

The Ideal Female Image under the Discourse of Special Times

-- A Brief Analysis of the Female Image in "Model Drama"

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Abstract

As a special cultural product during the "Cultural Revolution", the birth of "model opera" has strong epochal and political significance. And the female image shaped in the "model drama" also has a strong "revolutionary symbol" color. This paper analyzes the two types of female images in "model dramas", summarizes the commonality of female roles in "model dramas", explains the loss of female consciousness behind its production, and attempts to analyze the alienation and distortion of women in the special era of "Cultural Revolution".

Keywords

Model Drama Female Image; Heroine; Female Consciousness.

1. Introduction

As a "model of The Times", "model opera" has always shown its cultural function of political consciousness propaganda. No matter the eight works in the first batch or the nine works proposed in the second batch, they all kept up with the social needs of the time, and the themes were mostly about class revolutionary struggle and socialist construction. Moreover, there were a large number of female roles in these "model dramas", and many of them even placed women in the narrative center or took women's liberation as the theme. Based on this reality, the study of the female images in these "model operas" has become an important Angle to study the "model operas" and the social thoughts of the "Cultural Revolution" period. From the perspective of gender studies, these "model operas" have also become important texts for the study of gender issues during the "Cultural Revolution". Therefore, it is of great significance to deeply study the female image in "model drama". After watching these "model operas" from various channels, I consulted a lot of literature and found that many scholars had deeply studied the images of these "heroines", and also produced rich academic achievements.

Dong Jian and Hu Xingliang summarized the characteristics of Cultural Revolution drama to the point, and put forward the concept of "political symbol". On this basis, the special female images in these model dramas were regarded as a "symbol" of political propaganda, which became a common research idea. Li Xianglin did not stop at the feature of "political symbol", but from the two aspects of political consciousness and female consciousness, to explore the "heroine" in the model drama, and put forward the female consciousness of these female characters and the expansion of political consciousness. However, Sheng Xiaoling directly from the perspective of feminism points out that the logic behind the setting of female roles in model dramas does not actually jump out of the fact of male discourse. At the same time, when analyzing the female roles in the "model drama", Chen Jide points out their disorientation in different aspects such as gender, love and family, so as to demonstrate the argument of lack of female consciousness. In the above studies, most of them show a critical attitude towards these female roles from the

perspective of feminism. Unlike the traditional criticism of previous studies, Li Song analyzes the reasons for the emergence of these female roles from the perspective of history and puts forward different perspectives for the study of female images, while Yang Cuijuan and You Zhimin are not confined to gender. For the first time, the theological term "deification" is used in the study of model dramas, which provides a new dimension for the study of this problem.

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that it is very meaningful to deeply study the female images in "model operas". After watching these "model operas" from various channels, I consulted a lot of literature and found that many scholars had deeply studied the images of these "heroines", and also produced rich academic achievements.

2. The Final Confluence of Different Lives: "Growth Type" and "Talent Type" Women under the Shadow

The first type of "growth" is dominated by more "bitter" female roles, The most typical is Xier in "the white haired girl", she was taken away by the landlord Huang Shiren, who trampled her in his hands and fled into the mountains and forests full of hatred, she became a "white-haired fairy", the old society turned people into "ghosts", After the People's Liberation Army came, she was brought back to earth from "ghost" to human. In this type of female role, they will experience the exploitation and oppression of the so-called feudal class such as landlords and bullies, and eventually some revolutionaries and the PLA will act as the role of "saviors", and these women will become the "victims" and start to complain about the experience of oppression, "In revolutionary model dramas, reminiscing and telling the history of blood and tears has become a means to promote narrative, and it has also become the patent of women, young and old have a history of blood and tears." [1] Wu Qinghua, Chang Bao, Grandma Li, the model opera has different ages and different types of "victimized women", as if they can only be "redeemed" and become "followers of the revolution" after meeting the People's Liberation Army and revolutionaries. Before becoming true "heroines", they were always defined as "weak", redeemed by men. This gender model is very much like the classic "suffering and redemption" model, and the logic behind this model seems to be confirmed in the "female abuse" point. Freud once mentioned that the essence of "female masochism" is a cultural type built on the male-centered order, using female blood and suffering as the carrier to construct the male redemption required by mainstream ideology and ultimately confirm the male gender advantage. Under such a model, it seems that women's liberation is still under the patriarchal discourse order, and the relationship between men and women is still "dominating and being dominated", which seems to be completely contrary to "equality between men and women". However, the plot setting of women standing up from suffering to independence in the later stage also indicates the author's intention to express the theme of "female liberation". Analyzing such contradictions, it can be seen that what the model drama claims is only "equality between men and women" under the logic of male power discourse. The female role of "suffering" seems to be the center of the story, but it actually sets off the great and noble heroic image of the male revolutionaries, which caters to the mainstream political consciousness at that time and the formation of the magnificent image of the proletariat. The creation of these female roles is not simply to show the awakening of female consciousness, but to break the oppressed attitude of the traditional Chinese ethics requiring women to "the three obedience and the four virtues", so as to show the people's character of class struggle and the superiority of proletarian politics. Model operas with the theme of "women's liberation" are cultural tools for political awareness propaganda. Political liberation is not equal to gender liberation, and political liberation may create a premise for gender liberation, but it is obvious that model operas, as a model cultural product representing the era, have not escaped the shadow of male power to reach the realm of real gender liberation.

The second type of "talented" women is the female image with ability and no less than men, these women often have the same social status and power as men, and bear the same social functions as men. One of the most typical is Ke Xiang in "Cuckoo Mountain". In the face of Lei Gang, the captain of the peasant Self-Defense Force who looks down on female Communist Party members, she proves her ability and firm will and belief with her intelligence and talent, and has a leadership temperament. Fang Haizhen in "Harbor" is a grass-roots cadre with high political consciousness and long-term vision. We can see that these women have some common points, they all have relatively high social functions, such as female Communist Party members, female workers, female soldiers, etc., have a higher voice than ordinary people. Foucault believes: "Power is productive, it can create reality, create the field of objects, including the ability to discipline and control the subject according to its own will, so as to produce the needed, tame group." [2] This relatively high "power" is a necessary condition for the superior women to play their intelligent and astutely role and control the development of the whole event in a more "advanced" direction. None of these images have the color of "heroine" and become the so-called "women like men". This image is no different from men and actually takes men as a standard. He believes that the so-called "excellent women" should meet the same standards as men under this patriarchal discourse. This setup is under revolutionary consciousness, and still does not fully escape the shadow of patriarchy.

3. The "Heroine" of "Three Losses": Alienated Idealized Female Standard

Although the female characters in the model operas have different life experiences, some of them belong to the "suffering - redemption" model of women who grew up, some are born with leadership and talent of the female strong, but in the end will show a standardized female image: heroine. Observing these "heroines", we can find that all the female characters in the model operas have lost their inherent subject consciousness for the sake of national independence and liberation, or for the victory of class struggle. [3] This kind of loss is mainly manifested in two aspects: the loss of love and family and the loss of physical characteristics.

The loss of physical characteristics is mainly reflected in the fact that the female characters in the model operas have almost the same image characteristics: short hair, thick eyebrows and big eyes, broad shoulders and thick waist, strong body, loud voice and fast speech. [4] They even imitate male traits in their thoughts, personalities, and behaviors. For example, Fang Haizhen and Jiang Shuiying, the typical "heroines" in "Harbor" and "Ode to the Dragon River", possess strong personalities and extremely high leadership, and have the will of "women can hold up half the sky". Fang Haizhen even calls on everyone to "young people take the lead, and female workers strive to take the lead". Although this is a break from the gender concepts and ethical standards of the old society, repeatedly emphasizing that women can be the same as men is actually a neglect of women's own characteristics and female autonomy, and to achieve such a value standard, women must abandon more and pay more, which has great similarity with the liberal feminism of "gender equality" and "ambiguous gender". Li Yinhe once commented: "Liberal feminism is still based on the norms of men, asking women to become the same as men, ignoring the unique value of female qualities." [5] "Heroine" is only women abandon themselves to cater to male values, resulting in a new female survival dilemma, the loss of their female consciousness. The creation of such female images shows that when women break away from the historical shackles, they also enter a new round of dilemma of losing femininity. The loss of gender makes women no longer women, and the alienated idealized female standard is not only a destruction to women themselves. Here, a woman is just a man in a woman's cloak. [6].

The loss of love and family is also one of the common characteristics of "heroines". Family and marriage are important emotional sources for people, and marriage and family are undoubtedly very important for women. These two points are also the aspects that women have been

described emphatically since ancient times." Although women can fulfill themselves in other roles, the importance of reproductive and family needs should not be overlooked." [7] However, in the model dramas, we can hardly see the relevant information about the families of these female characters, and the family factor seems to be dissolved. In "Harbor", Fang Haizhen has outstanding personal ability, has a firm and outstanding ability, but there is no writing about her family or personal life, "Cuckoo Mountain", Ke Xiang's husband Zhao Xin is sacrificed, "Red Detachment of Women" Wu Qinghua is also an orphan. It seems that none of the "heroines" in the model drama are in love and talk about marriage, and family means that personal emotions must be taken into account, which will distract the attention of these "heroes", so that the factors of family and personal emotions can be simply eliminated, so that the "heroes" can focus on the revolutionary struggle and class struggle. In fact, when the "heroines" lose their gender, they are doomed to lose their families and love. When women no longer have femininity and female consciousness, and only have revolutionary ideals, collective interests will replace individual interests, and revolutionary interests will become their only value pursuit, whether it is family or love, they will only be a "burden". As a result, Xier and Wang Dachun are no longer a couple of lovers and become "good class brother and sister" who share the same difficulties, Wu Qinghua and Hong Changqing in "the Red Detachment of Women" can only be "revolution followers" and "revolution leaders". They cannot extend any so-called "love between man and woman" beyond the relationship between salvation and the redeemed. Thus, all "heroes" are written only in their public domain, with little narrative of family life and personal feelings.

4. Behind the "Heroine" : The Source of Female Image and Female Liberation

The "heroine" with male characteristics has no family, no selfish desires and no love, and is bent on fighting for the revolution. As a model drama of The Times, such a setting is bound to have a great relationship with the social consciousness and social needs of the time. "At its most basic level, each text is a political fantasy that paradoxically connects to the kind of actual and potential social relations that constitute the individual within a particular political economy." [8] "Heroines" seem to exist for the revolutionary struggle, this kind of heroic female culture with left-wing revolutionary color can be traced back to the Yan 'an period. [9].

Yan'an period was under the background of war, and the war demand was the biggest political requirement of the society at that time. Both material and consciousness must serve the war, which required everyone to operate closely like a screw, highly united and obeyed the command, and women in Yan 'an must also integrate into this "revolutionary" male society. Zhao Chaogou mentioned in his newsletter "Yan 'an January" that "due to party spirit, individual actions must be subject to the Party's domination; Because of the party spirit, one's understanding and thought must be guided by one party's policy." "From those lesbians, we can best see a political environment that changes a person's temperament and character." [10] These lesbians are trying to overcome their gender limitations and obey the needs of society and politics. The highly militarized political life requires smoothing out gender differences and maximizing the integration of the individual into the collective life. And this idea also directly affected the social attitude toward gender after the founding of the People's Republic.

The social needs of this period changed from the needs of war to the needs of socialist construction revolution. Women are also regarded as the same as men, "women can hold up half the sky", at this time, the demand for women shows that the socialist construction is in urgent need of "old and new", and gender equality and women's liberation have become the ideals of the new socialist culture. "The children of China have more aspirations, do not love red makeup and love armed", which reflects the ideal standard of women at that time, they should

not be inferior to men, and they should put down female characteristics to hold up "half the sky". As a result, the ideal image of women in society has been shaped in this way - "iron girl", and the degendered "heroine" in the model opera is very similar to "iron girl". "Iron girl" refers to female role models on the Chinese socialist front from the 1950s to the 1970s. During this period, a large number of women's steelmaking teams and well drilling teams emerged, and women's figures appeared in the most laborious industries. Obviously, during this period, the image of female heroism and grandeur was highly respected, which met the needs of the mainstream social consciousness for masculinity.

As a cultural propaganda tool during the Cultural Revolution, the female images created in model operas represented the idealized female images in the political consciousness at that time. These women who had no personal feelings, advanced thoughts and devoted themselves to the revolution were more like idols of *The Times* and idealized models pursued by social values. Perhaps the female image shaping of model dramas is not to express female consciousness, but mainly to meet the needs of social and political consciousness propaganda, but we cannot deny that women's liberation and class liberation are inextricably linked. Class liberation provides the necessary environment for women liberation, and women liberation is also an important embodiment of class liberation. Although from the perspective of feminism, the female images of these model dramas are "incomplete" and the female consciousness is lost, taking the male standard as the ideal value standard is completely opposite to the traditional ethical concept of "the three obediences and the four virtues" for women, and the other extreme is harmful to women. However, from the perspective of historical context and practical significance, while assuming its social political and religious functions, the model drama touches on issues related to female culture, reflecting to a certain extent the view of women in the new era and reflecting the desire of working women for proletarian liberation and political transformation, which is worthy of affirmation. Such a setting is undoubtedly a huge change from nothing to something, and it is the profile of Chinese women who have really begun to move to the stage of *The Times*.

5. Inclusion

As a political propaganda tool during the Cultural Revolution, model dramas set up many typical female images, who were liberated after suffering and being redeemed, or were full of talents and abilities. However, behind these images were still the value orientation under the logic of male discourse, and they all showed the image characteristics of "heroine" in the end. Behind this image is the loss of gender characteristics, the loss of love and family, which is formed under the political consciousness of class struggle above all else. They abandoned their femininity, although they jumped out of the traditional moral discipline of "the three obediences and the four virtues", they went to the other extreme, taking male value standards as the ideal standard for their own development, and fell into the dilemma of lack of female consciousness. The "heroine" in the model drama is actually the idolization of the ideal female "iron girl", which accords with the political consciousness of socialist construction and class revolutionary struggle at that time. From the perspective of feminism, this image is undoubtedly incomplete, but from the historical facts, it reflects the view of women in the new era to a certain extent. The expression of women's desire for liberation and breaking the traditional ethical rules.

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