

## On "A Bride for Rip Van Winkle"

Today, let's talk about Iwai Shunji's newest film *A Bride for Rip Van Winkle* (2016). The film *personifies* today's social media culture cinematically. That is, rather than concentrating on what social media does to people, it renders the acts of the characters in the film as those of social media. Every transaction between the characters is what we would see in a social media platform. Each character in the film approach each other as easy as a click and as devious as a malware. The odd beauty of social media is that the members of social media approach each other knowing that the acts of other members are ephemeral and insincere, and ironically truthful. In short, social media allows its members to form truthful relationships because a social media relationship is instantaneous (i.e. it comes and goes, so do whatever). The difference between the realm of social media and the actual society is that in the actual society the relationships are the *ideological acts of performance* whereas the relationships in social media are the *democratic acts of individuality*. The drama in the film emerges from the main character who unwittingly applies the societal acts to her social media relationships.

We could thoroughly view the film through character analysis, plot structure, music, theme, symbolisms, etc. but we should not forget that cinema is essentially the art of framing. Hence, I only care about the framing to be honest. Cinematically, the film is yet another Iwai Shunji's masterpiece. Every shot is either composed handheld or by using a Steadicam (except for the final composition, which is a dead-still shot composed with a tripod). Handheld and Steadicam shots force the camera *to catch sight* of the acts of characters. That is, the compositions are instantaneous and are not preplanned. These free compositions in the film manifest the democratic acts of individuality embodied by social media. However, the free compositions are constantly in the position of betraying the characters, as social media constantly threatens our privacies and our actual relationships in society. As a result, constant and ceaseless transitions (i.e. cuts) keep the characters in frame. One can say that it is simply the nature of handheld (free) cinematography to have a lot of cuts, but I think not. The free cinematography and its cuts directly mock the nature of social media. One perpetuates one's presence in social media through ceaseless media posts regarding his/her transitions in life. The film is not naïve. Each cut in the film is not made in order to support the story or plots. Rather, each cut in the film supports its *social media being*. There are many other films based on the social media theme but *A Bride for Rip Van Winkle* is obviously superior because Iwai Shunji looks at cinema through the frame, and not through the affects of story and plots.

The final composition is a dead-still shot composed with a tripod. The shot is clearly preplanned and carefully ordered. The camera is placed in a room in which the main character has just moved in to. The ideological acts of performance embodied by the actual society creeps in. It is at this point the camera is no longer instantaneous and free. The main character is trapped in her room, and the camera no longer is required to *catch sight of her acts*. In this particular shot, the character is no longer in a position to force the camera to follow her and force the director to make a cut in order to keep her in frame. She is contained; she is powerless. Her being as a human as opposed to her being as a social media is lifeless.

To sum up the entire film in terms of the camera work, the film manifests the main character as a social media being, giving her absolute power over the cinematic tools that which try to ground her in reality, until the very end in which her environment and situation render her social media being as a societal being, taking away of her powers and handing them over to cinema. Cinema is Naturally religious – we cannot, and should not, try to win over it.

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