

Isomorphism: A Study on the Construction of Homeland Consciousness in the New Mainstream TV Drama "The Flowers Blooming"

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Abstract

This paper's research background is the new mainstream film and television drama "The Flowers Blooming," which has achieved significant artistic, market, and educational achievements. It is currently the best work of its kind with a theme of home-country isomorphism. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the construction of homeland consciousness in "The Flowers Blooming", this study uses the case study method to sort out the main content of "The Flowers Blooming" and discusses the artistic tension of the work in the construction of homeland consciousness. The research presents an important case that highlights the significance of sorting through the artistic presentation of new mainstream film and television dramas, particularly in terms of homeland consciousness construction, which in turn underscores the fundamental effects of these new media forms.

Keywords

New mainstream; homeland consciousness; "The Flowers Blooming"; film and television communication.

1. Introduction

In June 2025, actress Song Jia, who starred in "The Flowers Blooming", won one of the highest honors in Chinese TV drama awards, the Magnolia Award for Best Actress. The drama has made remarkable artistic achievements, and has a unique way of portraying typical characters, highlighting its outstanding artistry. Family has a unique meaning in Chinese culture, and at the same time carries the spiritual world and living space of the Chinese people (Chu, 2003). From the perspective of family culture, the new mainstream film and television work "The Flowers Blooming" attaches equal importance to family and country.

Teacher Zhang Guimei, portrayed in the work, is a bridge between family and country, connecting the family of female students in the mountains of Yunnan with the country through the girls' school, showing a clear feature of family-country isomorphism, connecting the small family with the big family. With the wave of globalization sweeping in, the lives, wills, and spiritual outlook of the Chinese people have undergone unpredictable and immeasurable changes in the fields of economy, politics, culture, and society to varying degrees. In the social environment in which people live, they have unprecedented identity anxiety and identity crisis in self and culture. Samuel Huntington believes in his book "Who Are We: The Challenge of American National Character": "The national character/national identity crisis has become a global phenomenon", and people everywhere are asking "Who are we? What do we belong to?", this identity crisis poses a threat to the disintegration of the country.

At present, the vigorous development of commercial film and television has promoted the self-transformation of mainstream film and television, and has begun to innovate production models and explore commercial creative features, but the new mainstream film and television dramas in the development stage are still in the exploratory stage, and the creative features of

new mainstream film and television dramas have not been finalized, and their production models and definitions cannot reach absolute unity. In order to explore the specific logic, main methods and artistic effects of the construction of homeland consciousness in new mainstream film and television works, this study intends to use text analysis, case study, content analysis, etc., and select a typical case "The Flowers Blooming" from new mainstream film and television works. This study believes that while inheriting the political mission of traditional mainstream films to promote mainstream values, new mainstream film and television dramas have moved towards more delicate emotional portrayals and personalized appeals, allowing mainstream ideology to obtain more reasonable social output and effectively grasp the balance between mainstream discourse and social culture, and artistic aesthetics. In this context, new mainstream films and television dramas have also become an important path to promote national identity.

In a vivid and perceptible form, they can present the abstract national spirit and national discourse on the screen in a concrete way, thus becoming a symbolic field with extremely rich connotations, playing a very important role in strengthening national identity. According to the review of the literature, the concept of mainstream film first appeared in March 1987. The Main Melody is a figurative statement, which is aimed at some film works that can promote the construction of socialist spiritual civilization and can be advocated (Rao, 2009). The Film Bureau first proposed the slogan of "highlighting the Main Melody and adhering to diversity" at the National Feature Film Creation Conference.

Since then, "Main Melody" has been proposed and strengthened as a value orientation for film creation. Since 2010, especially the birth of the new era Main Melody movies in 2017, China's Main Melody movies have been rejuvenated. Before that, there have always been movies with mainstream ideology as the core: critic Ma Ning proposed the concept of "new mainstream movies and TV series" in his articles "New Mainstream Movies and TV Series: A Suggestion for Domestic Movies" and "2000: The Real Starting Point of New Mainstream Movies and TV Series". New mainstream movies and TV series are a new type of movies with commercial value, artistic expression, and social responsibility formed by Chinese movies in the context of globalization and digitalization, combining local cultural characteristics with market demand. In order to meet the needs of the film industry to play its role in education and the box office market, the commercialization of mainstream films and the mainstreamization of commercial films are considered to be important driving factors for the new mainstream film and television dramas to become the new normal in the industry. Critics point out that the new mainstream film and television dramas are "the product of the breakup of the three-part structure of mainstream films, commercial films, and art films", and their core feature is "the confluence of mainstream values and mainstream markets". They use serious drama themes, individual perspectives, and national sentiments to achieve the dual penetration of values and markets. The new mainstream is different from mainstream films that emphasize educational functions and market-oriented films that emphasize commercial functions. The new mainstream is "the integration of values and commerciality" (Yin, 2018).

The new mainstream TV series currently popular in my country is the inheritance and development of mainstream movies. They are different from the mainstream movies that simply borrow the operational mode of commercial movies and the humanistic expression methods of art movies. Instead, they have been revitalized by integrating with various types of film and television works. As an important part of ideological education, the new mainstream TV series are innovative explorations in constructing collective memory, and are also important rituals for reproducing, summoning, and reconstructing national identity. In his book "The Nation-State in the Age of Globalization", Anthony Giddens believes that the crisis of personal identity has intensified in the era of globalization, "national identity has become difficult", "we must seek national identity as we seek self-identity", and the Chinese nation-state is also

changing and transforming. China should connect with other countries when understanding its own independence and national identity, and jointly solve the problems and difficulties faced by each other. Therefore, this topic combines the new mainstream film and television dramas with nationalization and national identity for analysis and research, attempting to explore the profound role of new mainstream film and television dramas in reproducing historical memory and building national identity through the relationship and interaction between the three.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Mainstream TV series

The new mainstream film and television drama has completed a special genre interpenetration and ritual construction at the level of "micro-macro narrative". Its micro-macro narrative turn is an innovative change in traditional mainstream movies. This innovation is reflected in the combination of personal discourse and grand narrative in the narrative paradigm, which is reflected in the two aspects of genre penetration and fusion and ritual memory construction (Zhou, 2021). This study found that in recent years, China's new mainstream film and television industry has achieved leapfrog growth. After twists and turns, the new mainstream film and television drama has fully integrated China's contemporary spirit, artistic thought, and market consciousness under the joint promotion of historical discourse, literary discourse, and political discourse, making the development of my country's new mainstream film and television drama art reach a new high.

China's new mainstream film and television dramas appeal to common ideals and beliefs, and within the framework of nationalist discourse, arouse the resonance of national emotions, call upon the collective memory of the nation, enable the public to achieve a unified cognition of sensibility and rationality, and allow the cultural spirit of a nation to be passed on from generation to generation, thus helping to realize the Chinese dream from the perspective of spiritual and cultural construction. Most of the research focuses on how to define this type of film. As time goes by, the changes in the creation of "new mainstream films" have attracted attention from the industry and put forward new views. Scholar Ma Ning proposed the connotation of new mainstream films: "It is a high-quality film strategy that advocates tailoring appropriate models based on low-cost facts." (Ma, 1997). Since the concept of "new mainstream films" was proposed, many scholars in the academic community have put forward their views and conducted in-depth discussions. This concept presents different development characteristics in response to the changes of the times.

In its embryonic stage, Wang Naihua defined the new mainstream film as "a commercial film that conforms to the mainstream ideology, which is the result of the integration of the main theme and entertainment films. It is a commercial film that conforms to the mainstream ideology, including not only low-cost productions but also blockbusters with huge investments" (Wang, 2007). With the release of "Assembly" and "Founding of a Republic", "new mainstream movies" gradually began to appear in front of the general public. Academics began to publish articles comparing the development of new mainstream movies before and after. Liu Fan discussed "the origin, evolution and creative evolution of new mainstream movies" in "From "Assembly" to "Wolf Warrior 2: The effective transmission of national ideology and the hidden suture of audience desires." (Liu, 2016).

2.2. New mainstream TV series

After entering 2011, new mainstream movies took a new turn. More scholars participated in the research on this type of movie. Rao Shuguang believes that "new mainstream movies are the product of the combination of mainstream ideological discourse of main-theme movies and mass and citizen cultural discourse." (Rao, 2013). Zhou Xing believes that "the new mainstream

should be a combination of the three elements of creating competitive advantages in the new situation of Chinese films, exploring all works that are beneficial to the overall image of Chinese films, and encouraging those that conform to the national concept of big films" (Zhou, 2013). Zhang Wei, Chen Xuguang, and others proposed in "Definition, Evolution and Strategy: A Study on New Mainstream Blockbusters" that "new mainstream blockbusters have absorbed the narrative explorations of mainstream films, commercial films, and even art films in recent years. To some extent, new mainstream blockbusters are a kind of transformation and rewriting of the three traditional types of films" (Zhang, 2007).

Yin Hong and Liang Junjian proposed that "the emergence of new mainstream films has gradually blurred the clear three-part film division among mainstream films, commercial films, and art films, eliminating the situation that commercial films are not artistic, art films are not mainstream, and mainstream films are neither artistic nor commercial." (Yin & Liang, 2018). The vigorous development of commercial films has promoted the self-transformation of mainstream films, and has begun to innovate production models and explore commercial creative features. However, the new mainstream films in the development stage are still in the exploratory stage. The creative features of the new mainstream films have not been finalized, and their production models and definitions cannot reach absolute unity.

2.3. Narrative of Homeland Consciousness

Narrative mode and narrative technique are the most common topics in the study of new mainstream films. Zhang Lirui and Fan Zhizhong discussed the typological narrative. They believed that the new mainstream films adopted an industrialized production method and a commercialized narrative mode, integrating mainstream culture, national image, and personal emotions. This method not only promoted and spread the values of mainstream ideology, but also won the audience's welcome and high recognition in the market (Zhang & Fan, 2021). Zhou Su discussed the genre interpenetration and ritual construction of new mainstream films at the level of "micro-macro narrative". He believed that the micro-macro narrative shift in new mainstream films is an innovative change in traditional mainstream films.

This innovation is reflected in the combination of personal discourse and grand narrative in the narrative paradigm, which is reflected in the two aspects of genre penetration and fusion and ritual memory construction (Zhou, 2021). Guo Yuwei and Li Jun took the rhetorical strategy of national image narrative as the research theme and analyzed the important source of power of current Chinese films. They believed that the strong box office appeal shows its effectiveness and creativity in narrative rhetoric (Guo & Li, 2022). Huang Zhongjun focuses on the development path of the "people-oriented" nature of new mainstream films and sorts out the changes in historical context and historical mission in the process of the evolution of mainstream films to new mainstream films. He points out that in recent years, new mainstream films have always been centered on showing the real life of the people and satisfying the aesthetic needs of the public. In addition, in the creative practice, the understanding of the "people-oriented" consciousness has become more in-depth and perfect, and more outstanding works that focus on the people and showcase the country have been continuously explored and created (Huang, 2022).

Based on the theory and practice of "narrative dynamics", Chen Yu believes that "film narrative should depict a process of change, which includes multi-faceted qualitative changes (i.e., "upgrading"), forming an organic mechanical system. From the perspective of the relationship between film narrative and audience, narrative needs to be dynamic, that is, to continuously stimulate the audience's interest and desire to be narrated." (Chen & Wang, 2023). Liu Rui and Rao Shuguang believe that "new mainstream films provide a globalization path for the Chinese film industry in the form of foreign narratives. Foreign narratives use Chinese martial arts action elements and modern military war spectacles as the genre foundation of national

blockbusters by constructing disaster scenes in foreign spaces, and use national will and community imagination to call on the audience's lofty emotions and patriotic enthusiasm." (Liu & Rao, 2023).

3. Findings

3.1. "The Flowers Blooming": A Female Perspective on the Construction of National Identity

National identity and national identity has the function of national legitimacy and has a clear affiliation at home and abroad. Although national identity and national identity have some similarities, such as emphasizing sovereignty and territory, their meanings and scopes are still different. "A state refers to a public institution that is different from other social institutions and monopolizes the implementation of coercion and oppression on a given territory, while a nation refers to a political community that is united by culture and political contracts, and its members share its history, culture, and territory." (Ma, 2001). For a long time, the background of national identity construction has been masculinity, that is, it is expected to rely on men to complete the shaping and strengthening of national identity.

However, with the development of society, women are more involved in the content and process of national identity construction, showing the unique charm of women's perspective. The TV series "The Flowers Blooming" focuses on portraying female characters with outstanding typicality, especially the image of the female student "Guyu" and teacher Zhang Guimei. As a student living in Huaping, Lijiang, where many ethnic groups live, "Guyu" has dropped out of school several times, but returned to school under the encouragement of teacher Zhang, and became an intern teacher in a girls' school at the end, giving back to her alma mater that raised her, showing her resilience under the construction of culture and identity. This character is not a single flat character, but will show some character weaknesses, allowing the audience to see the character's growth and progress in the process of plot development. At the same time, as a winner of national honors, teacher Zhang Guimei's encouragement and support for female students in mountainous areas has a solid foundation, which can provide sufficient support for the personal development of female students and show her outstanding personal charm.

In terms of character creation, new mainstream film and television dramas often treat characters in a low-key manner, giving contemporary heroes more "humanity". From this point of view, "The Flowers Blooming" also breaks away from the "great, glorious and correct" character portrayal method of traditional mainstream movies, reduces the propaganda color, focuses on heroic groups and small figures of the times, and focuses on creating characters that the audience likes and likes. This kind of character creation can also resonate with the audience (Liu, 2022). In this TV series, the multi-ethnic characteristics of Lijiang are also further demonstrated. Multi-ethnic female students gather under the supervision of teacher Zhang Guimei, thrive in the girls' school, and become talents of the Republic. In this drama, Chinese national identity is China's national identity, which is the highest degree of ethnic identity among the 56 ethnic groups. It refers to the psychological recognition and sense of belonging of the Chinese nation members to the Chinese nation as a whole, as well as the psychological acceptance and tolerance of their fellow Chinese people. People within the Chinese nation recognize and trust each other, and are also recognized and belong to the Chinese nation by other members of the Chinese nation.

3.2. Returning to the mountains of Yunnan: ethnic identity based on homeland

In his book *The Flowers Blooming*, Harold Iroson analyzed the status of ethnic group identity under political change from eight perspectives, including nationality, and discussed the

connotation of national identity and ethnic group identity, and the impact of national politics on ethnic group identity based on the discussion of "state" and "nation". Yunnan is a multi-ethnic region with ethnic interpenetration, especially in Lijiang Huaping, which is the focus of "The Flowers Blooming". The area is located in the mountainous area of Yunnan, where Naxi, Yi, and other ethnic compatriots live. In September 2008, teacher Zhang Guimei promoted the establishment of the only free girls' senior high school in the country, Lijiang Huaping Girls' Senior High School, which gathers female students from many ethnic groups. "The Flowers Blooming" focuses on these teachers and students, emphasizing that female students should actively build their hometown after graduation, and compose the mainstream value of giving back to their hometown.

If we analyze the sense of home in "The Flowers Blooming" from the perspective of nation and identity, we can see that the work's national imagination of "Greater China" is real: the student "Guyu" has changed from a female student who dropped out of school several times to a female teacher who returned to the podium of a girls' school. Her transformation and transformation show that teacher Zhang Guimei's efforts have indeed changed the fate of girls in mountainous areas; Teacher Zhang Guimei's insistence on continuing education for girls in mountainous areas of Yunnan is stubborn and strong, especially when she entered the families of ethnic minority compatriots several times to take school-age female students back to school. The portrayal of these character stories shows the work's strong sense of home.

New mainstream movies are an important carrier for shaping heroic images and highlighting heroic spirits. They create heroic groups in a three-dimensional way, with revolutionary heroes, role models of the times, evacuation heroes, and civilian heroes as the main types, creating a group of heroes with flesh and blood and a gathering of heroes (Fang, 2023). Combined with the characterization of "The Flowers Blooming", new mainstream film and television dramas should go deep into the texture of individual life, shaping ordinary people (including women) in the big history into new historical subjects, reflecting the strong adaptability of film life narrative and its historical construction (Ding, 2023). For example, in June 2025, the actress Song Jia, who starred in "The Flowers Blooming", won the Magnolia Award for Best Actress, which reflects this point.

4. Conclusion

As a TV series that is deeply loved by the audience and depicts women in ethnic minority areas in Yunnan, "The Flowers Blooming" records the stories of female figures in the new era of Chinese education, with Zhang Guimei as the center in a delicate narrative style. Based on case analysis, this study fully explores the artistic creation form of new mainstream film and television dramas based on the film and television works of "The Flowers Blooming", and points out the reasons why they are both popular and well-received. In terms of the discussion of character images, this study focuses on female characters such as Zhang Guimei, analyzes their character construction patterns in the work "The Flowers Blooming", and reveals their artistic value based on this. In order to further evaluate the research value of this article, this study, combined with the limitations of existing results, shows that the current detailed combination of cases is still insufficient, so this article can become a positive reference for related research and help deepen research in this field. In terms of research prospects, due to the insufficiency of the case studies in this article, future research should expand the scope of research, select suitable objects for research from different types of new mainstream film and television works, and conduct further analysis and discussion.

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