



Research article

Female Consciousness and Stereotypes in Chinese Female-Directed Cinema: Insights from the film *Send Me to the Clouds*

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Abstract

This paper analyzes Chinese female director Teng Congcong's film *Send Me to the Clouds* to reveal the relationship between female consciousness and ideologies of power in the context of the current Chinese era. We examine the narrative strategies, imagery symbols and power ideologies in the film through Foucault's body theory and feminist film theory. *Send Me to the Clouds* takes the redemption of life as its narrative strategy and incorporates elements of humor and absurdity. The film changes the initiator of sexual pleasure to the female protagonist, and the male becomes a passive character who is a cheater, a coward which is an attempt to break the "stereotype" of female passivity in the traditional Chinese cultural settings, to create an important role for female consciousness and ideology of power in this life-saving film. However, it is important to critically examine the limitations and subjectivity of the film, especially whether it subverts the traditional mainstream ideology in its artistic expression of "female consciousness". This study provides insights into Chinese feminist film narratives and further discusses the significance and role of Chinese female consciousness in the global feminist film discourse.

Keywords: Female Directors, Stereotypes, Female consciousness, Feminism.

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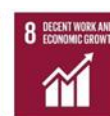
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1. Introduction

The global conversation on feminism, gender representation, and the role of cinema in societal discourse is multifaceted, encompassing various perspectives from different cultures, societies, and academic disciplines. This conversation is not just about analyzing content; it is about understanding cinema's role in perpetuating or challenging societal norms and the ways in which gender is constructed, represented, and understood across different cultures. These different roles, the different characteristics of cinema, and the intricate interplay between gender and authorship, the national and transnational, and other related debates provide a space where women directors can engage in a viable negotiation of their political and artistic identities (Despoina Mantziari, 2014).

Based on the expansion of the group of female directors in China, most feminist film theory studies have assumed that the film texts are analyzed and discussed based on female films. This assumption is prone to a dangerous result: that a female film must have a feminist stance. So how do you determine whether the film is a female film? In our opinion, this assumption has not been sufficiently discussed and can seriously affect the Chinese audience and even the Chinese society's correct understanding of feminism. On the other hand, Chinese female directors are an important part of the global community of female directors, and as Chinese female directors have frequently won several awards around the world since 2010, a correct understanding of their films will also affect the future development of female discourse in Chinese cinema. Therefore, it has become increasingly important to analyze whether the works of female directors subvert the dominant ideological narrative patterns to gain insights and answers. The analysis of Chinese female directors' films, especially through the lens of a film like *Send Me to the Clouds*, underscores the importance of cultural specificity in feminist narratives. While the film presents themes and issues that are deeply rooted in Chinese society and culture, such as traditional gender roles and the patriarchal family structure, it also touches upon universal themes of female empowerment, identity, and resistance against societal norms. This dual focus enriches the global conversation by providing insights into how local cultures and global feminist themes intersect and influence each other.

In Western feminist film studies, the development of feminist film theory plays an important role in recognizing gender power relations in films. They absorb the research methods and theories of philosophy, sociology, and psychoanalysis as the theoretical basis of feminist film studies. The famous Laura Mulvey (1975), with the help of psychoanalytic theories, provides a classic theoretical model for the critique of patriarchal ideology by revealing the thrill of film viewing. In their writings on Hollywood cinema, Molly Haskell (1987) and Marjorie Rosen (1973) analyze the historical position of women in cinema in a strict chronological order of decades, leading to comprehensive conclusions. These writings presuppose a direct relationship between cinema and society, cemented by the notion of 'ideology'. Thus, cinema is assumed to reflect reality. In this sociological view, the objection to the Hollywood Dream Factory is that it produces false consciousness and that films do not show "real" women but only stereotypical images of "femininity" with ideological overtones. This leaves the female viewer with no opportunity for real identification but plenty of room to escape into fantasy through identification with the stereotypical image. The effect is

alienating rather than liberating (Anneke Smelik, 1998). In China, the understanding and study of feminist film theory relies on the translation of Western research texts. Nonetheless, the community of women directors and feminism in Chinese film remains under-discussed and divorced from the language of film as if it were engaged in cinematic research (Chen & Zhang, 2017).

Recognizing the strengths of feminist film theory, it is possible to reveal the meaning of film texts by analyzing narrative strategies, imagery symbols, and power ideologies. This paper employs film narratology, film semiotics, and feminist film theory to analyze and study the hidden power discourse of female characters in films, with the aim of examining whether the narrative strategies employed in these films help female characters break free from stereotypes and characterize connotative values and meanings in relation to Chinese gender culture. In examining how female characters navigate and negotiate their identities and desires within a patriarchal framework, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of female agency and power in cinema. It challenges audiences and scholars alike to consider the nuances of female empowerment, questioning whether the mere portrayal of strong female protagonists is sufficient to subvert patriarchal narratives or whether these portrayals sometimes inadvertently reinforce traditional gender dynamics. The global conversation on feminism and cinema also involves scrutinizing the role of female directors in shaping feminist narratives.

The era of this study is set at the beginning of the 21st century, when the number of Chinese female directors working in mainland China's film industry has increased dramatically. These female directors and their predecessors made films that scholars believe reflected a new sense of femininity. However, Dai Jinhua, a renowned Chinese scholar of feminist film theory, disagrees, claiming that women are "falling" and regressing in the films of female directors. Based on this assumption, we can understand that the works of current female directors are still repeating the stereotypes of women under the logic of patriarchal discourse. Patriarchy is a system of domination and superiority of men, as well as a system of control over women (Zainiya & Aesthetika, 2022). Stereotype is the process or attitude of generalizing the whole class of a phenomenon based on the little knowledge gained from members of the class (Suherli, Bahfiarti, & Farid, 2021). Stereotypes are also interpreted as simultaneous views of a certain people or thing from generation to generation. Women are always portrayed as emotional and weak, while men are rational and strong (Suherli et al., 2021). After the 21st century, movies have increasingly portrayed women as having decent, stable jobs in urban spaces, as being college-educated, and increasingly involved in the arts and politics. Women are also often described as single striver (Go, 2013).

In the film *Send Me to the Clouds*, it tells the story of a female reporter who has not yet graduated from her doctorate, who suffers from ovarian cancer, and then searches for her own redemption to raise money for her operation and face her parents under the ethic of complicated family relationships. The film won the Best Screenplay at the 2020 Berlin International Film Festival, was nominated for the Best Screenplay, Best Director's Debut, Best Actress, and Best Supporting Actress awards at the Golden Rooster Awards for Chinese Cinema and won the Award of the Society for Injurious Film Criticism, the Huading Award, and the Finalist Award at the Beijing International Film Festival. Our study identifies a critical gap in the understanding and

interpretation of feminist narratives in Chinese cinema, particularly those directed by female filmmakers. It challenges the assumption that films made by female directors inherently adopt a feminist stance or effectively challenge patriarchal norms. The central problem it addresses is the nuanced representation of female consciousness and the extent to which these films subvert or reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and power dynamics.

We argue that "Send Me to the Clouds" employs narrative strategies and character development that both challenge and conform to traditional gender roles. Through detailed narrative analysis, it demonstrates how the film's protagonist, Sheng Nan, represents an attempt to portray a strong, independent female character who confronts societal and personal challenges. Utilizing Foucault's theory of power and feminist film theory, we studied the complex interplay between cinema, gender, and power, offering a framework for understanding how films can both reflect and resist societal power structures. This contributes to the global conversation by highlighting the importance of critical media literacy in understanding and interpreting the gendered messages conveyed through cinema. However, the film's resolution and the dynamics of power relations reveal underlying patriarchal ideologies, suggesting limitations in the film's subversive intentions.

The significance of this paper extends beyond the specific case of "Send Me to the Clouds" to engage with global conversations on feminism, gender representation, and the role of cinema in reflecting and shaping societal norms and ideologies. It highlights the importance of a layered understanding of feminist narratives in cinema, emphasizing the need for continued critical examination of how films both challenge and perpetuate gender stereotypes and power imbalances. By doing so, it underscores the relevance of these discussions in promoting a deeper understanding of gender dynamics and the empowerment of women in the global context of cinema and cultural production.

2. Methodology

Russian scholar Vladimir Propp (1928) studied about a hundred folktales, and in his *Morphology of the Folktale*, he summarized 31 narrative functions and 7 action environments in the universal narrative structure and argued that all stories come from his 31 functions and are in the same chronological order (Taylor and Willis, 2005). Also, these seven action environments are the seven characters: villain, donor, helper, princess, dispatcher, hero, and false hero. This method of narrative analysis by Propp allows for the function of each character in a film text to be disassembled and interpreted, and then states which discourses are contained in the text (Darajat & Badruzzaman, 2020). Narrative analysis studies the entire text, focusing on the structure of the story or narrative (Jayawardana & Rosa, 2021). Propp's research methodology provides a way to be able to glimpse the behavioral characteristics of the female character function in the face of the logic of patriarchal discourse, as well as the semiotic implications. Although Propp's theory is mainly used in the behavioral analysis of male hero story texts, it is equally applicable in feminist fairy tales, aiming to analyze the main function of female protagonists in the narrative, with the aim of explaining the way in which they participate in the narrative (Dijana Vučković, 2023). Building on Propp's analysis, Greimas further simplifies the above functions by categorizing textual narratives into three combinatorial forms: first, the contractual combination. It includes ordering and receiving

orders, prohibiting and violating prohibitions, and manifests itself in interpersonal relations as mutual conflicts between people, reconciliation, and so on. The second is the completion-type combination. Including hard drilling, through the test, the struggle, the implementation of the task, and so on. The third is the separation-type combination. Including the gathering and separation of people, encounters, migration, displacement, and so on (Luo,1993). These three forms combine characters in a variety of storylines, providing the basic pattern of the movie's narrative (Greimas,2001). In addition, Greimas distinguishes between six types of roles in a narrative work: (1) protagonist and object, (2) supporter and bearer, and (3) assistant and antagonist (Liu&He,2001). Many of these roles are not necessarily specific people but rather materialize into various specific contents or some kind of abstract power, thus making the analysis of the work more concrete and providing a clear definition for our analysis of *Send Me to the Clouds*.

When the main functions of the female characters were analyzed through Propp's theory, we were able to find the character relationships and motivations for their actions in the story, but this was not enough for us to understand the female subjectivity of the female characters. Propp's framework helped us to find out the function and influence of men in the actions of the female characters, and we need to find out more about how the female characters treat and think about their own behavior in the actions, and specifically, we need to examine whether the female characters in the film have a "female consciousness" or not. Here, feminist film theory plays a very important role. Feminist film theory is inspired by the postmodern philosophies of Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacan's structuralist psychoanalysis, and Derrida's deconstructive philosophy that were popular in the West in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminist film theorists took from them such ideological resources as "other", "deconstruction", "gaze", etc., and re-read the image of female in the film text, the female consciousness in the ideology, and re-read it. The re-reading of the female image in film texts and the female consciousness in ideology shows the footprints of feminist films in their quest for female self-awareness, i.e., the process from image subversion to cultural subversion (Zhang,2006).

Therefore, we will use the concepts of "other" and "gaze" in feminist film theory to analyze the female characters in *Send Me to the Clouds*. Along the line of feminist film theory, the first step we will take is to analyze Sheng Nan's difference. How the female director sets up Sheng Nan as a female character and her network of relationships. I will then utilize the concept of "gaze" to see if Sheng Nan's "female consciousness" arrives at the scene when she is confronted with the dilemma of stereotyping. In Lacan's view, the eye is an organ of desire, and as such, we may derive pleasure from the act of looking; however, the eye is also an organ that is fully symbolically ordered (Yang,2014). The reason why people usually see only what they want to see, what they can understand and accept, and turn a blind eye to the rest of existence, is that the organ of the eye is subject to the full grasp of symbolic order. But in Lacan there is a way and a possibility of escaping from the symbolic order, which is the gaze. The fantasy that the gaze induces, and carries is a projection of desire, the desire of the viewing subject to arrive at presence along absence (Dai,2015). In the film, there are several gazing shots of the female protagonist, Sheng Nan, before she goes up the mountain, and after she goes down the mountain, she completes the gazing through the camera in her hand. Through the interpretation of the gaze, we need to discover how

the female protagonist, Sheng Nan, generates sexual desire and how she expresses it. Ultimately to explore the discursive ideology of the female protagonist, Foucault's theory of power and body gave me the key to the problem. By analyzing the distribution of power in the scene scheduling of the female protagonist's character relationships in various plot passages, I was able to peek into the ultimate truth of the female character's discursive ideology of power.

3.Results

The aim of this paper is to critically examine the complexities of female representation in Chinese cinema through the lens of feminist film theory, Foucault's theory of power, and narrative analysis. It seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on gender, power, and cinema by providing insights into how female consciousness is portrayed and negotiated in films directed by Chinese female directors. From our comprehensive analysis of the film's narrative, there are four distinct components that interplay the complexities of the female representation. It consists of the disciplining of social interpersonal relationships, broken family relationships, constructed sexual desires and the body. These four components from society, family, self and their roles on the body respectively constitute the image of women in the films of current female directors.

3.1 Compromises Hidden in the Narrative

Combining Propp's seven spheres of action with the characters in the text of the movie, where the characters are depicted as the heroes who perform their functions, i.e., the female protagonist, Sheng Nan, we can make the following divisions between the functions of the characters in the movie.

Character/Function	characters in the movie
Villain/Creating Characters for Narrative Complexity	None(Cancer)
Donor/Giving the hero something (a physical object, information, or advice) that helps resolve the narrative's characters	Li Ping's father
Helper/Characters that help return heroes to equilibrium	Si Mao
Princess/Often a character who is coerced by the bad guys and at the climax waits for the hero to save them	Sheng Nan
Dispatcher/The character who sends the hero on a mission	Li Ping
Hero/Male-dominated, tasked with restoring equilibrium, usually rescuing a princess and winning the heart of a beauty.	Sheng Nan
False Hero/Characters who seem to be good guys but are actually bad guys and can't be told until the end of the story	<u>Liu Guangming</u>

Figure 1: Character function table based on Propp's seven-character cross-references

As shown in Figure 1, the characterization of the movie basically conforms to the traditional

narrative mode, in which the protagonist has three tasks that must be accomplished, the first of which is to raise 300,000 RMB for the operation, the second is to complete the autobiography of Li Ping's father's book manuscript, and the third is to experience an orgasm before the operation. These three tasks appear at different times but are accompanied by the first task trigger. Next, we utilize Grimes' action model of subject/object, sender/receiver and helper/opponent for each task. The power relations of the movie narrative can be examined.

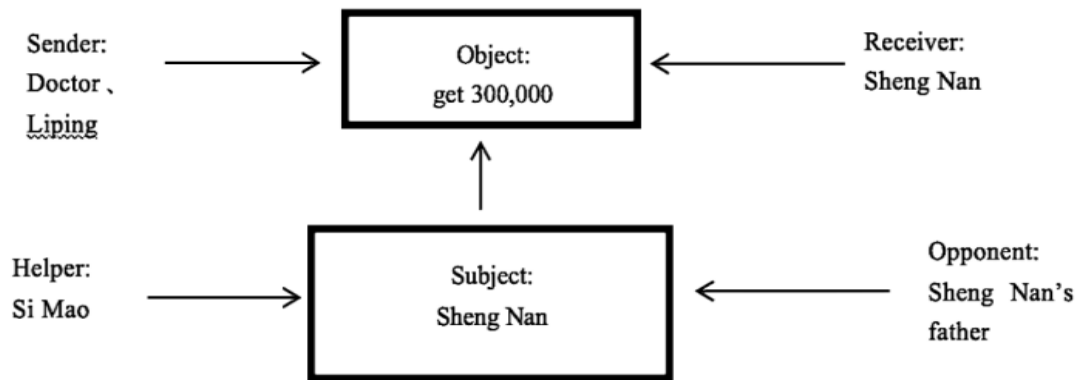


Figure 2: Narrative Model of Send Me to the Clouds

According to the Figure 2, the subject of the movie is Sheng Nan, the object is Sheng Nan's desire to get 300,000, the sender is the doctor and Li Ping, who confide in Sheng Nan to complete the task to get 300,000, the receiver is Sheng Nan herself, and the helper is Si Mao, who is a friend of Sheng Nan's, and the opponent is Sheng Nan's father, who fails to get the money from her father, and instead, her father borrows the money to do business with her, which puts a mental and material burden. Throughout the text of the movie, all character relationships are male, and Sheng Nan seeks the help of three men in all three of her missions, all of which fail, the first being her father, the second being Si Mao, and the third being Li Ping. In the end, Sheng Nan chooses to compromise amidst the arguments and conflicts. In the first mission, Sheng Nan finally forgives her cheating father and happily enters the operating room under her father's watchful eye; in the second mission, Sheng Nan is unable to find love and retaliates against Si Mao but still has sex with him; and in the third mission, Sheng Nan faces Li Ping's humiliation and finally compromises to complete the book manuscript. Throughout the story, even though Sheng Nan appears as an unfeminine character, she is instructed and helped by men in her actions and is physically healed in the completion of her tasks. This is in line with the stereotype of women seeking men for the fulfillment of their desires. Even though she is an independent and thoughtful "female doctor". In the power relations of the movie, wealth and power are still in the hands of men, and the subject and object of the three tasks are Sheng Nan herself, who creates the predicament and has the wealth of her physical healing, so the narrative of the movie is still in the traditional mode of narrative, even though the hero is a woman.

The narrative from the movie suggests that firstly, female empowerment is placed between male

power. Whenever in an unequal competition, women's success becomes raw. Female failure in the home is often equated with the image of a soft, unintelligent woman. Secondly, the narrative of this movie represents the irrational way of thinking of a highly educated woman. The panic at being told that she has a disease shows her emotionalism and passivity. There is also the fact that she still changes her make-up to please the male she is attracted to when she meets him. In addition, the movie still emphasizes the importance of men on women's decisions and behaviors. Every female decision relies on male discursive discipline. Doctors, owners of companies, and well-connected male friends all launch their missions against Sheng Nan repeatedly throughout the movie, and Sheng Nan receives the call of male power to turn around in every resistance.

3.2 Absent Father and Tender Mother

The essentialist concept of gender constructs the dichotomy between the two sexes, characterizing females as "carnal, irrational, gentle, maternal, dependent, emotional, subjective, and lacking in the ability to think abstractly" and males as "spiritual, rational, courageous, aggressive, independent, rational, objective, and skilled in abstract analysis and discernment. The male characteristics are categorized as "spiritual, rational, courageous, aggressive, independent, rational, objective, and good at abstract analysis and discernment"(Li,1997). Formation of stereotypes about male and female gender characteristics. Through the film that the female director tries to break free from the female stereotypes that have been part of the mainstream discourse of Chinese cinema by portraying a strong, independent female character. Sheng Nan is a journalist who has not graduated from her doctorate, and her first scene is investigating the truth about the mountain fire. As shown in Figure 3, she is dressed in a dark gray color scheme, with a brown woolen hat covering her long hair, a black leather jacket and earthy yellow wide backpack, torn gloves, black jeans, and even male-specific martin boots, and she is still unperturbed even after being kicked in the face by a madman for the sake of the investigation, as she gulps down a snack and analyzes the truth about the volcano's fire with a co-worker. Here it fits perfectly with the previously mentioned masculine traits. Her appearance is presented as an independent, headstrong, rational and courageous male. This look is in line with the "Hua Mulan" style of female image, in the film, her independence and courage are produced out of the female gender characteristics.



Figure 3: Film Screenshot about heroine Sheng Nan's outlook when she first appeared in the film. (00:05:20)

By examining and reflecting on the "myth of motherhood" constructed by patriarchal culture, the female director shows the real form of mother-daughter relationship hidden in the mainstream narrative discourse, and in the narrative space where the father is absent, the maternal genealogy inherited from generation to generation is revealed (Wang,2021). Women can secure their identity through female genealogy and to find female history that has been obscured by patriarchal culture. This reconstruction of the mother-daughter relationship is the main topic of expression for female directors nowadays, who have changed the exaltation of the mother's identity, but if the mother's existence is only used as the opposite of Sheng Nan's to highlight her independence, the stereotypical perception of mothers is still clearly visible(Su,2020).Although the domestic space is not used as the main place for Sheng Nan's body in the film, the director chooses to accompany Sheng Nan in the interview, and the mother becomes a symbol of the domestic space, following Sheng Nan through the space. 50-year-old Liang Meizhi maps the body image of women in traditional Chinese marital relationships, which are deeply influenced by the patriarchal system, and is gazed at to attract the attention of men, with lip augmentation injections, lip enhancement injections, and a woman's history obscured by male culture. Liang Mei Zhi, who is gazed at, always deliberately attracts men's attention, injects lip augmentation injections, dresses young and fashionable, and speaks in a deliberately coy voice, among other distorted aesthetic manifestations, which is in sharp contrast to the characterization of her daughter. Sheng Nan, who is the daughter in this capacity, does not identify with her mother in all her communications with her, and they break out into arguments from time to time. The mother's biggest task in her appearance in the film is her short-lived emotional relationship with Li Ping's father, which in turn ends with the death of Li Ping's father. Thus, in the film, the mother is not only a symbol of a broken domestic space, but also becomes an object that completes the male gaze.

In the works of female directors, "family" has always been presented as incomplete, and this movie is no different. When Sheng Nan tries to raise money for her operation, she tries to turn to her father, who runs a business, but before she can ask him, he asks for a large sum of money for the company's liquidity. The father's approach to education is distinctly Chinese and emasculating.

Traditional Confucianism is a deep-rooted stereotype in China, where the father does not care about his daughter with a bruised face, but only about whether she wins or loses a fight, and even the name (Surname of the Chinese name follows the father's name) Sheng Nan, projects the father's admiration for his daughter's patriarchal culture. Women are emasculated men, but they can also be excellent men.

Whether it is the crazy mother or the absent father, in the movie, the director discusses the current gender stereotypes in China through family gender role relationships. With masculine names engraved by men throughout their lives, distorted values of success, fathers having more choices than mothers and even the right to make mistakes, etc., we argue the director is criticizing the distortion of gender education in China through the family gender role relationships, and Sheng Nan is also being weakened by the concept of the female gender in the behavioral practices with her parents. Narratively, Sheng Nan's growing space nourishes a sense of self that has nothing to do with gender, whether it is from parenting or the bodily discourses of herself-space, which are devoid of female gender-specific action tasks and traits.

3.3 Constructed Sexual Desire

Lacan argues that desire pursues goals that are forever lost, and that desire is fully cultural and social. The gaze is a projection of desire, a process of desire fulfilment in the imagination. Throughout the film Sheng Nan's point-of-view shots appear four times. In front of the hospital, on the bus, in front of Liu Guangming's house, and in front of the operating theatre. The topic of sex comes up in the film as Sheng Nan is diagnosed.

Sheng Nan: "I never fool around with men. My sex life has dried up for years. How could I get cancer of the ovaries".

Doctor: "One of my patients was a virgin." (Teng Congcong, 2019, 0:08:01)

This scene is set in the first act of the film, where Sheng Nan is diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and in her perception of the self, the identification of the health of the female body is based on purity or lack thereof. The Chinese concept of gender is still based on restrictive precepts of female identity and body. If a woman maintains her chastity and does not have sex with men, her body will be healthy. Immediately following this is the fact that Sheng male did not produce her desire. All fantasies seem to be annihilated in the anxiety of the countdown to life.

At the home of Simao, Simao searches through the Internet for information on ovarian cancer and finds a patient commenting on the Internet:

"After the operation I lost my sexual desire, my ovaries were removed, the female hormone page is not produced, I can't have a conjugal life now, I've lost my pleasure completely and it's painful.". "Sheng Nan, I think, you should treasure and cherish the time before the surgery." (Teng Congcong, 2019, 0:13:15)

Undoubtedly, the interaction through this dialogue is here the reason why Sheng Nan begins her sexual journey. The message on the Internet symbolizes the construction of sociality, and the cherished statement of Si Mao further reinforces the anxiety of Sheng Nan's desire. It can be argued here that it is Si Mao's actions and words that construct Sheng Nan's desire. He creates in Sheng Nan the anxiety of not having sexual desire and orgasm in the future, and so he must experience sexual pleasure before the operation. The desire of the ego is absent, and therefore also caught up in the anxiety of the self in the imagined order.

The first point-of-view shot of Sheng Nan appears at the entrance of the hospital. Sheng Nan is knocked down in front of the hospital by a thief in retaliation, and the set of shots in this scene nicely recreates the mirror stage of Sheng Nan's spirituality. According to Lacan, fantasy is the stage or scene dispatch of desire. In fantasy, the object of desire always escapes from our gaze. In this set of shots, Sheng Nan's disorientation after being knocked to the ground is a lack of understanding and confusion about her illness being in her body, a powerlessness to count down her life, and through her point of view, in Figure 4, the next shot is the sun that is about to be covered by dark clouds, as shown in Figure 5. Here on the one hand is the projection of Sheng Nan's desire, the end of life, the demise of the body, and the desire of the ego will disappear into the darkness along with the summary of life. The final shot of this scene is thus a pull-shot from God's point of view, as shown in Figure 6, which, in combination with the previous shot, is in fact the point of view of the sun, and with the withdrawal of the pull-shot corresponds to the escape of the object of desire.



Figure 4: Film Screenshot about heroine Sheng Nan's collapsed in front of the hospital. (00:09:31)



Figure 5: Film Screenshot about Sheng Nan's first point-of-view shot. (00:09:32)



Figure 6: Film Screenshot about pull shot. (00:09:54)

The voyeuristic viewpoint on the bus is Sheng Nan's viewpoint of her mother, as shown in Figure 7. On the bus the mother also must wear lipstick to enhance her femininity. In the mother's first appearance, the mother is shown with red lips that are still swollen, and when she gets on the bus the mother must use the lipstick to enhance her lip color, proving that the mother is extremely receptive to the idea that red lips are a source of the male gaze, and of sexual arousal. While we have yet to understand the meaning of the gaze here, the encounter with Liu Guangming after getting off the bus causes Sheng Nan to develop a desire to have sex with him. This attempt to fulfil her own desires is predicated on her putting on lipstick and accepting her mother's behavior.

In this case, it is Sheng Nan's attempt to gain power over sexual pleasure by dressing up in lipstick, she has already reproduced the "stereotype" of gender, that is, she wants to dress up to gain sexual power over men.



Figure 7: Film Screenshot about Sheng Nan's second point-of-view shot. (00:24:07)

When Sheng Nan sits on the boat and sees Liu Guangming's family picking up guests (including himself) from the shore for a banquet, another point-of-view shot occurs, as shown in Figure 8. At this point the lens seems to become a mirror, and Sheng Nan's identification of Liu Guangming in this moment is like a baby discovering its own alienation in the mirror in this moment. Because the scenes after this shot are all portraying Liu Guangming's ridiculousness and absurdity. Before this, Liu Guangming is knowledgeable, kind and gentle. After entering the reality of Liu Guangming's existence, the mansion, the lie that Liu Guangming believes in the eternity of the soul is discovered.



Figure 8: Film Screenshot about Sheng Nan's third point-of-view shot. (01:14:47)

The point-of-view shot of Sheng Nan at the end of the film corresponds to the first point-of-view shot, as shown in Figure 9. Sheng Nan's position in the frame is inverted, but it does not cut to the object being gazed at. Instead, it cuts to a shot of herself with her eyes closed. The director is showing here a declaration of Sheng Nan's awakening of her female consciousness. She no longer needs to gaze at anything absent to enter fantasy. She is her own fantasy. But in front of the point-of-view shot, it is Sheng Nan's parents who appear in the hospital, thus connecting the shot of Sheng Nan entering the operating room. This arrangement at the end of the film is a reconciliation of the father-daughter relationship. This arrangement appears to be a deliberate return to the ideological norms of patriarchal discourse, just as Dai said, "In some films made by female directors, which try to highlight women's existence and cultural realities, the women are even more deeply mired in the fog and enigma of discourse, and their films often start with an irregular, anti-order image of a woman, a woman's story, and a classical, orderly/moral/marriage story. classical, orderly/moral/marital situation as the ending" (Dai,2017, p. 114).



Figure 9: Film Screenshot about Sheng Nan's fourth point-of-view shot. (01:32:40)

3.4 The disciplined body

Foucault says: "Between every point of the social body, between men and women, between members of the family, between teachers and pupils, between the educated and the uneducated, there are power relations of all kinds, and they are not just purely projections of the great ruling power on the individual; they are the concrete, ever-changing soil in which the ruling power takes root, and they make it possible for the ruling power to fulfil its function"(Foucault and Yan ,1997).Thus, power is diffused between the characters of the film screen, and it is only through the body that we can see the truth of the ideology of power discourse.

Overall, the narrative structure of the film is a standard three-act structure. From the diagnosis of

the disease that triggers the character's action to make money, to the outbreak of the conflict that completes the self-sending up to the green cloud, to the final descent to solve the problem and complete the surgery, there is always a reproduction of the imagery of the "green cloud" and the mist. The body reproduces the ideology of power discourse in these images.

In the first appearance of the mist, as shown in Figure 10, the scene is the city where Sheng Nan's works and lives. The film uses a panning shot to move the vision from the lower part of the skyscraper upwards, bringing the camera's visual direction into the mist of the building's roof. This shot occurs before Sheng Nan is diagnosed, and here is the first act of explanation of Sheng Nan's state. The predominant color of cyan in the scene foreshadows the fact that her body is lost in the city. This is the real space in which Sheng Nan's self is active. The second mist is that of the first time she goes up to the cloudy mountain, as shown in Figure 11. Sheng Nan, her mother and Li Lao, are on the right side of the picture, and they disappear into the mist of Yunshan through their physical actions. On the one hand, this is where Li Lao lives, symbolizing Li Lao's social class, and on the other hand, it is also a pretext for the conflicts that erupt later in the second act of the plot, with Sheng Nan lost in the quest for life and death, her mother lost in the phantasmagoric realm of male pleasing, and Li Lao lost in the complacency of the admiration of others. Here Sheng Nan's superego level instructs her on how to complete her self-discipline and self-restraint. The final mist, appears at the end of the film, as shown in Figure 12 when Sheng Nan's body moves from the depths of the mist towards the shot with more and more clarity, symbolizing her gradual discovery and realization of the significance of life. The film tries to emphasize the use of the natural imagery of green clouds and mist as a metaphor for the process of constructing Sheng Nan's character's body, which is the process of her being enveloped by the mist, getting lost in the mist, and then getting out of the mist.



Figure 10: Film Screenshot about First appearance of mist. (00:06:43)



Figure 11: Film Screenshot about Second appearance of mist. (00:33:22)



Figure 12: Film Screenshot about Third appearance of mist. (01:31:10)

"Disciplinary power is enacted through institutionalized discourses, and in modern societies the body receives not only the disciplines of bureaucratic and political institutions-hospitals, prisons, asylums-but also a great deal of discipline in a variety of dispersed and distributed forms-such as discourses about sexuality (Baldwin&Tao,2004). Sexuality is a target that all power is keen to monitor, and the body/sexuality is ontologically inseparable from power, which in its history of regulating the body/sexuality has gradually formed a set of systematic body disciplining/sexuality management mechanisms, which in the case of cinema have an important restraining effect on the expression of the body of desire in reference to discourses of sexuality. Foucault sees sexuality as a means of regulating the body. Foucault sees sex as a bridge and link between the power of

discipline and the power of life, and it is embedded in both body discipline and population management at the same time, and "sex" becomes a target of power struggle because it is at the intersection of body and population. For film, body discipline is mainly devoted to obscuring the body of desire, and the body of desire points more to the female body, especially to the sexual discourse based on the female body, so it is said that body discipline is in a way a response to the body's desire(Wang,2016).The female director tries to liberate the desire of Sheng Nan's body in order to break free from the power discipline, and tries to achieve the acquisition of power and the understanding of life through sex, and the mist in the film space becomes a network of power relations diffused in the world of Sheng Nan's existence. The film's disciplining of Sheng Nan's body begins with the doctor, and after going through Si Mao, her father, Li Ping, Li Ping's father, Liu Guangming, and finally the surgery is completed, and the sexual pleasure is completed by itself, the whole story is absent from the subjectivity of her constructed body in need of desire after going through six men. The whole process of healing the body cannot be done without men, so to speak, and the gender difference is not reflected in the film, as the film narrative holds up just as well by replacing Sheng Nan's female character with a male one.

4. Discussion

From the point of view of the text itself, the whole text of the film is full of illogicality that contradicts reality. In the context of "sexual desire", the simple "desire of desire" seems to be the only option for women (Doane,1987). The complexity of the female figure, through the compromise of male power, the fragmentation of the domestic space, the desire for sexuality and the disciplined body, points to a newly produced stereotype, that is, a marginalized new female figure, the female doctor. They are highly educated women with high standards, whose survival is still inseparable from men, and who cannot live without compromising with them.

Sheng Nan fulfils the meaning of the name given to her by her parents, "Sheng Nan" in Chinese means stronger than men, her strength and independence come from the satisfaction of her parents, and this anxiety makes her lose the support of love from her family, so the director deliberately chooses to use dimly lit evenings and mornings when dealing with the family space as a metaphor for her nervousness. metaphor for her tension; Under the conflict of power relations, Sheng Nan's gender difference as a woman is deliberately weakened. When he clashes with Li Ping at the hot spring hotel, Li Ping only mocks the fact that Sheng Nan is highly educated but bows down to money without attacking the gender dimension or questioning her business ability as a woman. He is even indifferent when he is insulted about his male functioning. The darker side of how real society treats women is evaded here. Coupled with the unique charm of Liu Guangming's gentle and erudite charm in the first half of the movie that makes Sheng Nan fall in love at first sight, but analyzing it comprehensively, Sheng Nan as a highly educated woman who is already over 35 years old and self-reliant and self-awakening in her life, obsessed with the immature setup of the literary young man with a sudden speed and almost silly white-sweet-like devotion, is otherworldly and deviant from the common sense. According to common sense, Sheng Nan's selection criteria should be higher, at least not to Liu Guangming show unusual adoration and worship, so the generation of such deep love is really puzzling. In the second half of the movie, Sheng Nan witnessed the emergence of another him under the same skin, ridiculous in the public

recitation of the absurdity of pi, punctured the lie of believing in the soul of eternity, but she is still not stingy to give Liu Guangming a kiss. The director tries to use this kiss to end the emotional line between the two, to pay tribute to the long dead "Liu Guangming" in Sheng Nan's heart, but this kind of ceremonial artifice doesn't let more viewers feel Sheng Nan's spontaneity, and instead produces more vulgarity and uninteresting and intentionality, which gradually deviates from the previous image of her translucent and bright. Therefore, what we see here is that the setting of the text of the movie is a deliberate attempt to dispel "stereotypes", but in fact, it is plunging the movie into another trap of "stereotypes". The emergence of "female consciousness" in the text of the movie comes too suddenly and without a strong logic.

Judith Pamela Butler, a renowned feminist scholar, points out that the body faces three turns: the body turns in the face of the enquiry of power, and Butler identifies the body's obedience and attachment to power; when the body further reflects on itself, the body, which was originally a slave, succeeds in usurping the position of the subject, which marks the awakening of the self; on this basis, Butler identifies the On the basis of this, Butler recognizes the fictionality of the subject, and for the third time, he turns to an insubstantial placeholder, this time with no actual meaning to refer to (Li,2018). The female protagonist in the movie, Sheng-Nan, even when confronted with male counterpoint positions, ends but is all but reconciled with them. Sheng's completion of Li Ping's biography pays for her surgery; Si Mao, though not directly pleasuring Sheng, completes her sexual act; her father is no longer absent before the surgery; and Sheng gives Liu Guangming one last kiss to end her absurd journey of pursuing sex. Sheng Nan's body turns around in the face of the call of power and constructs its own subject in the relationship of power. Even though she develops a sense of femininity and tries to get rid of the so-called traditional Chinese stereotypes, she still moves towards the discipline of the patriarchal discourse with her budding sense of femininity. Her several confessions of desire are accompanied by ambiguous positions and the help of male characters' appearances to complete her self-reconciliation. This is like the female consciousness in Chinese society, who come out with their arms raised, and walk back into the maw of patriarchal discourse amidst the cries of the audience.

5. Conclusion

The narrative and characterization of the film *Send me to the Clouds* attempts to break the stereotypes of women; however, the film fails to break the workings of the patriarchy. The end of the film highlights the struggle of women to break the patriarchy as well as the redemption of even men. The narrative conveys the message that no matter what the context is and what social identity women hold, they still must compromise with male power relations. It is compromising that conflicts with the expression of Western feminist film. In our opinion, when constructing the expression of feminism in film, what Chinese female characters really want to escape from and get rid of is still the male gaze and the sense that they can only survive with the help of others. Compared with the subjectivity expressed in Western feminist film, which is supposed to express the gender differences from a female perspective, and the sense of criticism of the asymmetrical power relations between the two sexes (Anneke Smelik, 1998), the "female consciousness" of Chinese film is not the same as that expressed by Western feminist film, in this case was prevalently presented in this film. The "female consciousness" of Chinese film is still compromising with male

power, and the complexity of the current film discourse is still the coexistence of "stereotypes" and "female consciousness". The traditional narrative mode has not been completely subverted, and the discourse of female characters' bodily power still needs to continue to be resisted and re-initiated.

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