

2019

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Recommended Citation

(2019) "On the Poetic Features in Jia Zhangke's Films," *Contemporary Social Sciences*: No. 2, Article 7.
Available at: <https://css.researchcommons.org/journal/vol2019/iss2/7>

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On the Poetic Features in Jia Zhangke's Films

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Abstract: As one of the representative figures of the sixth generation of Chinese directors, Jia Zhangke is known as “the most poetic Chinese filmmaker.” He has constructed artistic conceptions through image positioning, which create a unique beauty. At the same time, the themes of his works reflect the tradition of “poetry as an expression of aspirations” from the perspective of the fates of ordinary people in this era of change, allowing the audience to feel the poet’s “aspirations.” His films also show poetic features in terms of composition, lens, language and music.

Keywords: Jia Zhangke; films; poetics

Zhai Yongming, a Chinese poet, once praised Jia Zhangke as “the most poetic Chinese filmmaker.” Jia himself also publicly expressed his love of poetry. As one of the representative figures of the sixth generation of Chinese directors, his films demonstrate typical features of traditional Chinese poetry as he constructs his artistic conceptions through image positioning which gives his films a surreal beauty while at the same time reflect the tradition of “poetry as an expression of aspirations” from the perspective of the fates of ordinary people in this era of change, allowing the audience to feel the poet’s “aspirations.” His films also show poetic features in terms of composition, lens, language and music.

1. Aesthetic artistic conceptions beyond reality

“Artistic conception,” as the core aesthetic category of classical Chinese poetry, originated during the pre-Qin Period and matured in the Tang Dynasty. Wang Changling proposed in his *The Norm of Poetry*, “A poem creates an artistic conception in three ways. First is through objects; second through sentiments; third

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through artistic conception.” Images are essential to an artistic conception. Zhu Guangqian believes that the highest level of poetry is the combination of images and sentiments and emphasizes that the two cannot be neglected. “Poetic conception (artistic conception) is an artistic space formed by the image of poetry triggering the imagination of the reader. It is the artistic conception formed in the mind of the reader.”^① Li Zehou believes that “the artistic conception... is a higher level of aesthetics than the image and sentiment because the conception contains both image and sentiment while it discards its objective & subjective one-sidedness, thus creating a complete and independent artistic existence.” The objective image and the subjective sentiment are integrated into an integral concept. The ultimate image beyond the object itself becomes an “image outside the image,” the artistic conception. The primary feature of Chinese film poetry is the rich oriental artistic conception. The artistic conception of the film “is not the appearance of the real world, but the aesthetic space beyond reality... It is the integration of subjectivity and objectivity, as well as the identity of object and self. The spatial distance between oneself and the world is overcome.”^② Jean Mitry once said, “Image is not a symbol of ‘freedom’ like vocabulary... It can only be specific and ideographic because of the facts associated with it.”^③ Jia instills his subjective feelings into the objective images, making the images broader and more far-reaching thus carrying emotions and aspirations beyond images. Typical images of the artistic conception in his films include common, well known objects such as the Three Gorges, cigarettes, liquor, sugar and tea, ruins, theme parks, and keys.

The Three Gorges is the primary image in the film *Still Life*, also the most beautiful image in this film. Han Sanming stands at a high place and takes out a ten-yuan bill as he looks at the Kuimen Gate of the Three Gorges. The gorge is filled with mist and the river is covered with ripples, there are lush and green mountains on both banks. Later, in another scene he is leaning against a wall looking at the Three Gorges, staring at the Yangtze River. The mammoth Three Gorges makes people feel the vastness of the universe and the smallness of the individual. It creates an artistic conception of “the infinity of the Yangtze River and the sorrowfulness of the people.” The Three Gorges is the destination of Han Sanming and Shen Hong’s journey to find their beloved missing ones. It is also the place where the people of Fengjie County have lived for generations. It has witnessed countless joys and sorrows for tens of thousands of years.

The film is composed of four sequences, titled cigarettes, liquor, sugar, and tea, which are also the significant artistic conceptions used to express the film’s theme. Cigarettes are used to develop interpersonal relationships. Han Sanming hands out a cigarette to the hotel owner while inquiring about his ex-wife. After Xiaoma dies, Han Sanming puts out three cigarettes in front of his portrait to show his respect. Liquor is the “gift” that Han Sanming brings to his ex-brother-in-law, Old Ma, which is refused at first. Old Ma says, “I am not your brother, and I don’t want your liquor,” but at last he is moved by Han Sanming and accept it; liquor is also the bridge of friendship between Han Sanming and Xiaoma, and the two hobnob with each other in a small restaurant. Tea is the only thing left by Shen Hong’s husband. Shen Hong is ready to taste the “Wushan Yunwu” tea he left behind, but it seems it has expired, suggesting that the marriage is “already over;” sugar is Xiaoma’s yearning for a good future, as he says to Han Sanming, “The boss pays each of us 50 yuan for

① Li, 2002, p.302

② Yang, 2001

③ Jean Mitry, 1988

one errand.” Sugar is also the image that verifies the love of Han Sanming and his ex-wife before his leaving. Through the highlighting of such common objects, the audience can understand the meaning of life.

Ruins are another image in the film. Fengjie County in *Still Life* is a huge demolition site. The film is filled with many scenes of ruins with debris covering the ground, broken walls, and the buildings marked with the word “demolition.” Among the debris, the demolition workers keep pounding the buildings while the certificates of merit and photos of the original owners still hang on the remaining walls. There are also many scenes of ruins in the film *24 City*. As the narration continues, the machines of the original Factory 420 are carried away and the factory building is gradually demolished to make room for commercial housing. Karsten Harries believes that “the ruins are memories of time... and the effect of the ruin is heightened by the viewer’s reflections.”^① “In the ruins, history is physically integrated into the background. With this effect, the situation presented by history is not so much a permanent life process, but rather a form of irresistible decline.”^② The ruins transcend the surface and have the meaning of metaphor, symbolizing the end of an era.

World Park is the primary image in the film *The World*. World landmarks are recreated at reduced scales in a theme park in Beijing, so tourists can “travel around the world” in only 15 minutes. Under the Eiffel Tower, the loudspeaker repeats in Mandarin, with accents, “Welcome to the Eiffel Tower, please take a clockwise tour.” Tourists take a group photo in front of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and several migrant workers walk by carrying a bedding roll. The New York Twin Towers still stand in the park even though the actual ones are gone... These scenes make the audience realize this is an “imitation” of the real world. The “postmodern” atmosphere is self-evident. History and culture have become flat. Everything has lost the depth of history, and “entertainment” is the sole purpose.

Keys are a primary image in the film When Tao brings Liangzi & Jinsheng’s wedding invitation, Liangzi is disappointed and leaves his home, throwing his keys to the top of the house. This is the first presence of keys in the film. Years later, Liangzi returns home because of illness. After hearing the news, Tao sends him the money for medical care and returns his keys. In another scene, Dollar, Tao’s son, comes back to Fenyang to attend the funeral of his grandfather. On the farewell train, Tao gives Dollar a set of keys to her house and tells him, “You are always welcome back.” Dollar’s Chinese teacher asks him what he is wearing around his neck. He tells her they are the keys to his mother’s house, also the things that his mother has left for him. Ironically, Dollar often loses the keys to his Australian home. The poet Liang Xiaobin wrote a well-known poem in 1980, *China, I’ve Lost My Key*. The “key” symbolizes the beautiful things that people lost in the Cultural Revolution. In the poem, the process of “seeking” the key reflects the awakening and thinking of the younger generation, and this can also be found in the film *Mountains May Depart*. For Dollar, who has a very vague impression of his mother and speaks only a little Chinese as he left China in childhood, the keys are not only placed with his thoughts of his mother, but also imply that his traditional roots have only one symbol left.

① Karsten Harries, 2001, p.238

② Walter Benjamin, 1999, p.132



Mountains May Depart

2. “Aspirations” of the poet to care for the common folks

Regarding the descriptions of the nature of literary works, in the development of ancient Chinese poetic theory, “poetry as an expression of aspirations” was first proposed in the pre-Qin Period, such as “Poetry expressing feelings” in the *Book of History*. The *Preface to Mao’s Odes* in the Han Dynasty put forward, “The poem is what goes to that which is intently on the mind. In the mind, it is ‘being intent,’ coming out in language, it is a ‘poem,’” reflecting the understanding of literary works in terms of social moral functions from the pre-Qin Period to the Han Dynasty. “Poetry as an expression of aspirations” requires the poet to use lyricism to express his/her feelings. The tradition of “Poetry as an expression of aspirations” is evident in Jia’s films as he has always focused on the fate of ordinary Chinese people in the changing times. He once said that in his films, behind the social problems is the crisis of personal existence. For specific storytelling, he has dispelled the grand narration mode of traditional films and used objective and calm shots to show the life of common folks in the era of change, especially the living conditions of the marginal groups. This is the “aspiration” of the director as a poet, showing China’s traditional intellectuals’ thinking about history and life in the process of social transformation. Brazilian director Walter Salles has publicly stated that no country has experienced such rapid and violent changes as China, and no one can reflect this change so deeply as Jia Zhangke.^①

A nostalgic suite of wanderers. The films *Xiao Wu* or *Pickpocket* (1997), *Platform* (2000), *Unknown*

① Director of Central do Brasil is about to publish a monograph on Jia Zhangke. Retrieved from: <http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2012-12-28/14433823151.shtml>

Pleasures or *Ren Xiao Yao* (2002), known as the “hometown trilogy,” can be said to be works printed with the director’s memory of his youth. *Xiao Wu* reflects the crisis of existence of marginal young people in a county town. Jia once said that *Xiao Wu* is “a film about anxiety in real life, and some good things are rapidly disappearing from our lives.”^① It is not hard to see that “good things” refer to the traditional spiritual homeland lost in social change. The narration in *Platform* spans the ten-year period from 1979 to 1990 in China. A group of young people from the county’s Cultural and Art Troupe, who love art and wish to pursue their dreams, wind up quieting down and returning to their respective starting points in life. This is a tragic manifestation of individuals who get lost in social change. For this film, Jia noted: “This is a recollection of my ten-year youth. It is also about a decade of dramatic changes in China.” The title “*Platform*” is taken from a rock song with the lyrics, “lonely platform, lonely waiting,” which was popular in China in the mid-1980s. The young people of the Cultural and Art Troupe keep repeating the scenes of leaving the town and then going back. Everyone is full of hope for the future, until the Troupe is dissolved along with their dreams. Yin Ruijuan dances in the office to the music from the radio, then she puts on her tax bureau work uniform and rides a motorcycle through the town, as her dreams of art have been crushed by reality. Hence the theme of “dreams can seldom escape from the common life” is poetically presented.

The *Unknown Pleasures* tells about Datong in 2000. It is said that the whole area has been mined out and workers have been laid off. Two unemployed workers, 19-year-old boys, Bin Bin and Xiao Ji, wander around all day, doing nothing, not knowing where their future is. Finally, the idea of robbing a bank comes to mind. In an interview, Jia said: “Under the pressure of rapid development, people have an inexplicable incitement and excitement and often develop an irrational attitude toward life... Many people cannot see their future, and there is a sort of atmosphere like ‘carnival before dying’. The whole film is always looking for this atmosphere.” For, Xiao Ji, *Ren Xiao Yao* means “do anything that you want to do,” like the meaning from Zhuangzi. For Bin Bin, *Ren Xiao Yao* is from the singer Ren Xianqi’s pop song of the same name. It shows the confused state of the young people’s “feeling of being completely in the dark.”

The “Hometown Trilogy” is the subconscious reactions that resulted from the director’s life experiences. The hometown is changing, the streets trimmed, the stores demolished; Zhong Ping has a perm, Hu Meimei has her hair done, Cui Mingliang puts on bell-bottoms, Xiao Yong carries a cell phone around, and Zhang Jun plays the songs of Zhang Di from a tape recorder he brought back from Guangzhou... “Hometown” can be said to be the most basic spiritual home of mankind and Jia uses a camera to memorize his hometown. At the same time, it also shows the troubles of growing up and the difficulty of fitting into a changing society. The protagonists of the film “have a certain outlook on life and values, which are not perfect, or do not meet the mainstream values, but they have a more pure and firm belief than adults. In order to maintain their faith, they would be up for fierce internal resistance.”^② *Xiao Wu* is a thief. His former “colleague” Xiao Yong, after parting ways with him, has become a well-known entrepreneur, and even participant the local TV program. *Xiao Wu*, however, sniffs at Xiao Yong’s ways of making money such as “smuggling” and “pimping,” and adheres to his own “craftsmanship.” Xiao Ji in the *Unknown Pleasures* says, “Why do you want to live so long?”

① Jia, 2009, p.25

② Liu, 2015, p.35

30 years of life is enough,” and Bin Bin’s answer to the massage woman “to merely survive” is “eat a meal and drift along.”

Since 2004, the director has shifted his focus from individuals (represented by *Xiao Wu*) to groups (represented by *Still Life*). In the works that explored the era and individuals, the influence of the change of era on the individual’s destiny is more obvious, the conflicts between social change and individuals more intense, and complex feelings are conveyed through the change of era.

A fabled poem about seeking, *Still Life* (2006) through the backdrop of Fengjie County and the demolition, tells a story about seeking. Both main characters are from Shanxi. Han Sanming bought a wife many years ago. Later, his wife was rescued by the police. He visits Fengjie to look for this ex-wife and his unknown daughter, whose address is “No. 5 Qingshi Street.” When he finally arrives, he finds that the building has already been flooded; Shen Hong comes to Fengjie to find her husband who has not returned home for two years, holding a 7-digit phone number, but the local numbers have long changed into 8 digits; the people in Fengjie County are also looking for something, as the thousand-year-old ancient county is demolished within two years, and their hometown is about to disappear. They are going to find new homes and new ways of making a living. Finally, Han Sanming meets his ex-wife who left him 16 years ago. He learns that she is not doing well and decides to return to Shanxi to make money for a year to redeem his wife. Shen Hong has found her husband Guo Bin. The two break up peacefully and Shen Hong leaves Fengjie alone. The demolition workers follow Han Sanming to Shanxi, in the hope of “making big money” by working in unlicensed coal mines, the hotel owner whose house was demolished has to “occupy” a bridge hole, the middle-aged woman with a disabled husband goes to Guangdong to find a job, and Fengjie folks line up in order to board a ship to leave their homes. All the people in the film are looking for something. It may be family affection, or love, or a future. As for the results, no one can be sure, as “the Three Gorges are a small world, with people coming and going, wandering at varied wharfs.”^①

A group poem about life, *The 24 City* (2008) was written by Jia Zhangke and the poet Zhai Yongming. The film records the lives of nine people in the form of interviews. Their narrations are more like monologues than drama, and the director, as an interviewer, occasionally talks with the narrators. The narrators are interwoven with the demolition process of the Factory 420 and the construction of new buildings, mixing people’s fates with the changes of the era, which shows the fates of different people in a poetic way and constructs the film at multiple levels. Unlike his previous films, this film has added poetry subtitles and black screens. On the one hand, the black screen is used for transitions. When a narrator finishes, the shot is transferred to the next narrator through a black screen; on the other hand, it is also used for the narrator’s telling process, for example, the screen is blacked out 3 times during the narration of Da Li, played by Jiang Wenli. The black screen is similar to the “section” of a poem, controlling the rhythm of narrations and emotions, and guiding the audience’s thoughts. “By pausing, the personal character is revealed, the inner activity of the character is enlarged, and the relationship with the audience gets closer.”^② A poem appears when a narration is finished, together with poetry text subtitles and matching music for the transition, for instance, the subtitles of *A Dream of Red Mansions • Funeral Flowers Chant* and the music from the film *Little*

① Liu Yi. Young man without ambitions. Retrieved from: <http://news.sina.com.cn/o/2006-09-13/110410008790s.shtml>

② Zou, 1996

Flower appear after Xiao Hua played by Chen Chong tells of her rough love life. Other poems include Ouyang Jianghe's *Glass Factory*, Yeats' *The Coming of Wisdom with Time and Spilt Milk*, and Wan Xia's *The Essence*. Through the life memories of several state-owned factory workers, the sorrows and joys of the common folks in the context of the great times are presented in a chitchatting manner. The comparisons between the former factory's prosperity and the current decline reveal a desolate feeling of sadness.

As a song of the lonely, *The Mountains May Depart* (2015) spans the period from 1999 to 2025, and places from a small inland town to a foreign country, telling how human emotions are rooted in the changing of the times. Everyone in the film is lonely. In 1999, Tao chooses the upstart Jinsheng as her husband rather than the coal miner Liangzi, leading to Liangzi's departure; Tao's father goes to attend the 70th birthday ceremony of his good friend but ends up dead in a strange railway station; after Tao and Jinsheng get divorced, their son goes to Shanghai to live with his father there. Tao has been living alone. In 2014, the son who studies in an international elementary school in Shanghai returns home, calling Tao "Mummy," and is unsure of what to do in front of his grandfather's coffin; later, Dollar, the son, moves to Australia with his father, and never sees his mother again. In 2025, he uses Google Translate to communicate with his father, Jinsheng. Jinsheng has bought a roomful of guns, "These guns actually remind him of his old friends, even old enemies, because in such an isolated place, it seems that even enemies from the past have become objects to be close to."^① If it is said that the difference between Dollar and his mother is the regional differences within China, what stands between Dollar and his father is the difference in languages and eras. Standing alone on the shore of the ocean, Dollar gently calls out his mother's name "Tao" facing the choppy ocean. At that very moment, Tao, who is making dumplings in her home in Fenyang, seems to feel something. But the two are not only separated by geological location, but also by a spiritual dimension. Their loneliness cannot be dispelled by money or technology, implying the director's spiritual care for the individual.

3. Poetic charm in images

As a traditional Chinese poetic proposition, and as the most important criterion in the field of poetry, "rhyme" is the "meaning" of art, which originated from music. Its scope ranges from original music and character appraisals to paintings and poems. In the Song Dynasty, "rhyme" became the highest aesthetic standard of artistic works. Fan Wen pointed out that rhyme is to ask the aesthetic object to have implied meaning. Jia once said, "The poetry in the film is actually more spiritual. It is a matter of heart and soul. It is the moment when the audience is touched. It is realized by the combination of language, music and pictures. This sort of poetry is related to daily life."^② His films reveal typical poetic features in terms of composition, lens, language, music, etc., and have an aesthetic appeal that is endless.

As the basis of the picture language of a film, composition directly affects the audience's impression of the film. In *Still Life*, Sanming rides a motorcycle taxi to "No. 5 Qingshi Street," and the young driver points at the river and says that's your destination. The shot stays on the mound in the river for a long time. Under the river is the ancient Fengjie County with a history of two thousand years. When Sanming and his fellow workers

① Jia Zhangke. How to evaluate the film *Mountains May Depart*. Retrieved from <http://daily.zhihu.com/story/7382320>

② Zhai Yongming & Jia Zhangke: The Significance of Poetics for Reality. Retrieved from:<http://ent.sina.com.cn/m/c/2013-08-20/10273991378.shtml>

discuss the scenery of their hometowns printed on the back of the RMB, the TV in the room is broadcasting the TV series *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. When he is waiting for Xiaoma at the restaurant, the three people sitting at the next table, who are still in the costumes of Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei in Sichuan opera, are playing with their cell phones. Such a surrealistic approach makes the audience fall into the clouds, but it is this expression that gives the audience poetic aesthetic perception, which in turn deepens the connotation of the film, reminiscent of the story of Liu Bei entrusting his son to Zhuge Liang at Baidicheng (today's Fengjie) a thousand years ago. Hence, this kind of approach implies a metaphor for traveling between ancient and modern times. Three different screen frames are used in *Mountains May Depart* to distinguish the transitions of the different ages: the 4:3 for the part in 1999, 16:9 for the part in 2015 and full screen for the part in 2025. In 1999, Tao, Jinsheng, and Liangzi stand on the bank of the Yellow River in an isosceles triangle, with Tao in red in the center, forming a very interesting composition to suggest the triangular relationship of the three. Furthermore, the pictures of Jia's film are raw, without any scenery or decoration, more like a fable poem with a cautious meaning. For example, in *Xiao Wu*, discarded paper scraps and other garbage can be seen everywhere on the street; Gengsheng's Pharmacy is small and dark; the wall of the barber shop is only whitewashed brick. *Xiao Wu*, with messy hair, wears a dirty, unsuitable suit jacket all year round. The residential areas in the *Platform* are disorderly arranged, with coal balls and cement boards everywhere. Such a scene is a metaphor for the inner confusion and powerless feeling of people to break free from the real environment.

The director often uses a combination of fixed shot and scenery shot to create a poetic effect, allowing the audience to deeply understand the mood of the film's characters and to think about it seriously afterwards. At the beginning of *Still Life*, the director uses a 4-minute full-length shot to outline the portraits of migrant workers in Fengjie, as if it is a painting of Along the River during the Qingming Festival of the time. The film uses many scenery shots, with repeated landscapes of the Three Gorges, quietly running ships, and the watery county towns, so that the audience can feel the passage of time in the silence, and this approach is also in line with the English name of the film *Still Life*. If comparing the film to a painting, these shots are the white space in the landscape painting, giving the audience an endless aesthetic experience. In *Platform*, Yin Ruijuan and Cui Mingliang go out on a date, and they have a dialogue on the wall, with alternating shots of each as they talk. The atmosphere between the two is dull, indicating that it is difficult for the two to get together again in the future. At the very beginning of *The World*, there is a 2-minute full-length shot. Zhao Xiaotao, wearing a costume, walks and shouts, "Who has a band-aid?" The camera follows her in a long aisle that is noisy and narrow, giving the audience a sense of crowding. At the end of *Xiao Wu*, a nearly 3-minute full-length shot is used to express the onlookers: *Xiao Wu* is squatting on the ground, and more and more people are watching him. The camera adopts a look-up position and simulates *Xiao Wu*'s eyes to look around and shake slightly, suggesting that *Xiao Wu* is panicked out of anxiety, giving the audience a strong sense of substitution. After the end of Su Na's narration in *24 City*, there is a high-angle shot of the whole of Chengdu, together with the poem of Wan Xia: "Only the side that you have lost is enough to make me glorious for a lifetime." The "lost side" here not only refers to the glorious past of the Factory 420, an ordnance factory, but also the workers in the film who have worked in the factory for decades and viewed the factory as their own home.

The language of the film is also very clear and thought-provoking, often poetic and subtle. This is because the expression of language breaks the movement of traditional shots. Unlike the creation of artistic conception,

the language itself is poetic and direct. *24 City*, without any plot, completely relies on the narrations of nine interviewees to prop up the whole film, driving the audience to reflecting on their lives by following their narrations. In *Mountains May Depart*, Zhang Jinsheng names his son “Daole”, a homophone for “Dollar,” and says to him, “Dad will earn you a lot of dollars in the future.” Later in 2025, Zhang Jinsheng, who has lived in Australia for years, really has earned tons of dollars. Zhang Daole has also become an authentic “dollar.” In the classroom, the teacher asks his Chinese name, he jokes, “dollar is a dollar.” The conflict between the father and the son is constant. They communicate with each other by relying on Google Translate or Dollar’s Chinese teacher. When Zhang Jinsheng yells at his son, “You must first learn Chinese,” the director’s punctual intention in the name is completely exposed.

In addition to the poetic language, there is also the clever use of music in Jia’s films. In *Mountains May Depart*, when Tao hands the wedding invitation to Liangzi, Liangzi tells Tao that he is going to leave this small town. Along with the music of Yoshihiro Hanno, the painful expression of Tao, and the restrained sadness of Liangzi make this parting one of the heartbreaking scenes of the film. There are also two episodes in the film, and each appearance is closely related to the development of the story, giving people different aesthetic meanings. One is Sally Yeh’s *Zhenzhong*. The lyrics are about farewell. This song appears three times in the film. The first time is in the electrical store operated by Tao’s father. The guest who comes to buy a sound device takes out a CD for a sound test, and the song that plays is Sally Yeh’s *Zhenzhong*. The second time the song appears is on the train on which Tao sends her son back to Shanghai. They listen to *Zhenzhong* played on an IPAD. For the third time, *Zhenzhong* is played on the vinyl record player of Dollar’s teacher Mia, which produces a feeling of *deja vu*. Another episode of the film is *Go West* sung by the British band Pet Shop Boys. This passionate, energetic song gives a strong contrast to Sally Yeh’s *Zhenzhong*. At the beginning of the film, young Tao and others are dancing to the music of *Go West*, and they, in the prime of life, feel that their future is very promising. While at the end of the film, the music playing in the background is still *Go West*, the wrinkled Tao alone is dancing outside in the snow, with slow movements, not charming at all. The Wenfeng Tower still stands, and the mountains and rivers still exist, but the old friends are no longer there.

In addition, the film uses the technique of polyphony to present the same event or scene twice or more. The repeated presence forms the artistic effect of recurrence and profoundness. In *Platform*, the Cultural and Art Troupe continues to perform outside the town, and then comes back to Fenyang. Cui Mingliang and Yin Ruijuan respectively stop at the window of the photo studio on the street of Fenyang. Teresa Deng’s song *Mine and Coffee* is played twice. Once from the Taiwan Radio station that Cui Mingliang listens to, and the other by the recorder in the hair salon. In *24 City*, the scene of the truck with a full-load of factory machines driving by appears twice. The first time is at the beginning of the film when the truck is driving on the street. The second is during the factory relocation process, the machines are loaded on the truck which drives out of the factory area and into the street.

Jia’s films show the audience a different contemporary China. As Chen Danqing said, “Compared with Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, Jia Zhangke is a unique animal.” As the “most poetic filmmaker in China,” the images in Jia’s films have aroused the reverie of the aesthetic subject. The “aspirations” that have built a far-reaching artistic conception and focus on the fate of common folks reflect the long aftertaste experience left to the audience by his humanistic spirit and the images of lasting appeal. All these have the aesthetic meaning of traditional Chinese poetry, making his films a great success on the international stage.

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(Translator: Yi Xin; Editor: Yan Yuting)