

Analysis on the perspective and value of the “cultivation” documentary images

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Abstract: As a multi-sensory expression, moving images have a stronger ability to express beyond time and space. The creator uses the camera to depict history through images and sounds, so that the audience can reflect more on the process of watching. From "The Up series" to other similar long-term videos, they have become important chronicles of the era. This article will focus on the relationship between documentary images and history, and the characteristics of "cultivation" formed by these long-term images. Analyze and interpret its value from a multi-dimensional perspective. The context of the development of the times and the critical observation of the creators have led to the creation of works that reflect on social change. This kind of creation has also become a reference mode for many countries, bringing about a rich and dynamic cultural exchange based on cross-regional cultural differences, which has contributed to the development of the globalization era.

Keywords: Documentary images; Social memory; Dramaturgy theory; Cultivation.

Análise do valor das imagens documentais e da memória social do “cultivo”

Resumo: Como expressão multissensorial, as imagens em movimento têm uma capacidade mais forte para se expressar além do tempo e do espaço. O criador usa a câmera para representar a história através de imagens e sons, para que o público possa refletir mais sobre o processo de visualização. "The Up Series" e outros vídeos de longo prazo semelhantes tornaram-se crônicas importantes deste período. Este artigo focará na relação entre imagens documentais e história, e as características do "cultivo" formado por essas imagens de longo prazo. Análise e interpretação de seu valor a partir de uma perspectiva multidimensional. O contexto de desenvolvimento dos tempos e a observação crítica dos criadores tem levado à criação de obras que refletem sobre as mudanças sociais. Esse tipo de criação também se tornou um modo de referência para muitos países, gerando um intercâmbio cultural rico e dinâmico, baseado em diferenças culturais inter-regionais, o que contribuiu para o desenvolvimento de uma era da globalização.

Palavras-chave: Imagens documentais; Memória social; Teoria da dramaturgia, Cultivo.

Documentary is often a sort of construct - a reenactment of another time and space for audiences, using cinematic images and recorded sound to depict history for the present. Dziga Vertov, who proposed the concept of the "Kino-Eye," said that "the cinematograph was invented to penetrate deeply into the visible world, to expose and record the phenomena that we see, so that we do not forget what is happening now and what we must consider in the future" (VERTOV, 1984b: 67).

The Relationship between the Documentary Image and History

History, as Bill Nichols (1991: 142) put it, is the referent of documentary which always stands outside the filmic text, 'always referred to but never captured'. The film as much is always made up of images that are never more than fragments, in which history itself is invisible, an absent cause accessible only through textual reconstruction. This textual reconstruction is the work of montage. In short, the documentary can only be used as part of the history, and even if the discussion of the documentary itself in relation to the construction of "reality" never ends, it cannot hide its value and significance. Nichols goes on to say that "the body presented in the documentary must be understood in relation to the historical vein, which is a reference, not an ontology. History is the place where pain and death occur, but it is also the place where facts and events make sense" (Id.: 265). From this perspective, further understanding of the content of the documentary image will enable a deeper understanding of the era and the collective social memory behind the images. One of the most unique and iconic of these films is Granada Television's (now ITV Granada) "The Up series", which began in 1964 and features 14 children from different social classes and races in the Britain, followed at seven-year intervals from the age of seven and then edited into a series of nine films until 2019. "The Up series" came about as a result of Granada TV's investigative journalism programme from January 1963 to December 1998 on the theme of "World in Action", which explored current social issues and had an audience of nearly half the population in the Britain (LEWIS-KRAUS, 2019). The head of the show and founder of Granada TV, Tim Hewat, wanted to further expose the "illusion" of the changing social class in Britain at the time, so he decided to find a novel way to expose the lies of the new "egalitarianism". Inspired by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle's saying "Give me a child until he is seven and I will show you the man", which similar to the ancient Chinese proverb "One's manhood can be foreseen at the age of three and the agedness can be foreseen at the age of seven". This programme also prompted Michael David Apted, a graduate of television training to take part for the first time in what has come to be known as the "groundbreaking chronicle" of documentary images.

Tim Hewat initially had a certain preconceived notion of the programme, and in order to satirize social phenomena, much speculation and planning took place in advance, believing that the conclusion was predictable and that class distinctions were destined to solidify the fate of individuals, so in the process of selecting subjects, class differences and distinctions were the main considerations, and the words "This has been a glimpse of Britain's future" were presented at the end of the film, in order to convey to the audience as a political critique of the program's perspective: children of the rich were still rich, children of the poor were still poor (WEIZONG, 2014). This is not only an issue of the era, but also a problem that the country needs to think about in the development process, as to what is a more objective and just way of development and how it can bring more reflection and possibilities to the public.

The director Apted was born in 1941, grew up in a middle-class family, graduated from Cambridge University with a degree in Law and History, and experienced a flourishing social movement during his upbringing, which is the

reason he was initially selected for the programme, and later became a representative of left-wing intellectuals in Britain; his work spans a wide range of television and film categories, and constantly reflect and express political, ethical, and life destiny. Participating in the "The Up Series" project ended up being an extremely important part of Apted's creative career, and no matter how it changed, he returns to the production of "The Up Series" every seven years.

Between 1951 and 1964, on the other hand, the economy gradually recovered after the Second World War, and the incomes of British industrial workers rose by 95%, while the government cut taxes, people's living standards steadily improved, and the status of the working class changed. Until the late 1950s, when Britain became one of the richest countries in the world. The economic recovery, which contributed to the flourishing renaissance of industrial civilization, allowed television to spread rapidly to a large number of households, till 1963, nearly 82% of all households had a television set with which to watch TV programmes (MENGGE, 2011). Under this development background, the improvement of the working class's consumption ability has promoted the prosperity of the popular culture of the mass media, and also caused the hostility of the elite class; the influx of immigrants also prompted the British society to quickly show a high heterogenization. The concepts of "British culture" and "British people" are facing shocks. The anti-traditional movements launched in the 1960s have reshaped the appearance of all social strata. The first generation of intellectual elites from the working class have entered the historical stage. The academic movement of the "New Left" started, and in this era of social transformation, young people in Europe and the United States other than Britain have also begun to pursue a set of values that are very different from those of their parents. People have begun to pay more attention to women and all kinds of Ethics strive for more rights, and many outstanding works of art and schools of thought were born in this era. Similar video works such as "The Up Series" that reflect on social changes have appeared one after another.

"Cultivation Documentary ": The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

Documentaries are sometimes even more performative than the fiction films. Since the fictional performance is to obliterate its pretentious elements through pretending natural gestures, the audience's reaction is rather self-contained; however, by emphasizing the explosive relationship between the audience and the act of viewing, and transforming the documentary from the perspective of the object of viewing to the subject of action, the audience performance inspired by the documentary is in no way inferior to the performance of the object being depicted (RABINOWITZ, 1993). This is actually emphasizing the two-way connection between the audience and the image during the viewing process.

In recent years, Chinese audiences have been impressed by local works such as: "A Bite of China", "Masters in the Forbidden City", "Twenty-two", "The Story Of Chuaner" among others. These documentaries have gradually "cultivated" a group of local audiences, and no longer just interested in commercial films. These local works not only create a high degree of interaction between the Internet and interpersonal communication, but also have a practical impact on the lives of the audience, such as the increasing number of candidates in the restoration department of the Forbidden City, stimulating the local tourism and catering industry, creating a cautionary effect on the new generation of young people about history. The image itself, as a "mirror of the times", actually promotes people's change.

British communications scholar Denis McQuail (1972) has proposed "four types of utility" for TV shows to meet the needs of the audience, including:

psychological conversion utility, interpersonal relationship utility, self-confirmation utility and environmental monitoring utility. The audience indirectly projects the inner presupposition and self-construction by watching the growth of children of different class backgrounds in "The Up Series", and compares their changes to verify some established presuppositions, and can also see the intention of the director. "The Up Series" shows the gradual progression of these subjects from childish to rebellious adolescence, receiving different education and entering the society, some of them entering marriage, some of them going through the process of life's ups and downs, and by the ninth part of 2019, some of them have passed away. In each film, we can see not only the epitome of the era, but also the repetition on the key issue. By repeatedly presenting some classically related words, the audience can see not only the changes in the stage of the subject's growth, but also the external environment and the character and foundation of the child who was first recorded from the age of 7 onwards, which do not echo the director's creative motivation, but become the precious document of the development process of the era.

The creators and audiences that have grown up with these children constitute the particularity of image creation, forming a process of accompanying "cultivation" in the process of viewing. Audiences witness and experience a common visual "experience" in the life of these subjects. The experience of abbreviation can be combined with McQuail's theory of using and meeting the needs of the audience to continue exploration.

The concept of "Cultivation" first came from the Life simulation games. In the course of the game, the player can choose any object and cultivate it to achieve achievements in the game, and the player will get his own sense of achievement and satisfaction through the process (YUFENG, 2019), The initial pursuit of objectivity in documentary making was all about emphasizing not to interfere too much in the actual lives of the subjects, but it is undeniable that these influences were inevitable. Although the production process of "The Up series" was shot at intervals, from the second film onwards, the subjects were invited to view images from their childhood (7 years old) and adolescence (14 years old), and then they were repeatedly discussed with each other. During the editing process, the director also put the subject's refuted views and ideas into the film to produce a multi-view presentation, and the subject also appeared straightforwardly that "shooting has no value". In addition, because of the public feedback problem after the broadcast, the choice to withdraw from the shooting halfway illustrates that this series of works started a co-creation, and under the influence of multiple perspectives, it became a series of recorded images with the characteristics of "cultivation".

"All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players
They have their exits and their entrances
And one man in his time plays many parts."

As in this passage from Shakespeare (1599) there are different "identities" given to each person under the social structure, and then people "play" the corresponding social roles under these fixed patterns. Dramaturgy theory's proponent Erving Goffman (1989) then addresses the question: how do people create an impression in the minds of others during interaction? Or rather, what techniques are used to make oneself perform certain behaviors to give others the impression that one wants others to have. When a person appears before other people, the latter usually want to know about the individual, interested in his general socio-economic status, self-concept, attitudes towards treatment, competence and trustworthiness, etc., there is an implicit demand for utility, for

the individual to know what he expects of the other, and how to act more appropriately in response to the corresponding expectations, then some established social realities and conventional rules become the way to address these issues.

"The Up Series" are made up of children from different classes, so the influence of the congenital family and its environment inevitably serve as a reference for watching the changes and formation of these subjects. In the film, even though most of the subjects' families exist only as auxiliary characters, it is difficult to conceal the fact that the family (both the original family and the next generation) plays a role in the self-perception and external cognition of individual characters; at the same time, the way the subjects deal with their environment and cognition, along with the advancement of age and the transformation of their identities (including changes in their autonomous and social identities), all contribute to the verbal and daily life messages conveyed by the subjects to a certain extent. On the other hand, some of the inherent concepts of family formation formed by the current mass society have also prompted most subjects to have certain ideas about their future family life in the early days: such as what type of education may they receive in the future, whether they will enter marriage and have children, the jobs they dream about in the future, and how to get along and communicate with people from different social classes are discussed during the interview. Even though the way the film is shot and edited changes slightly as time progresses, gradually increasing the focus on the individual subjects themselves, the overall process of change in social development is still projected onto these characters. These conversations and contents are all closely linked to the changes in Britain's domestic environment, where the changes in external society towards women and people of color have led to increased employment and lifestyles, as well as more opportunities and possibilities, and a place for themselves within social groups, so that the changes experienced by the subjects themselves have influenced their life course.

The repetition of the contrasting issues gradually intensified in the later shots, and the reflection on the development of the self and the formation of the next generation, as time and life changed, new "cultivation" of the different subjects also gradually appeared in the process. As time progresses, new connections and relationships are formed as realistic audiences who have watched the films enter into the lives of their subjects (and together in marriage), and these are the most valuable and rare parts of the series. Just because the subject is as an individual "person" existence, so can enter into a more in-depth reflective discussion, not only for the subject to produce their own thinking, follow the audience watching also produced "sympathy" feelings, the subject's life ups and downs of the change driven the viewer's sigh, but also strengthen the social development of the current stage of the situation of experience. With the deepening of self-knowledge and the accumulation of age, the audiences can feel that the subject becomes more relaxed in facing the camera, and gradually will question the creator's perspective and reflection on the past. The tempering in life increases the sense of weight of individual life. Like discussed in previous, the subject of the documentary is like a "body", and the real power of the image is to cover the thickness of history. The transformation of these subjects and themselves and the social process ultimately constitutes the depth of the image, and together with the film, the roots sprout and precipitate.

The value of "The Up series" as a cross-regional and long-time documentary subject matter

When talking about the purpose of analyzing documentary works, scholar Paula Rabinowitz (1993) has suggested that this is actually pursuing a place and credit

in the movement for social, political, and economic equality, as well as an attempt to point out how the subject of history is brought to the fore by documentaries. "The Up series" is a series of documentaries that show Britain's history from the 1960s to the present, as audiences watch stories that transcend the lives of individuals and experience the changes of the times in different situations, which ultimately form a microcosm of the country's development. In recent years, the director's filming has transcended the original motive of creation, and the ultra-long period of filming has closely connected the filmmaker and the subject, and these "free-growing" subjects have become the symbols of the era. Originally implied based on the critical perspective of class, it gradually became a focus on "individual" life, and began to explore what made a person's life, and finally obtained the key elements in addition to the influence of personality: marriage and education. Those who break the class boundaries to the greatest extent, from the bottom of society to becoming university professors, rely on their untiring efforts in their studies. (MENG, 2019)

Marriage is the key to change for all people, and even among them, there are those who have not been able to enter the marriage but are still full of aspirations, but there are also families who have achieved good happiness index because of a strong marriage, even though their lives are ordinary.

With the advent of the British version of "The Up series" and its huge impact on the era, "The Up series" and similar creations began to appear in several countries around the world. In 1990, the Soviet Union began the creation of the "Born in the USSR" (director: Sergei Miroshnichenko / Jemma Jupp). At that time, the film selected 20 children of different classes in the Soviet Union, until the 28-year-old version of was completed in 2012. The most significant difference between the Soviet Union version of "The Up series" and the British version is that life is more complicated than the British version, as the Soviet Union experienced national division, cultural shock and economic recession, which made life itself more difficult for the subjects to achieve stability. Also in the Asian region is the Japanese version of ""The Up series " <7年ごとの記録>. Compared to the country turmoil experienced by the Soviet Union, Japan recorded a version up to the age of 28 (2013), during which Japan experienced The bubble economy, these changes in the external environment also have a stimulus and impact on the subject, of which the more interesting is that some subjects refused to disclose their family background, so as not to be labeled with an inherent label. Compared with the British version, this also reflects the difference between the times and the regional culture. In the original British version, the subject talked about similar issues, trying to get rid of the so-called class label, because it is easy to bring too many presets and "imagination", re-enter Goffman's "Dramaturgy" (1989). But director Apted has retained valuable relevant interview content in the film, let the subject speak for itself, express it with a more diversified perspective, and show that in addition to the inherent potential advantages of the class, the diligence of the self is also a part that cannot be ignored. The "21 Up in America" till 2015 has recorded 13 children to 21 years old, spanning the east and west coasts of the United States, with different race and class. The time for collating records began after the 1990s. Compared with other countries, the United States has actually entered a "heyday" since the 1990s. The new economic era has driven the US economy to maintain rapid growth and long-term prosperity. Compared with other countries' versions, there have been more flows between classes. It is interesting to note that since 2000, the BBC has been producing and airing a new series called " Up in New Generation "which is now 21 years old and follows the record of the children born in generation Y, after the process of technology "takeoff", the subjects began to enter the era of rapid Internet change. The characteristics of this era have made the entire image creation process more interactive. The subjects' own life is also more influential, and they

have their own fans. At the same time, the feedback and evaluation of watching can also be watched from time to time. Only after the new stage of recording and shooting can we know the consequences.

Compared to other countries with similar subjects or similar creations, similar documentary in China is "Post-00s", which focuses on the growth of China's "post-'00s" and spans more than a decade in its creation. Director Zhang Tongdao's initial motivation for filming was to document his four-year-old child, but in his interactions with the child, he realized that his education was only a brutal intervention of the child through experience, and he wanted to open up the world of the child to a very different world from that of the adult. From the perspective of class, there is no major difference in "Post-00s", which is basically a middle-class family background in Beijing, but the most central concern is the influence of "education". Education has always been an important issue in China and a local feature. Every year, the college entrance exams and secondary school exams are like important festivals, and good schools are like the "golden key" to success, so the pressure of competition becomes a heavy burden for families. In the film, many issues are presented, such as personality and system, test education, studying abroad, getting along during adolescence, the influence of one child policy and openness to childbirth, parent-child relationship, etc. In the end, we see that different education methods do not have the same impact and results for each child. In a decade, a group of children who were originally in the same kindergarten took their own paths.

The biggest difference between "Post-00s" and "The Up series" is that the former reinforces the importance of 'education', which itself has to do with the context and motivation of the director, and in terms of the content of the work itself, the interval of time is not specifically recorded, probably due to the need of the creation itself, the TV version (2016) and the film version (2019) were only shot in stages after an interval of ten and twelve years respectively, with cross-content comparisons presented in the images. The key difference in the film is that the subject is no longer just the child, but the parents are also present in an important capacity, which also illustrates the geographical development of the content of "Post-00s", where the Chinese parents are the driving force behind the growth of the children. With the advent of the era of globalization, the film also shows the difference between Chinese and Western education, but the results of the real long-term "upbringing" will not be known until further follow-up. It was only after twenty years that Atped, the director of the British version of "The Up series", realized that he was not creating a film for political purposes, but more based on a humanist perspective to document the real situation of ordinary people from different social strata in Britain at that time, which also shows that the value of the images recorded for a long period of time can only be finally realized through the cumulative observation of the length of time and the development process of the times.

The long-term series of documentaries focusing on educational topics at the production stage also includes "True Growth" (Director Zhang Lin), which has been filming three middle school students from different family backgrounds in one of the best middle schools in Beijing since 2012. Producer Su Guoxiang, who originally decided to start the project, began the seven-year process after filming the school's education reform experience and felt that "through these children, we might be able to see what the next 20 or 30 years will look like for the core of Chinese society". The film now accumulates more than 1,000 hours of footages, documenting the time span from a teenager's first year of high school to college graduation. For China's current development stage, university is an important step before entering the society. Almost all families are trying to make their children have a better "starting point", so the college entrance examination has

become an important fate ring with Chinese characteristics. Recording images of related processes has become an important part of portraying the development of China. The seven years of filming for "True Growth" covered several key turning points, which also created a different dimension of separation and value meaning from "Post-00s", and more accompanying filming also distinguished the series from "The Up series", which used a large number of interviews.

"There's always this tension if one wants to comment on the way documentary films are constructed, but then the way your subject is positioned with that text, is a problem, Then there is the extra, what I would call the burden of representation – making films about subjects that have not been given voice – that you face in relationship to trying to give that subject in some way its own voice without it being the 'authentic' voice". (JULIEN *apud* MINH-HA, 1993)

How to maintain a more objective perspective is also a proposition that is constantly being explored and groped for. The charm of documenting images lies in the process of "Cultivation" over time, where the subject and the outside world simultaneously construct the spatio-temporal nature of image expression, and the diversity of these changes makes the creative process more interesting.

The process of development of different regions and changing times is recorded by camera, and the functionality and value of the image is constantly highlighted, so that even if the process of creation is limited by many external realities and barriers, the accumulated content will become a dynamic chronicle in the future. This is the best feedback on the creation itself as the audience watches and experiences the changes of time and deepens its reflective nature of life. For example, most of the existing video works have uncertainty about the intervals between shots, the lack of documentation of key details in the process of growing up, and the fact that it is still unknown whether the characters will continue to be filmed for long periods of time in the future. In fact, Apted also talked about the biggest regret of "The Up series" in the interview that no more female subjects were recorded, but these problems also confirmed the evolution of the perspective of the times and the unpredictability of the future, only after a long period of creative process can we constantly look back and think about history. As Walter Benjamin (1969: 255) reminded us, "For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."

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