Research on the Interactive Relationship between the Dynamic Development of Female Characters in Film and Television Works and Social Issues

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Abstract:

With the commercialization of the film and television industry and the gradual rise of feminism, the characteristics of shaping female characters in film and television works and its changing trends have received widespread attention from the public. This article mainly analyzes the significant characteristics of female characters in various stages of film and television works and their changing trends. But overall, there are still some deficiencies in shaping female roles in movies and TV works, such as "content homogenization", and "role immobilization", and the endings of this kind of film and television work are often idealized. Based on this, this article proposes the following suggestions. In the production process of film and television works, producers need to break away from the frameworks of plot production which are fixed and stereotyped, and innovate in plot routines. Besides, producers also should create film and television works around female characters from different professions and identities. And they should consider the rationality, logic, and practical significance of the plot when creating.

Keywords: Film and television works; female roles; the characteristics of image shaping

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the characteristics of female characters in film and television works and their changing trends are becoming a social hot topic. In the background of a gradually open and culturally integrated global environment, the themes, forms of expression, and diversity of characters in film and television works have been further expanded, becoming rich and diverse. Therefore, with the social progress and wide recognition of cultural diversity, female characters in film and television works have gone through significant changes and development in the past decades. In early film and television works, female characters are usually created under the male gaze, lacking authenticity and objectivity, and often fixed in specific

stereotypes, lacking personality and depth [1]. Therefore, female characters were greatly limited by the traditional framework of gender roles in the early stage. With the continuous development of mass media, people can access diverse cultures and information in a faster, more convenient, and comprehensive way, which has a great impact on people's lives, thoughts, and public opinion [2]. The breaking of this information barrier has accelerated the evolution of traditional social concepts and the awakening of feminist consciousness. In later film and television works, the presentation of female characters has gone through significant changes. More and more female characters are no longer just a foil who can only stand by the male characters but appear on the screen as protagonists or important characters, with more diverse performances and character positioning [1].

In today's film and television works, more multidimensional female characters are created. These films and TV works display their inner world and experiences from multiple perspectives, portraying female characters with fuller personalities, which makes the audience realize their importance and versatility in the plot. Meanwhile, as a cultural product, film and television works play an important role in reflecting social issues and phenomena. For example, the changes in images of female characters in film and television works can reflect the changes in the progress of social development. In addition, some studies have pointed out that although there have been some breakthroughs in shaping female characters in film and television works, there are still some problems.

This study mainly explores the interactive relationship between the dynamic development of female characters in film and television works and social issues. To explore the interactive relationship between the dynamic development of female characters in film and television works and social issues, this study will use various methods such as content analysis, and qualitative analysis. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the dynamic development of female characters in film and television works, revealing their changing trends, exploring the social motivations and interactive relationships behind it, analyzing the impact of these changes on social gender attitudes and other social phenomena, and further promote the shaping of female characters in film and television creation and the development of gender equality in society.

2. The Historical Evolution of Female Characters

2.1 Early Image Shaping

In the Chinese society of the 1980s and 1990s, film and television works just started developing and became popular gradually, and their production was influenced by various factors, including the influence of traditional Chinese thought and the absolute dominance of male producers in the social production field at that time. Therefore, many female characters in film and television works are portrayed from a male perspective. They are always the typical and stereotypical image of traditional Chinese women--obedient daughters, obedient wives, filial daughters-in-law, and selfless mothers, but they are just not independent individuals.

For example, Liu Huifang, a female character in the "phenomenal" work Desire released in 1990, is also a typical representative of traditional female images in early film and television works. She is the image of a perfect wife from a male perspective because she is capable of managing the household and is loyal to her husband. Even facing the betrayal of her husband, she still has no regrets or grievances. Becoming women with a spirit of sacrifice solely for the betterment of the family was a societal requirement for females in that era [3]. In addition, similar female characters include Qiu Yue in Little Husband, Wife, and Big Sister. Qiu Yue gave up her happiness for her father and married a weak and sickly boy, being bullied by her husband, mother-in-law but having to swallow her pride, and even after her husband remarried, she chose to devote her entire life to fulfilling her duties as a wife. Xia Xiaoxue in Hand in Hand should have been a woman with a bright future for development, but she gave up her career for her husband and son after marrying, and in the end, she was betrayed by her husband. Qiao's wife in Our Mom and Dad doesn't even have her name. For others, she is just Qiao's wife and the mother of her child. However, this kind of female image was praised in film and television works at that time, while the opposite image was criticized [3].

2.2 Later Image Shaping

After the 21st century, with the impact of new ideologies and trends, there has been a revolutionary change in market demand, and the film and television industry has entered a new stage of development. From then on, due to the accelerated awakening of women's self-awareness and subject consciousness, the number of female-centered film and television works has significantly increased, and it is more diverse in terms of content, themes, and the portrayal of female images. In these film and television works, female characters are no longer just the traditional Chinese female images, but independent individuals with distinct personalities, subject consciousness, and self-pursuit. For instance, the popular TV series Pink Girl in 2003, pioneered the formation of group images of "her dramas" in mainland China, mainly portraying four female characters with different personalities, namely, heartthrob, man's wife, marriage maniac, and Ha Mei. Although there is suspicion of "labeling" characters in this work, it still

presents women's awareness of pursuing independence, freedom, and equal rights [4]. In addition, after 2010, a large number of various types of female-centered films and television works were produced, such as Ode to Joy and Nothing But Thirty.

Especially in the past two years, major female dramas such as Lost You Forever, A Journey To Love, and The Double have successively become popular dramas. The proportion of women's career and emotional aspects presented in these dramas has shown significant changes compared to before--female characters tend to prioritize their careers in their life plans. In The Double, after being betrayed by her lover, the main female protagonist still maintains independence, clarity, and ambition. She gradually achieves her goals in her career and even has a significant impact on the direction of the national political situation.

The growth of women portrayed in these dramas, not only involves the subjectivity and self-pursuit of female characters but also links female values with patriotism, which is the exploration of ideological patterns. These film and television works further enrich the connotation of female values, making the portrayal of female characters more three-dimensional.

3. Social Causes of the Evolution of Female Characters

3.1 The Change of Social Gender Concept

The system and mainstream ideology that China has inherited for thousands of years have had a profound impact on society's perception of women. Throughout history, most laws and thoughts have been aimed at consolidating patriarchal societies. For example, the "Three Obediences and Four Virtues" means at home, follow your father, when you get married, follow your husband, and when your husband dies, follow your son, as proposed by Cheng Zhu Neo Confucianism. It completely objectified women, and during the Ming and Qing dynasties, society persecuted women even more severely [5]. In a patriarchal society, males are given superior social status, supreme power, and great tolerance [6]. On the contrary, people are extremely strict with women. It is taken for granted that women have a lower status, and regard women as appendages attached to men and performers of family roles. And most women in Chinese society also accept this reality, being bound by tradition but not resisting. Therefore, in the early stage, the main female characters appearing in film and television works are usually obedient, gentle, submissive, and filial. They take care of everything in the family, they don't have jobs and ideas of their own and have no say.

But looking at Western society, as early as the 18th century, the concept of "feminism" emerged in the West and led to the rise of the feminist movement. Feminism is an ideology that empowers women. The feminist movement aims to fight for women to obtain equal rights, status, and opportunities for self-development with men in various aspects such as economy, society, and education [2].

After the 21st century, the accelerated development of globalization has brought about the integration of world cultures, the thought of feminism has impacted the traditional ideological system of Chinese society and greatly promoted its transformation. Therefore, more and more women have gained subjectivity and are no longer bound by traditional gender roles. They leave families and work in society as independent individuals, demonstrating the power of women at all levels of society. In the film and television industry, more and more female producers are joining the production process as directors, producers, or other roles, gaining a greater say. Moreover, they are always trying to show the power and diversity of women by portraying diverse female characters in film and television works, thus giving voice to the female community. To some extent, this is a powerful impact, resistance, and challenge to patriarchal society and male perspectives. Therefore, in the later stage, most of the female characters appearing in film and television works are independent, powerful, and thoughtful female images. These film and television works convey the idea that women are independent individuals with the right and ability to pursue their values. Meanwhile, film and television works will also focus on narrating rich storylines around different female characters and analyzing their inner selves, fully showcasing more female images.

3.2 The Rights and Interests of Women Groups

In 1978, China had just implemented reform and opening up, which was a major political and economic reform [7]. In the 1980s, all aspects of Chinese society were gradually recovering, and people's current core demand was to meet basic living conditions. In addition, China's per capita education level was not high at that time. Especially for women, most of them haven't received ideological education, and their thoughts are still influenced by traditional thoughts. Their demand for pursuing gender equality and realizing their value is not strong. Therefore, in the early stage of the film and television industry, female characters presented in films and television works often lacked resistance and were content with the status quo.

After the 21st century, with the development of society, the cultural level of Chinese women has generally risen. And under the impact and influence of the feminist movement, more and more women are daring to break through tradition and make their demands to society to strive for rights. As expressed by feminism, females should not be classified as the weak party. The power of women must also be demonstrated in a balanced way to encourage ef-

forts to promote the importance of women's self-esteem [2]. During this period, the demands of the female group gradually shifted towards the expectation of equal status between the sexes in various aspects such as economy, society, politics, and education, having the right to pursue themselves and receive the understanding and respect that women deserve. In fact, to some extent, females have broken through the constraints of a patriarchal society and gradually demonstrated their unique power and charm at various levels of society. They strive to realize their value to gain social understanding and respect, and further enhance the status of women. Therefore, in the later stage, the female characters portrayed in film and television works effectively demonstrate the ability of women to satisfy their dual demands on both material and spiritual levels, bringing women's power and rights demands to the screen and becoming the role model for women to change society and realize their values.

3.3 Business Factors and Market Demand

Since the turn of the century, the commercialization of Chinese film and television works has gradually matured, and the directors who emerged during this stage have a more international cultural perspective compared to their predecessors [7]. At the same time, they also have a better understanding of market demand. Nowadays, with the development of the socioeconomic structure, women's independent consumption ability has been enhanced. Their social, economic, political, and other status has been comprehensively improved. The number of female audiences is huge and constantly increasing. These factors greatly affect the portrayal of female characters in film and television works. According to Accenture's 2022 data, China has nearly 400 million women aged 20 to 60, they control up to 10 trillion yuan in consumer spending every year. "Her Economy" is thriving and the power of women cannot be ignored. The increase in the number of female audiences and the improvement in women's consumption ability have forced producers of film and television works to start paying high attention to the feelings of female audiences [8]. For instance, The Romance of Tiger and Rose, which was popular in 2020, has been searched 44 times on Weibo with a heat value of 150 million [3]. To Dear Myself has been trending nearly 40 times, with nearly 30 times on the topic of female characters alone [3]. During its broadcast, Nothing But Thirty was searched 228 times on Weibo, mostly on topics related to women [3]. Therefore, to cater to female audiences and meet strong market demand, various types of film and television works centered on women's growth have been produced in large quantities, becoming a hot spot for commercial investment.

4. The Interaction between Film and

Television Works and Social Problems

From the analysis above, it can be concluded that film and television works usually reflect the evolution of the social status quo and social thoughts. However, at the same time, the dynamic changes and developments in society also affect the thoughts of film and television creation [9].

As one of the media for mass communication, film, and television works can demonstrate social issues that occur in real life to the audience, and it is one of the important means to showcase the unfair treatment or practical problems that women encounter in their daily lives [10]. Especially after 2010, to meet the rapidly changing market demands, many film and television works, such as Under the Skin, Rose War, A Murderous Affair in Horizon Tower, Full Bloom, Twenty Your Life On, and Imperfect Victim, focus on various social hot topics such as gender discrimination in the workplace, domestic violence, mental control, sexual harassment, sexual assault, the dual pressure of family and workplace and appearance anxiety that women encounter. This kind of film and television work intends to provide people with a better understanding of the current social situation, thereby promoting the resolution of social problems and social progress. Meanwhile, it can also guide people to form correct social values, which have great practical and educational significance.

Full Bloom is a popular urban emotional drama set in 2024, showcasing the diverse storylines of the main female character Huang Yimei living and working under different identities at different stages of her life, and also demonstrating the transformation of her emotional journey. In these storylines, various challenges faced by women in both the home and workplace, as well as strategies for the female protagonist to break through are presented, presenting a vivid and multifaceted female character. Imperfect Victim revolves around a female lawyer and a female victim, raising multiple social issues such as workplace sexual assault, domestic violence, and public opinion violence, exploring the complexity of human nature in depth and the challenges faced by women from multiple perspectives, which has strong practical significance.

5. Existing Problems in Film and Television Works

Although film and television works that focus on women's growth and promote feminism are highly popular in the consumer market today, there are still some problems in their production. For example, behind the large-scale production of film and television works focusing on the theme of women's growth, there is a clear trend of "following the trend", hiding problems of "content homogenization", "theme homogenization" and "character fixation" [11]. The highly repetitive plot, themes, and characters in these film and television works will cause aesthetic fa-

tigue and gradually lead to a loss of interest in watching. If film and television works use the banner of "feminism" but do not make further breakthroughs or more changes in their substantive content, it will only numb the audience gradually, making them stop at the stage of feeling the most superficial "pleasure", without deeper thinking. Over time, such film and television works will become meaningless in solving the question of reality. In addition, such film and television works often use idealized endings of "reunion" as a means of ending treatment, which is very common in local dramas. Even some film and television works may disregard the logic and coherence of the plot to meet the audience's expectations, resulting in unreasonable endings [12]. If film and television works produce idealized endings without considering the rationality of the plot, they will not have strong practical significance and will not have a useful positive impact on solving social problems.

6. Conclusion

From the past to the present, female characters in film and television works have always been in a state of dynamic development. This article analyzes that in the 1980s and 1990s, positive female characters in film and television works were not seen as independent individuals, and their value was limited to being centered around family and males.But since the 21st century, more and more films and television works are being produced around the growth of women. The female characters revered in the drama exhibit more diverse personalities gradually, and they were shown more vibrant vitality. These films and television works highlight the independence, diversity, and value of women.

The portrayal characteristics of female characters in film and television works have undergone a disruptive transformation, which is the result of the changes in social thoughts and social status quo, and also reflects the process of changes in social thoughts and social status quo. The development of society will generate new social hot spots, new market demands, etc., which will ultimately affect the content of film and television creation. The audience's attention to social hot spots has prompted more film and television works to integrate in-depth analysis of social hot issues through artistic creation such as story content design, thereby enriching the shaping of female character images. In this way, not only does it showcase social reality issues to the audience and promote people's attention and discussion on these issues, but it also encourages women to have the courage and strength to break free from inherent constraints and find their own lives.

With the development of society, female education is becoming increasingly sophisticated and their participa-tion in social production is also increasing. The power of women is constantly being discovered and excavated. It cannot be denied that due to the continuous improvement of women's status, their voice and presence are becoming stronger, and the "Her Economy" is continuing to rise. Therefore, in the future, feminist-themed films and television works will inevitably have a good development trend. However, as mentioned earlier, this type of film and television work is currently facing some problems that cannot be ignored and urgently need to be addressed, which should be taken seriously.

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