cases are tragedies suffered by the black community in their struggle for equality and dignity, directly reflecting the enormous challenges they still face in their pursuit of equality and justice. From a deeper perspective, it can be found that the root of racial discrimination lies in social structure and historical legacy issues, rather than individual skin color. The film "Green Book" superficially tells the story of individual 'humanity' in real society. In fact, it is a call for profound reflection and action on racial equality in society.

## 2 Reality is a mirror that reflects human nature

At the end of the 19th century, film was initially just a "circus" aimed at accumulating capital for speculators and monopolistic bourgeoisie in imperialist countries, and serving as a tool for

economic plunder of colonies and semi-colonies. It was not until the early 20th century that it broke away from its primitive state and entered the realm of art <sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, films have a special purpose since their inception. The imperialists want to achieve ideological rule over their own people and cultural aggression against colonial and semi colonial areas through films, so that the public's preferences are always the most important criteria for film creators. Even the Oscar Awards, as the highest palace of film art, have always maintained the market box office as an important award criteria for films. The survival essentials based on the market undoubtedly mean that films need to have a precise grasp of the aesthetic tastes of the masses. Although some niche and avant-garde experimental films do not aim to cater to the market, it cannot be denied that they are also trying to explore human spiritual needs through the lens. It can be said that the desire to express the essence of human life is an eternal and unchanging exploration for filmmakers. However, "human desires are not just a matter of consciousness and thought, but a current reality that must be satisfied. Otherwise, human life will be threatened <sup>[5]</sup>. Therefore, no matter how pure a work of art is, it cannot truly ignore human social activities in its creation. Therefore, the importance of "reality" in the creation of art works is self-evident.

Since films inevitably rely on observing reality to tell stories, how to combine reality observation with artistic forms has become a new question for thinking. In a work of art, if human nature is one of the indispensable emotional motivations, then the human nature here may not necessarily be the artificially elevated ideal human nature. Perhaps the natural human nature of reality is more likely to resonate with the audience's emotions, because from the human nature in reality, the audience is more likely to see their own shadow, and is more likely to fall into the artistic life of forgetting things and oneself while watching films <sup>[6]</sup>. This paragraph conveys two important messages. Firstly, it affirms the necessity of portraying "human nature" as the humanistic core of films with reality themed. Second, the vague "human nature" in today's images should be visualized as a mirror that can directly reflect on the audience's real "human nature", rather than the heroic lofty human nature in traditional dramas. How is human nature defined? Professor Ma Lixin from the School of Media at Shandong Normal University explained human nature in his book "Oscar Art Research" as follows: "What is 'human nature'? Outside are various

---

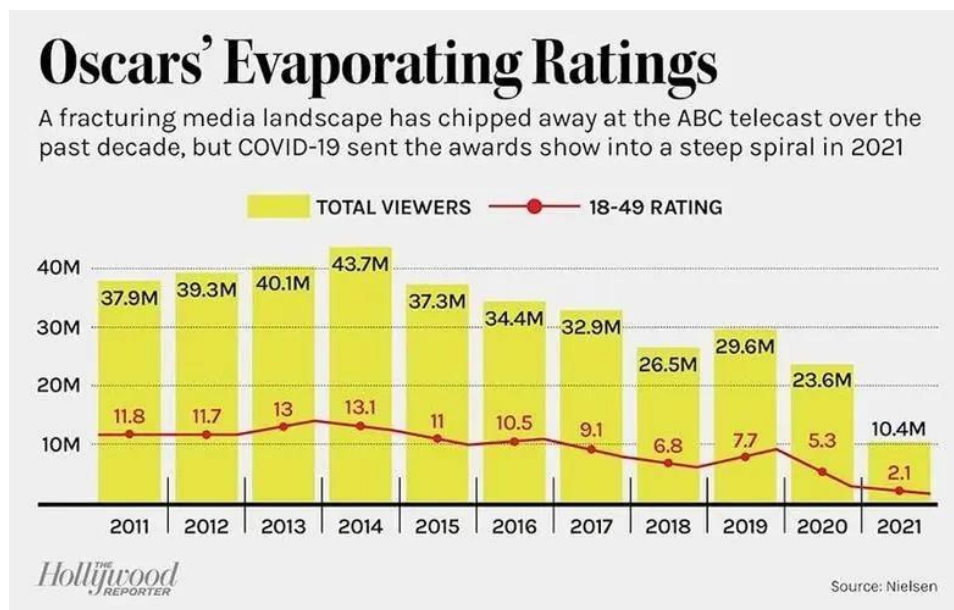
<sup>[4]</sup>Cheng Jihua, "History of Chinese Film Development" (Volume 1), China Film Press, 2016, Introduction, Page 1.

<sup>[5]</sup>Ma Lixin, "Oscar Art Research," People's Publishing House, 2015, p. 24.

<sup>[6]</sup>Ma Lixin, "Oscar Art Research," People's Publishing House, 2015, p. 51.

concrete and vivid manifestations of human actions in satisfying their own desires. Inside is the human spiritual movement composed of reason and emotion [7]. In other words, a classic film must be an organic unity of the philosophy of human nature conveyed externally and the rational spirit constructed internally, with some practical significance. Of course, it is not only necessary to see the positive role that reality plays in the artistic expression of films, but also to see that the artistic expression of films also spreads practical significance. The two interact and complement each other.

The 91st Academy Awards ceremony officially came to an end with the final winner of the Best Picture award, "Green Book". In recent years, the Oscar selection results have often been disappointing and controversial for film enthusiasts and professionals. The public's attention to the Oscars ceremony is also mostly due to topics such as "Will Smith's slap" and "Best Picture award mishaps" rather than the film itself. The 91st Academy Awards ceremony officially came to an end with the final winner of the Best Picture award, "Green Book". In recent years, the Oscar selection results have often been disappointing and controversial for film enthusiasts and professionals. In recent years, the public's attention to the Oscars ceremony has also been mostly due to topics such as "Will Smith's slap" and "Best Picture award mishaps" rather than the film itself. According to data, the ratings of the 2018 Academy Awards have plummeted by 19% compared to the worst ratings in nearly a decade in 2017, reaching a new historical low [8] (Table 1).



[7]Ma Lixin, "Oscar Art Research," People's Publishing House, 2015, p. 24.

[8]Black Lau, bleak! Oscar Awards ratings hit historic low [DB/OL], Mtime Time Network <http://news.mtime.com/2018/03/06/1578678.html>, 2018

Table 1 Statistical Chart of Audience Rating of the Academy Awards Ceremony from 2011 to 2021 (Data Source: Nielsen)

After the 91st Academy Awards, the WeChat official account "Yuemu Chinese Film Watch" even gave a blunt evaluation of "mediocrity". However, the award for the film "Green Book" still gave the audience the final comfort, despite continuous questioning afterwards about whether the plot adaptation of the film followed true events. In terms of its artistic value, the award of "Green Book" once again proves that this temple of light and shadow, which has gone through 90 years of ups and downs, is still a treasure trove of artistic classics, despite its age. The true charm of its films is not the portrayal of macro themes, nor the so-called "political correctness" and "popular culture". It is based on the reproduction of reality, using audio-visual art resources and technological means to allow the audience to enjoy the audio-visual feast while being moved by the stirring humanistic brilliance emitted by the film. As an art film, "Green Book" is not defined as a pure art film like 'The Shape of Water'. Compared to "Twelve Years a Slave", which also criticizes racial discrimination, it is more full of human emotions, making it the highest grossing Oscar Best Picture in China's history. (Since its release on March 1, 2019, as of March 9, the cumulative box office of the film has reached 200 million RMB within one week <sup>[9]</sup>) (Table 2).

---

<sup>[9]</sup>Meng Jia, "Green Book" has become the most popular Oscar winner in China. What kind of award-winning film is popular with Chinese people, Yien Network <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/LwmZccdPKT4G2dYNmYFf0A>, 2019

票房排名		+更多指标		
日期 ↓	票房(万) ↓	票房占比 ↓	场次占比 ↓	场均人次 ↓
合计	26,433.3	-	-	11
2019-03-09 周六 上映9天	3,925.2	11.3%	12.3%	27
2019-03-08 周五 上映8天	3,312.5	10.8%	12.3%	24
2019-03-07 周四 上映7天	1,875.4	22.2%	20.4%	18

Table 2 Box office statistics of "Green Book" after 9 days of release (Data source: Entertainment Group)

Note: 票房排名-Box office ranking; 日期-Date; 合计-Total; 周六,上映 9 天-Saturday, released for 9 days; 周五, 上映 8 天-Friday, released for 8 days; 周四, 上映 7 天-Thursday, released for 7 days; 票房（万）- Box office (10000); 票房占比- Proportion of box office; 场次占比 - Proportion of sessions; 场均人次 - Average attendance per venue; 更多指标-More indicators

The success of "Green Book" is not only due to its Oscar winning film title and marketing strategies employed by distribution companies such as Alibaba, but most importantly, its highly acclaimed film quality. The film's realistic themes, contrasting character relationships between black and white, dramatic conflicts between rich and poor classes, and incredibly realistic plot designs such as "eating chicken in a car and writing letters to illiterate people" make it able to bring a strong sense of immersion to the audience even in countries without racial slavery. It is precisely these script structures based on reality that make the film more meaningful in terms of

exposing the various hypocritical and ugly realities of society in the context of the American Civil War, as well as the transformation of concepts and emotional sublimation between the two protagonists at the end of their road trip.

### 3 The combination of abstract logic of human nature and visual sensory art

Before the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1860, African American blacks were in a slave class with no personal freedom or political rights, and they suffered inhumane persecution from white slave owners. The racial consciousness and superiority of British colonizers became an important reason for racial slavery, while the huge demand for labor and the inability to meet this demand became the main contradiction in society during this period. The "Green Book" tells the story based on real people and events in such a historical context. Dr. Don Shirley, a black pianist, hired Tony Lip, a newly unemployed white commoner living at the bottom, as his driver to travel to the racially segregated southern United States. During their journey south together, the two had constant conflicts due to differences in race, class, personality, and other aspects. However, they faced difficulties together and formed a friendship. At the end of the journey, the two finally let go of their prejudices against each other. The "Green Book" was originally a travel guide specifically designed for black people, ostensibly for their convenience. In reality, it is filled with serious racial discrimination. The film adopts a typical classical narrative structure and revolves around a "Green Book" to embark on their journey. Following traditional plot clues, the film inserts unexpected clues and uses humor to blur the fictional plot. It is different from the old storyline of white people saving black people like "Django Unchained," nor is it different from the new position of black people's self-redemption presented in the competing "BlacKkKlansman," nor is it different from the interactive relationship of black people working for white people like "Intouchables". The "Green Book" is more like a swapped version of "Intouchables" and "Driving Miss Daisy". In theory, such plot design is unreasonable. In the context of that time, a cultured black musician, even if he was noble, could not surpass white people as a white boss. As a director who has made a well-known film like "Dumb and Dumb", how could he not understand the significance of the rationality of the story to a film? Therefore, this is highly likely to be the director interpreting the "prejudice" that has always been left in human nature through character relationship swap. The driving force behind the plot of "Green Book" is "discrimination", but what the film truly praises is the dignity and freedom of being born as a human being. The "Green



Book" is not about the lofty ideal human nature, but rather the imperfect human nature that lives solidly in reality, as mentioned earlier. Whether it is a white driver or a black musician, the humanity they exhibit changes according to different occasions and moments, noble, humble, rough, or gentlemanly. The glory in front of others cannot conceal the inferiority and loneliness behind them. This is the character's personality, but also the humanity of everyone. The film creates a convincing sense of reality in terms of characters, the establishment of a sense of time and space, and the rigorous logic of the narrative structure. The further resonance of the film with the audience comes from the creator's keen capture and organic combination of human rationality and sensibility. According to the viewpoint proposed in this article, the spiritual core of a good film needs to be measured from two aspects: its human philosophy and rational spirit. This chapter analyzes the "Green Book" based on this.

### 3.1 The philosophy of human nature hidden in action

As a material carrier, humans bear five attributes: physical, biological, spiritual, social, and informational. On the material carrier of human beings, these attributes must be combined to form an explanation for themselves. And the logic simplified by human nature achieves the unity of human mechanisms. As mentioned earlier, the externalization of human nature is the practical manifestation of human actions in satisfying their own desires. Therefore, the power of human nature must be expressed through character actions rather than language forms. Otherwise, it becomes an unappealing preaching. The main theme of the "Green Book" is equality and freedom. For this macro theme, director Peter Farrelly did not use too many lines or musical emotions. Instead, he expressed the desire of black musician Sherry for true respect and freedom through the step-by-step action line of "pianist Sherry decides to give up high paying performances and choose to tour south to experience the real life of black people, experiencing discrimination and oppression on the way, and finally awakening to resist and give up performances". There is an impressive scene at the end of the film. Due to being insulted by the hotel waiter who refused to allow Sherry to dine in the restaurant, Tony negotiated with the waiter who did not allow Sherry to dine in. During the negotiation, Tony was once again verbally humiliated by the waiter. When Tony wanted to wave his fist at him, the camera shot Sherry standing by the door watching from a slight upward angle. Sherry stopped Tony and said, "Stop, Tony. It's okay, I will perform as long as you let me do it". If the initial purpose of the doctor's tour was to understand the situation of the

black community, then at this time the doctor insists that the purpose of the tour is to repay the respect and equality given to him by white drivers. Meanwhile, Tony also pulled the doctor out of the restaurant without hesitation, a decision made out of respect for the doctor. In this segment, there is no profound dialogue between the characters. However, in the reciprocal action line, the concept of "equality" between the two characters, from estrangement to mutual understanding and respect, is presented. The director's arrangement is undoubtedly a stroke of genius for equality and freedom throughout the film. Compared to the film 'The Hot Summer' which also portrays black people defending their dignity, "Green Book" has a gentler narrative and a more innovative perspective. Foch, a black policeman, was identified as a suspect by the police because of his black identity in a murder case. Finally, Foch retaliated against the white police's provocation with a few loud slaps, firmly defending his dignity. In the "Green Book", even when faced with Kennedy's phone rescue, black musicians do not consider it an honor. On the contrary, he sees it as a shame and burden, which is precisely a reflection of the noble personality inherent in black musicians.

The visual narrative techniques in "Green Book", such as color aesthetics and camera language, successfully present themes and emotions, leading the audience into a story world full of profound meaning and emotional resonance. The movie "Green Book" showcases friendship and understanding across races and cultures through color changes and contrasts. The precise language of the camera enhances the audience's resonance with the emotions of the characters and the development of the story. In terms of visual conflict, the film creates a completely different atmosphere and visual effect through different angles such as looking up, looking down, as well as creative compositions such as contrast and reflection. Taking the looking down as an example, when showcasing luxurious performance venues or vast southern lands, the looking down lens can give the picture a macro perspective and sense of control. The audience feels as if they are in the perspective of God, overlooking the world in the story and experiencing its grandeur and magnificence. Looking up camera is often used to highlight the majesty, strength, or inner resilience of characters when shooting them. For example, in the scene of Tony confronting the discriminator, his posture appears more upright and tall, revealing a fearless courage and determination. The audience can intuitively feel the character's spirit of resistance when facing injustice. In the comparative composition, the film juxtaposes the simplicity of black

neighborhoods with the luxury of wealthy white neighborhoods, and contrasts Shirley's glamorous appearance on stage with the discrimination and humiliation he suffered off stage. The strong visual contrast accurately portrays the cruel reality of racial differences and social injustice, deeply conveying the theme of the film. Mirror composition cleverly implies the relationships or inner changes between characters in certain scenes. In the scene of Shirley and Tony inside the car, the window glass sometimes becomes a natural mirror, reflecting their faces and expressions. As the journey progresses, the audience can gradually capture the subtle changes in their emotions from this mirror, from initial unfamiliarity and estrangement to later understanding and trust. The visual suggestion is like an invisible thread, quietly pulling the audience's emotions and immersing them more deeply in the story.

In terms of emotional expression, music and soundtrack add emotional resonance and dramatic tension to the movie "Green Book". The music style and melody in the film match the emotions of the characters, thereby enhancing the audience's emotional experience. At the end of the entire movie, Shirley played a "Winter Wind Etude" at a black bar. This piano piece is a work by the world-renowned pianist Chopin, with a strong tragic color. It was created by Chopin in extreme grief, anger, and resistance. The film chooses this piano piece in this scene. In terms of musical form, 'Winter Wind Etude' is a typical classical piano music. It reflects Dr. Tang's true love for classical music, who has received Western music training since childhood and has always hoped to become an outstanding classical pianist. It symbolizes Shirley's most authentic side. From the perspective of music content, the fast-paced music in the work gives people the feeling of a strong wind in winter, mercilessly rolling dead leaves into the air. This symbolizes the social environment at that time, which oppressed and discriminated against the majority of black people. Shirley reveals his inner pain and struggle in piano performance, while the music expresses his emotions through sad and affectionate melodies, allowing the audience to resonate emotionally with the characters.

### 3.2 Rational spirit under contrastive conflict

Hegel emphasized that art is the representation of reality in consciousness through sensory imagery <sup>[10]</sup>, conveying the rational spirit deeply embedded in it through sensory external forms.

---

<sup>[10]</sup>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics (Volume 1)*, translated by Zhu Guangqian, Commercial Press, 2011, p. 129.

Rational spirit is another existence that is opposite to sensibility. Only by constantly perceiving and colliding can people more rationally understand what "themselves" are. In other words, rational spirit exists in an even numbered world and is generated through mutual rebound. 'Even numbered' is the main color tone of "Green Book", which deeply conveys the rational spirit that the film aims to showcase through the multiple contradictions and frictions between two races, two skin colors, two personalities, and two classes of characters, namely egalitarianism and liberalism.

Equality has always been a closely related and most concerning issue for the public. The disadvantaged in society are often more willing to think about equality. However, for "Green Book", it is difficult to directly point out who is in the disadvantaged position. The director intentionally uses the ambiguity of "black and white character swapping" to enhance the realism of the film, as if every viewer can find their own shadow in it. Compared to the more realistic description of black slaves in "Twelve Years a Slave", "Green Book" blurs the real bottom life of black slaves in a more romantic way. The accidental eye contact between the black pianist and the black slaves working in the fields in the film is unforgettable for many viewers. This is the only scene in the film that directly captures the lower class black slave community. However, directors rarely adopt a poetic and realistic style that combines lyricism and realism, using classical colors to beautify the scene: soft natural light, warm toned light and dark combinations, delicate images, peaceful light music, and black slaves wearing clothes <sup>[11]</sup>. It is precisely because the director's weakening of the harsh reality that allows the audience to fully focus on the eyes and expressions of the black slaves and feel their desire for "equality". The scene did not end here. The director continued to use the concept of "even numbered" to cut back on the pianist, who was also black. After seeing the gaze of this group of fellow countrymen, the pianist got on the car in fear and anxiously peered through the car door at this group of black slaves. The director intends to express in this way that "in life, we are all disadvantaged and striving for equality" (Figure 3).

---

<sup>[11]</sup>Luo Hong, "From the Edge to the Center: African American Black Culture," China Social Sciences Press, 2013, p. 11: "Betty•Wood once described the clothing conditions of black slaves in reality: 'A few masters would give male slaves a pair of linen shorts and a tattered hat, while most masters would make slaves naked, only covering their shameful parts with a piece of cloth, and female slaves would wear coarse linen shorts with their upper bodies exposed.'" In "Green Book," it is evident that the director beautified the portrayal of this fact.



Figure 3 Picture from "Green Book", a black man working in the fields (top) and a pianist sitting in a car anxiously staring (bottom)

At the end of the film, when the two of them arrived in Birmingham for their final tour, the hotel staff took the Doctor to a narrow and rundown dressing room, which was actually a cramped and cluttered storage room. Unlike the dissatisfaction expressed directly by the white driver, the Doctor remained silent, took Tony's performance costume, and calmly closed the door. Subsequently, a sculpture of the Virgin Mary and Jesus appeared in the picture (Figure 4). Although the screen flashed by, it was considered intentional by the director. Western culture dominates the dominant side due to its strong economic and political support. Black culture occupies a disadvantaged position due to the long-term suppression of their race. The Virgin Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ in Western Christianity. The gods dominate everything and are undoubtedly the strongest. However, in the novel "Distant Messiah" written by author Dou Dou in 2005, the male protagonist Ding Yuanying's insights on "dominant culture" and "disadvantaged culture" are worthy of readers' new thinking on the concept of "strength" and "weakness". Strong culture is a culture that follows the laws of things, weak culture is a culture that relies on the moral

expectations of the strong to break through boundaries, and it is also a culture that expects a savior<sup>[12]</sup>. The seemingly powerful white ethnic group places their hopes for life on Jesus Christ, while the seemingly weak black ethnic group vows to fight against this unequal world through their own strength. In these two different cultural expressions, one cannot help but ask oneself, who is truly the dominant culture? Equality is a beautiful aspiration that humanity has always pursued. Perhaps no one can eliminate inequality, but as long as there are still people moving forward on this path, human exploration of rational spirit will be further developed, and human civilization will continue to thrive under the guidance of rational spirit.



Figure 4 Picture from the "Green Book", sculpture of the Virgin Mary and Jesus

Out of a desire for freedom, black slaves often used uprisings to defend their right to equal respect as white people. In the "Green Book", whether it is a black pianist or a lower class black slave, there is no scene of black people gathering and violently rebelling throughout the film, but rather a long period of silence and endurance. The noble and elegant pianist was brutally beaten and humiliated as soon as he stepped off the stage. This seemingly cowardly forbearance continued until the climax of the film. Because Tony vented his anger and hit the police officer with sarcastic language, the two were locked up in the police station. At this point, the director borrowed the words of a pianist to reveal the true reason for his forbearance: "Fists cannot help you win, Tony. Only dignity can help you win, dignity always prevails". This comes from musician Shirley's deeper understanding of freedom. The racial slavery movement is a living movement of the extinction of human conscience. Unlike other depictions of the protagonist's

---

<sup>[12]</sup> Dou Dou, "The Distant Savior," Writer press, 2008, p. 153.

pursuit of freedom, the freedom pursued by black musician Sherry in "Green Book" is even more touching. This is precisely because his freedom is not fought for from his own perspective, but it is built on the "conscience" of self-control. Hegel's definition of 'conscience' is quite unique. He believes that conscience embodies the absolute right of subjective self-awareness, which is to know what justice and obligation are within and from itself. Hegel's viewpoint can help to better understand the reasons for the different reactions between the doctor and the driver regarding being rescued by President Kennedy's phone call. Driver Tony naturally reacted with surprise, excitement, incredulity, and even a hint of pride upon being rescued by Kennedy, as he was part of a naturally racially superior white community. Musician Sherry, on the other hand, showed a deep sense of shame and shame because the Doctor yearned for freedom. The freedom he pursues is a self-disciplined freedom that can take responsibility for oneself, which is what Hegel called the "absolute right of self-consciousness" of conscience. Therefore, he repeatedly used self-restraint to digest the anger brought by humiliation, wanting to use his true strength to fight for his free personality. In addition, every decision and reflection on freedom and cost in the film also has profound practical significance for the audience. From the "daring to speak out" of realistic films to the "conscience speaking out", what needs to be done is also a transformation from "courage" to "wisdom".

#### 4 The marginalization perspective and reflection on Chinese "reality themed" films

Since the Founding of China, the way and types of Chinese films that narrate reality have been constantly changing. From the popularity of films that praised the achievements of the founding of the People's Republic of China to the emergence of films such as "Legend of Tianyun Mountain" and "What a family" in 1979 that directly addressed China's real problems, Chinese reality themed films began to shift from being influenced by political factors to reflecting real society, daring to criticize and satirize reality. In the 1990s, with the emergence of documentary style films such as "Qiu Ju Goes to Court" and "Not One Less", as well as the continued influence of avant-garde film movements such as Italian neorealism and French new wave on the international stage, Chinese filmmakers' observations and reflections on various phenomena in real society became more profound, and deeply influenced the sixth generation of directors led by Jia Zhangke, Wang Xiaoshuai, and others. In recent years, with the continuous vigorous development of the Chinese film market, more and more reality themed films that are deeply

rooted in real life, close to the people, and have a considerable box office have emerged in the market. Recently, there have been market phenomena such as "The Crossing", "On the Balcony", "So Long, My Son" with high reviews but low box office, and "More Than Blue" with low reviews but high box office. This phenomenon, which is not novel in the film market, needs to be reconsidered. In addition to calls for government support, funding, marketing strategies, and other aspects, in the current Chinese film market, despite the emergence of eye-catching reality themed films such as "Dying to Survive", "Wolf Warriors", "Operation Red Sea", etc., there are still many works that lack substance, are eager for quick success, and use reality as a cover to make gimmicks. Some young directors are all striving to make films relate to reality, but most of them are either talking to themselves or playing the borderline. Especially a group of films led by the sixth generation directors that reflect the stories of marginalized people have been questioned by audiences, experts, and scholars. The film "So Long, My Son", which just won Best Actor and Actress at the 69th Berlin International Film Festival on February 19, 2019, has not escaped the marginalization. The superb acting skills of the actors, the intertextual narrative that breaks the single structure, and the era specific sentiment in the background have not been able to conceal the seemingly turbulent but actually hollow emotional core of their characters. The marginalized reality reflected in these films often makes the audience "deny the public nature of the film's reality". However, directors like Robert Bresson and Eric Rohmer, who remained loyal to their own aesthetic concepts throughout their lives, have left classic films with strong personal style in film history with a unique marginalized perspective. The "Green Book", which also discusses marginalized "black culture" and political movements in specific eras, has gained widespread recognition from the public. This is enough to illustrate that the problem is not about "marginalization", but about how to break the gap in people's understanding of the relationship between the artistic attributes of films and reality, and enable films to use a credible humanistic core to drive audience emotions. If historical reasons have caused racial discrimination in American society that cannot be eradicated so far, then what is causing the discrimination against vulnerable groups that still exists in Chinese society today? Without discussing the suffering of vulnerable groups and the superiority or inferiority of the humanity, as a new Chinese filmmaker in the new era, how to use film to make changes to the long-standing group discrimination and hierarchical discrimination in society, and how to use the lens to make the public accept



marginalized groups and cultures in society. Whether from the film "Green Book" or from previous Oscar winning films, there are valuable lessons to learn from. Therefore, regulating the creative market of Chinese reality themed films is still an urgent field that film workers need to explore, think about, and develop. Based on reality, they should be brave in innovation, balance and complement the emotional art form with the rational reality framework, and create "reality themed" films that meet the needs of the times and are recognized by the people.

## 5 Conclusion

The humanistic is the core value of film texts. Realistic films should pay more attention to the living conditions of "people" and reflect the value of the times. For films, loving 'people' is crucial <sup>[13]</sup>. As the classic line in the film "Green Book" goes: "Genius alone is not enough, courage changes people's hearts." The development of realistic films is hindered and difficult, only when every filmmaker has a firm belief, roots in reality, and explores the power of "people". This kind of film language based on reality can convey powerful ideological connotations and develop Chinese reality themed films, which may not be significant but can be extraordinary.

## References:

- [1] Andre Bazan, "What is a Film?" translated by Cui Junyan, Commercial Press, 2017;
- [2] Edited by Cheng Jihua, "History of Chinese Film Development" (Volume 1), China Film Publishing House, 2016;
- [3] Ma Lixin, "Research on Oscar Art", People's Publishing House, 2015;
- [4] Georg William Friedrich Hegel, Aesthetics (Volume 1), translated by Zhu Guangqian, Commercial Press, 2011;
- [5] Luo Hong, "From the Edge to the Center: African American Black Culture", China Social Sciences Press, 2013;
- [6] Hu Jinshan, "A History of African American Cities in the 20th Century," Xiamen University Press, 2015;
- [7] Georg William Friedrich Hegel, Phenomenology of Mind (Volume 2), translated by He Lin and Wang Jiuxing, Commercial Press, 2011;
- [8] Rao Shuguang, Zhang Wei, Li Daoxin, Huangfu Yichuan, Tian Yuan. Film shines into reality —— the attitude and spirit of realism film [J]. Contemporary Film, 2018, (10): 14-25;
- [9] Li Na. —— Take the Green Book as an example [J]. Journal of Shandong Institute of Arts and Crafts, 2021, (3): 72-75;
- [10] Zhang Yiwei. The narrative paradox, aesthetic worries, and intertextual acceptance of the Green Book [J]. Film Literature, 2019, (18): 42-46;
- [11] Song Yang. The ruin of The Times in the context of green Book [J]. Film Literature, 2019, (14): 89-91;

---

<sup>[13]</sup> André Bazin, 'What is a Movie?', Commercial Press, 2017, p. 310.

- [12] Chen Xi. The Conflict and Integration of the Self: The Green Book from the perspective of self-psychology [J]. Journal of Taiyuan University (Social Science Edition), 2020,21 (5): 86-108;
- [13] Fan Yajie. The Green Book: The Hollywood Racist Trend and its Critique [J]. Journal of Heihe University, 2021,12 (12): 134-136;
- [14] Miao Rui. Theme, type and previous text: a review of the film Green Book [J]. Journal of Dali University, 2020,5 (7): 88-91;
- [15] Wang Bo. Reading the Green Book: the realistic meaning of the Black Civil Rights Movement [J]. World Knowledge, 2019, (9): 68-70;
- [16] Yang is towering. Take the Green Book as an example of formalistic criticism again [J]. Film Literature, 2019, (13): 70-72;
- [17] Wang Rui. Application of narrative montage in American films —— takes the Green Book as an example [J]. Media Forum, 2019,2 (21): 176-176;
- [18] Song Ying. The Green Book: Human warmth in the dislocation of stereotype and real identity [J]. Grand Stage, 2020, (1): 92-95;
- [19] Dai Leting. A modern literary representation of the "summer" narrative prototype —— The film Green Book from the vision of Fry's mythical prototype [J]. Grade Classic, 2020, (9): 14-16;
- [20] Zhang Tingting. The shaping of black image and Black voice in the film Green Book [J]. Journal of Suihua University, 2021,41 (12): 96-98;
- [21] Wang Jie. Self-identity and Construction in the film The Green Book [J]. Central Plains Literature, 2024, (33): 71-73;
- [22] Sun Huizhu. From TuSon to the Green Book: offset and reconciliation between black and white [J]. New Chu Culture, 2024, (19): 35-37.