

Snow Leopard: The Interweaving of Reality and Surreality

--Wanma Caidan's New Interpretation of Tibetan Films

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Abstract

Wan Ma Caidan's "Snow Leopard" is a Tibetan film that deeply explores the relationship between humans and nature. Through realistic and surreal narrative structures, it showcases the impact of modernization on traditional lifestyles and the importance of nature conservation. This article first analyzes the conflict and integration of Tibetan and Han cultures in movies, revealing the role and complexity of language in cultural identity recognition. Secondly, it explores how the interweaving of realistic and surreal narratives in movies deepens our understanding of the interaction between nature, faith, and humanity. Through the direct conflict between herders and snow leopards, as well as the dream world of young lamas, it reflects different attitudes and decisions of humans towards the natural environment. In addition, the ecological themes in "Snow Leopard" were discussed in detail, particularly the respect and protection of nature and animals, as well as how to criticize and reflect on modern social ecological issues through the relationship between humans and animals. Finally, the innovation of Tibetan film tradition in "Snow Leopard" was summarized, and how Wanma Caidan proposed new cultural and ecological perspectives through this work was discussed. The success of "Snow Leopard" at the Tokyo International Film Festival and its significance in enhancing global awareness of Tibetan film were discussed, marking a breakthrough for Tibetan film internationally and showcasing its global influence.

Keywords

Snow Leopard ; Tibetan cinema; Human and nature.

1. Introduction

As a highly respected Tibetan film director, Wanma Caidan's works are deeply rooted in the rich soil of Tibetan culture, showcasing the rich cultural landscape and unique way of life of the Tibetan people to the world through the medium of film. Since his debut film 'Silent Mani Stone', Wanma Caidan has been exploring and expressing the multiple dimensions of Tibetan society, and each subsequent work delves into the complexity of the interaction between the spiritual world and the environment of the Tibetan people. As an artist, he not only focuses on the inner world of characters, but also explores the impact of environment, beliefs, and social changes on individual lives through films. These works have increased the visibility of Tibetan films on the international stage and provided a window for global audiences to understand and appreciate Tibetan culture.

In his posthumous work 'Snow Leopard', Wan Ma Caidan continued to use and innovate his artistic style and narrative techniques. This film not only gives the audience a strong visual and emotional impact, but also presents obvious innovation in narrative structure. Snow Leopard weaves a complex narrative about the conflict and fusion between humans and nature, modernity and tradition through a series of realistic and surreal scenes. In the film, the real-life story and the surreal visual and emotional experience are reflected in each other, showcasing the subtle relationship between humans and nature. Through this dual narrative structure, a

new interpretation and reflection on Tibetan traditional culture are proposed. This article aims to deeply analyze the realistic and surreal narrative techniques in "Snow Leopard", explore how these narrative strategies help the film explore and express the relationship between humans and nature, modernity and tradition, and explore how Wanma Caidan has made new cultural interpretations of Tibetan culture through this film, as well as the impact of these interpretations on understanding Tibetan culture and its position in modern society.

2. Cultural Conflict and Integration

In Wan Ma Caidan's posthumous work 'Snow Leopard', the conflict and integration of Tibetan and Han cultures is one of the core narratives of the film. By depicting the challenges of modernization in Tibetan life, Wanma Caidan demonstrates the changes in culture and deeply explores the friction and integration between tradition and modernity. The cultural interweaving in the film is presented through the lifestyle and behavior of the characters, and more importantly, through the use of language, namely the cross use of Tibetan and Mandarin, it reflects the diversity and complexity of cultural identity.

At the beginning of the film, a group of Tibetan and Han characters converse in a moving car, using both Tibetan and Mandarin. The dual use of this language reflects the convenience of communication and symbolizes the intersection of cultures. In the movie, Tibetan characters switch to Mandarin when necessary, depicting their living conditions in modern Chinese society. This phenomenon is particularly common in Tibetan settlements, especially for those living and working in multicultural backgrounds. For example, the TV station officials in the movie, who are accustomed to using Mandarin in their work, demonstrate the influence of the professional environment on personal language habits. In addition, while portraying the integration of Tibetan culture with the outside world, 'Snow Leopard' also does not avoid cultural conflicts. One of the main conflicts in the film takes place within a Tibetan family, where the younger generation is faced with the choice of whether to adhere to traditional lifestyles. This reflects the impact of modernization on traditional lifestyles, and the film showcases the internal divisions and intergenerational tensions within the Tibetan community through this internal perspective. This tension is reflected in life choices and attitudes towards nature and ecology, especially in the treatment of snow leopards, a species with special status in Tibetan culture.

The use of language in 'Snow Leopard' is a key point in understanding cultural identity diversity. The fluent transition of Tibetan characters between using Tibetan and Mandarin demonstrates their adaptability in multilingual environments and reveals how individuals can integrate into a wider society while maintaining cultural traditions. For example, the roles of deputy township chief and journalist in the drama, who are able to flexibly use two languages in different contexts, demonstrate how modern Tibetans actively participate in national public affairs while preserving traditional culture. This language strategy not only reflects the dual identity of individuals in modern Chinese society, but also reflects the position and changes of Tibetan culture in modern society. Through its rich narrative and visual language, 'Snow Leopard' showcases the conflict and integration of Tibetan and Han cultures. The language use strategy in the film, especially the cross use of Tibetan and Mandarin, enhances the authenticity of the film and deeply reflects the complexity and diversity of Tibetan culture in the face of modernization challenges. This dual dimension of culture and language provides a new perspective and depth for understanding the modern adaptation of Tibetan culture, and also prompts the audience to think about how to accept and adapt to the inevitable modernization process while respecting tradition.

3. The Narrative Structure of Reality and Surreality

Wan Ma Caidan's film "Snow Leopard" presents obvious innovation in narrative structure, cleverly interweaving the stories of reality and surrealism, forming a unique narrative style. This structure not only enhances the visual and emotional depth of the film, but also gives it deeper philosophical significance in exploring the interaction between nature, faith, and human nature.

On a practical level, 'Snow Leopard' tells a story that takes place in a highland pastoral area. At the beginning of the movie, a snow leopard broke into a herder's house and killed nine sheep. This incident immediately triggered a direct conflict between humans and nature, and the father and son in the herder family had a heated debate over how to handle this snow leopard. Father tends to release snow leopards, reflecting an attitude of harmonious coexistence with nature; The son, on the other hand, advocates killing the snow leopard as revenge for the losses it has caused to the family, reflecting the conquering and controlling mentality of humans towards the natural world in real life. This conflict reflects the issue of the relationship between humans and nature, and touches upon the different attitudes and values of people towards the environment and ecology in modern society. At the same time, the surreal aspect of the movie unfolds through the dream world between the little lama and the snow leopard. At this level, there is a mysterious and profound spiritual connection between the little lama and the snow leopard. In the dream, the lama and snow leopard redeem each other and experience a series of surreal events together. These events symbolize the spiritual pursuit beyond the material world and the exploration of the essence of life. These dream scenes enrich the symbolic meaning of the film, showcasing the sacred view of nature and animals in Tibetan culture, as well as deep philosophical reflections on the universe and life. [4]

This dual narrative of reality and surrealism greatly deepens the theme of 'Snow Leopard'. On a realistic level, the film explores practical issues in human life, such as environmental protection, conflicts between humans and animals, and the collision of cultural and ecological values in the process of modernization. On a surreal level, the film presents a deeper spiritual world to the audience through the dreams of lamas, exploring how faith, religion, and the inner world of humans affect our perception and behavior towards the external world. Through this structure, Wanma Caidan showcases the rich connotations of Tibetan culture and raises profound questions and reflections on the relationship between humans and nature in modern society. In addition, this narrative structure also reflects the complexity and diversity of human nature. The conflicts in reality and the harmonious coexistence in surrealism demonstrate the deep-seated contradictions in human hearts: on the one hand, we long to conquer and control nature to meet our material needs; On the other hand, we aspire to live in harmony with nature and seek spiritual comfort and redemption. Through this narrative style, 'Snow Leopard' allows the audience to not only feel the emotional impact of the story, but also to deeply reflect and examine their own way of life and values.

The realistic and surreal narrative structure adopted by Wan Ma Caidan in "Snow Leopard" not only adds artistic depth and beauty to the film, but more importantly, it provides a multidimensional perspective for exploring and understanding the complex relationships between humans and nature, faith and humanity.

4. Naturalism and Ecological Criticism

Wan Ma Caidan's film "Snow Leopard" is a work that explores the relationship between humans and nature, deeply demonstrating the theme of ecologicalism, especially the respect and protection of nature and animals. The film depicts the complex relationship between snow leopards and Tibetan herders, reflecting the attitudes and challenges towards the natural

environment and its residents in modern society, and proposing profound criticism and reflection on ecological issues.

Snow Leopard "takes the audience into a discussion about the conflict between the right to survival, nature conservation, and human activities through the fate of a snow leopard. In the film, snow leopards become the focus of human conflict due to their invasion of herders' sheep pens, revealing the ecological crisis of wildlife being forced to approach human settlements due to environmental destruction. Although the behavior of snow leopards is driven by instinct, it inadvertently triggers complex attitudes and decisions towards wildlife in human society. The conflict between herders and snow leopards in the film symbolizes a broader confrontation between nature and civilization, which is not only a regional issue, but also a microcosm of global environmental challenges.

The movie portrays different perspectives on nature through the herder Jinba and his family members. Jinba's position represents a more practical and people-centered perspective, advocating for the elimination of threats to protect the safety of families and property. However, Jinba's father and other family members tend to favor a more respectful approach towards life and nature, advocating for the release of snow leopards. This opposition reflects the contradiction between environmental protection and economic development in modern society, and also reveals the tension between traditional knowledge and modern law.

The ecological criticism in movies is not limited to direct conflicts between humans and animals. By showcasing the fragility and complexity of high-altitude ecosystems, Wanma Caidan emphasized the necessity and urgency of ecological balance. The stability of the natural environment on the plateau, as the foundation of Tibetan community life, directly affects the quality of life and future of local residents. The ecological theme in "Snow Leopard" also criticizes the disregard for the natural environment in the process of modernization, warning of the long-term consequences that this trend may bring.

In addition, the spiritual connection between the lama and the snow leopard in the movie deepens the philosophical and spiritual aspects of the ecological theme. The compassion and understanding of lamas towards snow leopards demonstrate an Eastern philosophy of harmonious coexistence with nature, which contrasts sharply with the Western view of natural conquest. Through this deep spiritual connection between humans and nature, the film calls on the audience to reconsider human attitudes towards nature and advocate for a more respectful and harmonious way of life.

The Snow Leopard, through its complex character relationships and rich symbolic meanings, presents a profound critique and reflection on ecological issues in modern society. The movie not only explores the importance of nature conservation, but also reflects on the way human society treats nature, calling for a more harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. Through this in-depth exploration, Wan Ma Caidan's works encourage the audience to think about how to pursue economic development while protecting our shared natural environment, ensuring the ecological balance and sustainable development of the earth.

5. Summary

Snow Leopard "is not only the pinnacle of director Wanma Caidan's career, but also an important breakthrough for Tibetan films in the international film industry. This film injects innovative elements into the Tibetan film tradition with its unique cultural and ecological perspective, and has achieved significant success on the international stage, greatly enhancing the global awareness and influence of Tibetan films.

From a cultural and ecological perspective, 'Snow Leopard' has deeply innovated the traditional Tibetan film. Traditional Tibetan films usually focus on depicting magnificent natural scenery and profound cultural traditions, while 'Snow Leopard' further explores the complex

relationship between humans and nature, especially the impact of modernization on traditional lifestyles. Wanma Caidan portrays the severity of modern ecological issues and the status of traditional beliefs in modern society through the narrative structure of reality and surrealism in the film. This in-depth discussion on cultural and ecological themes showcases the multidimensional and contemporary relevance of Tibetan culture, providing new possibilities for the expression and content of Tibetan films.

On the international stage, the success of 'Snow Leopard' demonstrates Wanma Caidan's outstanding mastery of film art and profound insight into Tibetan culture. The film won the Best Picture award at the 36th Tokyo International Film Festival, which not only highly recognizes the work of director Wanma Caidan, but also marks the important position of Tibetan films internationally. This achievement not only reflects the high level of art and technology in 'Snow Leopard', but also demonstrates the high praise of international audiences for films that explore complex social and environmental issues.

The award is of great significance in enhancing the global awareness of Tibetan films, not only opening the door to the international market for Tibetan films, but also providing a new window for global audiences to understand and engage with Tibetan culture. Through its unique narrative techniques and profound themes, 'Snow Leopard' showcases to the world the uniqueness of Tibetan culture and the environmental issues of universal concern, emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity in the context of globalization. Wanma Caidan successfully elevated Tibetan films from regional cultural expression to globally influential works of art through "Snow Leopard". This film is not only a pinnacle display of its cinematic art, but also a profound interpretation of the cultural and ecological themes it focuses on. The success of 'Snow Leopard' has set a new milestone for Tibetan cinema on the international stage and provided a powerful example for the global film industry on how to explore universal themes through regional culture.

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