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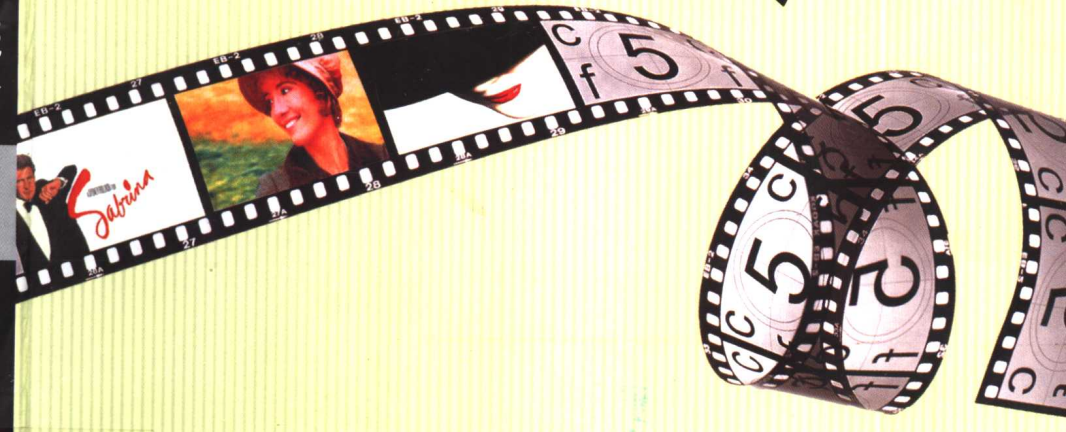
英美电影流派艺术概论

Introduction to English Films and Their Artistic Features

蔡圣勤 著



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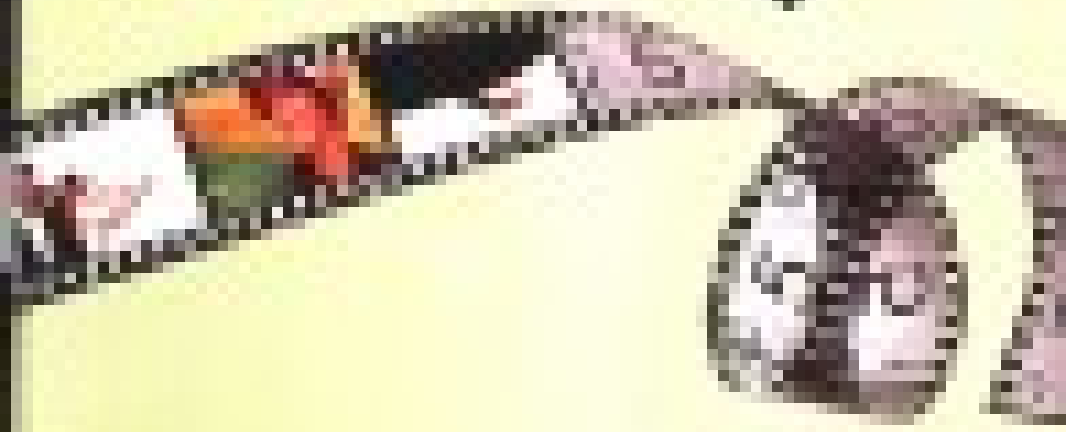

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

英美电影流派艺术概论(英文版)/蔡圣勤著. —武汉：武汉大学出版社，2003.10
ISBN 7-307-04041-7

Ⅰ.英… Ⅱ.蔡… Ⅲ.①电影—流派—简介—英国—英文 ②电影—流派—简介—美国—英文 Ⅳ.J909.8

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2003)第 086859 号

责任编辑：曾建华　　责任校对：刘　欣　　版式设计：支　笛

出版发行：武汉大学出版社　(430072　武昌　珞珈山)
(电子邮件：wdp4@whu.edu.cn　网址：www.wdp.whu.edu.cn)
印刷：湖北毕昇印刷总厂
开本：850×1168　1/32　印张：8.5　字数：216 千字
版次：2003 年 10 月第 1 版　　2003 年 10 月第 1 次印刷
ISBN 7-307-04041-7/J·49　　定价：12.00 元

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Foreword

This "one of a kind" Treatise entitled *Introduction to English Films and Their Artistic Features* brings to the forefront a realization that Professor Cai Shengqin started developing near the beginning of his career as an instructor in the Chinese University System. He takes you through a methodical discussion of the facts and principles surrounding the need to understand the culture of the people whose language a student is attempting to master. He very aptly demonstrates his reasoning and conclusions.

Professor Cai's approach to utilizing "The Genres and Artistic Features of English Films lets one see he is keenly intelligent and responsive to the needs of his students.

During the course of and upon completion of studies at Queensland University, Queensland, Australia where he was awarded the Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics he had begun slow and careful reasoning upon forming an opinion as to the value of English film in helping the Chinese students integrate the culture of the English language along with the intonation as demonstrated in the films in the speaking process.

He makes it very clear that the English films are a part of our

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linguistic environment. His assertion that strong connections can be made between the language arts and the media arts, between composing and film making, between literature and narrative film, and between reader response and viewer response, can not be disputed. Professor Cai considers film making an art, and compares it to other forms of art, tracing its technology and chronology, identifying major trends and variations.

He plainly demonstrates that genres and artistic features of English films have its place in the English culture and the private lives of the English speaker. During his 17 years as a teacher of English and his position at Yangtze University he has and continues to strongly advocate in the classroom and out, the necessity for English students to understand the advantage of viewing & studying English films.

The Professor, in his book is equipping the students and English teachers to form a mental image of the films from his descriptions and see the tremendous influence films have contributed to what understanding the foreign student has of the English culture. Now that I have read Cai Shengqin's book I most strongly recommend it for teachers of English in China. My urgent message is that all serious students majoring in English must have this book and know it from cover to cover.

I am currently the senior foreign English professor at Yangtze University and available Oral English Faculty for Jingzhou Municipal Teaching and Research Institute. The merits of Professor Cai's book are self-evident. It indeed yields knowledge and understanding. I consider it an honor to have been afforded the opportunity to interview the author and review his book. Through this review I have

gained insight that will increase my ability to further help my students master the art of speaking English.

Dr. Marion Hollis Tanksley,
English Department,
Yangtze University,
Jingzhou, Hubei, China

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Chapter One
Languages and Cultures from Film

1. Introduction

As an English language learner, it is not enough to know the language itself. You need to know more than that. Some college students in China even cannot answer the following questions:

① *Do you exactly know about British modern currency*?

② *About British royal family*: *Who is the King or Queen of UK*?

Yes, these seem easy to answer. You may immediately say that English Pound for the first one, Queen Elizabeth Ⅱ for the latter. Actually, in the first question the quizzer really wants to know is: *How many shillings make one pound*? And, *how many pennies make one shillings*? If it is about Chinese currency, three-year-old kids will find no difficulty to do it. How many college students can definitely tell you the currency have been changed since 1971? Before 1971, £ 1.00 = 20 shillings = 240 pennies, i.e. 1 shilling = 12 pennies. After 1971, £ 1.00 = 100 pennies, just like most international currency systems.

As for the second question, Queen Elizabeth Ⅱ is the very correct answer. About the British royal family, people know a lot from

most popular media, such as papers, broadcast, and Internet web site. They also are familiar with Dianna, Charles, and William. The further question would be: What is the royal family name? Many students will make faces and lower their heads and crouch to the desks. If the question is about China's ancient dynasties, Qin, Han, or Tang, Song, even Qing, young kids with no hesitation will bolt out Ying, Liu, or Li, Zhao, and Aixinjoelo for Qing Dynasty. Why does this happen? Language and culture exist everywhere. Now see another example of a dialogue in a China's film:

(*In 1940s, a bareheaded man to another guy with a wool-hat*)

It is Lao Tou Zi (*the old man*) *who sent me here*.

Most Chinese, older or younger, will easily understand the Lao Tou Zi is Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of Kuomintang. "The Old Man" does not literally mean Chiang Kai-Shek in any dictionary. But they know.

So in order to make us familiar to British and American intonation and pronunciation, to understand the inter-culture between China and Western countries, to be able to communicate with native English speakers on normal topics, as we know most famous stars are from films and tele-programs, you have to watch enough English movies, as well as practice of the text material-intensive listening, by words, by sentences, or by paragraph, listening to VOA special English or BBC program and assisted by computer, since you are in the situation of Chinese language circumstances.

To understand the background and culture, to get sensibility of native speaking to know the way of main media impact on modern social life, to be ware of the schools of literature and its effect to the motion picture industry, there are enough reasons to see English

language films and read this book.

2. Languages and Cultures Reflected from Film

Language is a part of culture and plays a very important role in it. Some social scientists consider it the keystone of culture. Without language, they maintain, culture would not be possible. On the other hand, language is influenced and shaped by culture; it reflects culture (Deng Yanchang, 1989). In the film or the other broadest sense, language is the symbolic representation of a people, and it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds as well as their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking.

"Culture consists of all the shared products of human society" (Robertson, 1981). This means not only such material things as schools, cities, and organizations, but also non-material things such as ideas, customs, family patterns, slang and other formal or informal languages. Putting it simply, culture refers to the entire way of life of a society, "the way of a people." And all of these only could be found in films.

2.1 Different culture with different values

Culture refers to state of intellectual development of a society and the customs, arts, social institutions, etc. of a particular group or people. Once human beings began to change the world, culture had appeared. Different people have different culture. Every nation has its own culture, which is the record of its history. Each kind of culture is the symbol of a country's civilization. It presents the core

of each civilization.

As everybody knows, the essence of culture is the values. Two kinds of people with different values will not do and think of something in the same way. For example, most Eastern people believe dogs are humble and foolish animals, and look down upon them. Meanwhile, dogs are considered as good friends of Western people and nobody defames them in the West. That is because these two kinds of people have different impressions of dogs. In their opinions, dogs have different positions and are not at the same level of their own concepts of value.

Culture not only refers to what have been mentioned but also means to cultural background and psychology. In fact, culture is made up of these three basic elements. They are the basic points of culture-researching approaches.

2.2 Connection between culture and movie

Movie is the product of art, and its basic function is to exhibit all the aspects of the objective world. Culture is the most important part of spiritual civilization. Human cannot produce the movie without the objective world, and culture as well. As the values determine the thoughts of people, and cultural background and psychology also influence a lot. These three elements certainly are the standard rulers of producing and appreciating a movie. Movie is a manner of cultural displaying, drawing people's attention on the society.

When the movies get achievement at certain height in the field of art, there would be a new branch of culture—movie culture. In one sentence, culture is the foundation of movie while movie

enriches culture.

3. The First Arts

Movie, or motion picture, has been called "first arts" since the 19th century while which is developing with the science and technology. It contains three main features which will be listed below.

3.1 A great combination of auditive and visual arts

Auditive and visual arts are the two main and popular schools of arts. Music composers and fine art painters are considered as honorable and respected artists by the common people. The two main arts have a long history and are rising well even in the modern society. Motion picture, the great combination of both of the above, takes the first place gradually and attracts mass better than each of the auditive and visual arts.

3.2 A great combination of literature and drama

It is not necessary to say how literature origins but we all know that drama is one part of it. Fiction novels are more popular than dramas for the new generations. The motion picture actually takes the place of the drama art with the help of the developed and developing technology.

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