

On the Artistic Characteristics of Female Images in Red Drama

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Abstract

Red drama, as an art form with unique cultural value and revolutionary spirit in the history of Chinese theatrical art, contains profound political implications and aesthetic tension, and can demonstrate distinct ideological characteristics and revolutionary ideals. The female characters in the drama showcase unique artistic characteristics through multidimensional construction, with themes of oppression and awakening, resistance and growth, and dedication and sacrifice. This enables red drama to imbue female characters with profound political implications and aesthetic tension through symbolic visual expression, three-dimensional narrative structure, and multidimensional character symbolism. Red drama, through the complex portrayal of female characters, can demonstrate unique artistic power at the intersection of aesthetics and politics, and explore the political metaphors and aesthetic values of female images, revealing their unique contributions in ideological dissemination and revolutionary spirit shaping, thus deepening the understanding of the artistic value and cultural significance of red drama, and enriching the theoretical perspective of Chinese drama.

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The 14th Five Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the 2035 Long Range Objectives Outline "points out that" the implementation of the project to improve the quality of literary and artistic works, the improvement of the organizational mechanism for major reality, major revolution, and major historical theme creation planning, the strengthening of rural and youth theme creation, and the continuous introduction of literary and artistic masterpieces that reflect the new atmosphere of the times and praise the new creations of the people. "This plan not only focuses on increasing the quantity of literary and artistic creation, but also sets its sights on deepening the quality, aiming to build a literary and artistic work system with distinctive Chinese aesthetic characteristics. Under this policy guidance, red drama, as an art form carrying revolutionary symbolic significance, has become an important way to promote mainstream ideology due to its alignment with the creative direction of "major revolutions and historical themes". At the same time, it has a demonstrative role in improving the quality of works and enriching themes. As an art form that reflects the history of the Chinese revolution and reproduces the spirit of the people's struggle, the artistic expression of female characters in red drama has become a unique and indispensable symbol system in revolutionary narratives. The construction of female characters in red drama is not only an artistic representation of the participation and contribution of female roles in the revolutionary process, but also an aesthetic transformation of revolutionary ideology from a gender perspective, thus constituting the aesthetic style of a specific historical period.

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In this process, the shaping of female images is both symbolic and realistic. Through multi-dimensional character settings and delicate emotional portrayal, it not only transcends traditional female concepts, but also reflects profound characteristics of the times and social responsibilities. Female images are not only witnesses of revolutionary history, but also disseminators and practitioners of revolutionary spirit. Their artistic representation in works demonstrates a spiritual power that transcends the times. At the same time, in the artistic creation process of red drama, female images are often endowed with rich symbolic meanings, carrying the deep connotations of revolutionary history through diverse character settings and delicate character portrayals. This not only demonstrates the indomitable will and dedication of female characters in revolutionary practice, but also reflects the changes in women's status and cultural significance in the social structure. Red drama, through aesthetic innovation, not only endows female characters with positive revolutionary attributes, but also sets them as spiritual carriers of revolutionary ideas in the structure and narrative logic of the drama, thus forming an artistic expression mode with distinct symbolic characteristics. The existing literature on red drama mostly focuses on the perspective of revolutionary narrative and historical representation, and pays less attention to the multidimensional representation of female images in red drama and the artistic characteristics they carry. Based on this, this article takes the classic female character images in red dramas as the research object, aiming to reveal the aesthetic characteristics of female characters in the red narrative structure, and provide a new perspective for understanding their key position in the inheritance of revolutionary spirit.

I. Overview of Red Drama

In a narrow sense, the Red Drama refers to the revolutionary drama movement, also known as the Soviet Drama, which was launched by the CPC centering on the Jiangxi revolutionary base from the winter of 1927 to the end of 1935. The movement aims to promote the Party's policy propositions through theatrical forms, enrich the cultural life of the military and civilians, and win the support of the revolutionary masses. Broadly speaking, it refers to the drama created with the theme of the Chinese revolutionary history led by the CPC, which is the perspective of this paper's research on red drama. This type of drama not only covers stories from the revolutionary war era, but also includes important events during socialist construction and reform and opening up, and even extends to works that play an important role in the revolutionary cause in the new era. Therefore, red drama is not limited to the scope of anti Japanese war drama, but rather a vivid embodiment of the national spirit and social values that are closely connected to the times and deeply integrated with reality, constantly evolving with the changes of the times.

The value of red drama lies in its function of disseminating ideas. As an important carrier of ideology, red drama penetrates revolutionary ideas and values into the hearts of the audience through dramatic plots, character images, and stage presentation. This theatrical form has intuitive infectivity and emotional shock, making the audience unconsciously accept revolutionary ideas and beliefs in justice. In red drama works, female characters are portrayed as tenacious and fearless revolutionaries, representing not only the fighting spirit of countless revolutionaries but also reflecting the unique role of women in social change. In addition, the value of red drama is also reflected in its promotion of national spirit and education of social morality. Through the artistic presentation of revolutionary history and heroic figures, red drama effectively spreads the spirit of loyalty, bravery, and fearlessness in traditional Chinese culture, thereby strengthening national pride and cohesion. This drama enhances the emotional experience of the audience through dramatic means of expression, allowing them to deeply appreciate the spirit of dedication of revolutionary martyrs during the viewing process. The transmission of spirit not only has a subtle influence on the individual values of the audience, but also plays a positive role in the construction of the values of the entire society.

II. Types of female image construction in red drama

1. Oppression and Awakening: The Emergence of Women's Revolutionary Consciousness

Under the oppression of the old society, female characters endured multiple constraints and exploitation, gradually developing a sense of resistance and ultimately moving towards awakening and liberation. The image of women under oppression, with the growth of their own cognition and the influence of the external revolutionary environment, achieves liberation through self rescue and other rescue methods, thus forming a representative type of female revolutionary consciousness construction in red drama.

In the "self rescue" genre, female characters independently develop a sense of rebellion and actively seek self liberation under the heavy pressure of the old society.

Self rescue type female characters are based on strong self-awareness and independent personalities, gradually breaking free from the constraints of traditional ethics and gender norms, and moving towards freedom. The awakening of women comes from self reflection on social oppression, accompanied by strong emotions such as the desire for equality and refusal to be objectified. This internal driving force drives them to seek new life in oppression. Women suffer from constraints, pain, and dissatisfaction in the feudal family and social structure, forcing them to reflect on their own status and living conditions. In this environment, women discover the unique value of their own lives, break through social limitations, and begin to resist unfair treatment, taking positive actions to liberate themselves in order to gain new life. The awakening and revolutionary consciousness of women have influenced the creation of red dramas, leading to the emergence of a sense of "self rescue" among female characters in the plays. The character Fu Honglian in "The Red Detachment of Women" deeply reflects the hardships and struggles of women in the feudal society of old China. At the young age of ten, she was sold by her mother as a child bride and lived with her "wooden husband" for ten years. During this period, Fu Honglian suffered cruel oppression from feudal forces, but could only silently endure it. However, despite facing adversity, Fu Honglian's heart did not completely surrender. She closely followed the establishment of the Women's Army and gradually realized that a military composed of women was her only hope for breaking free from feudal constraints and seeking freedom and liberation. The image of Fu Honglian is not only a true portrayal of many suffering women in Chinese social life, but also a microcosm of the entire social and cultural background.

In contrast, the awakening of women in the "he saved" type relies on external revolutionary forces, showing a process of passive to active transformation. In his rescue type, female characters are initially in a powerless state due to the oppression of the old social environment, making it difficult to achieve liberation through personal strength. However, with the continuous advancement of the revolutionary situation, women gradually realized their own difficulties and the essence of oppression with the help of revolutionary forces. The success of the revolution brought about the improvement of women's social status and living conditions, enabling them to redefine their own value in the revolutionary tide, gradually awakening and devoting themselves to the revolutionary cause. The awakening and liberation of such female characters usually manifest as a two-way interaction between the external environment and the awakening of their own consciousness. Under the influence of revolutionary forces, women found their life goals again under the heavy pressure of the old system and gradually formed a firm revolutionary consciousness. Through contact with revolutionary forces, female characters develop a profound understanding of oppression and comprehend the true meaning of revolution, ultimately joining the revolution and becoming an important driving force behind it.

2. Resistance and Growth: Independent Consciousness and Role Transformation

In the narrative system of red drama, the construction of female images gradually transcends traditional gender frameworks, and through multiple changes in plot and inner world, exhibits distinct independent consciousness and growth trajectory. This type of character is not only a witness and participant in revolutionary history, but also exhibits a strong sense of resistance in the process of personal awakening and growth. Through challenging existing authority and re evaluating self-worth, they complete a deep transformation of their role.

Red drama places female characters within the power structure of the old society, facing multiple constraints such as feudal family control, patriarchal oppression, and class exploitation. This environment not only limits women's individual development, but also suppresses their sense of autonomy. However, women's resistance is not simply individual resistance, but a powerful counterattack against the entire oppressive social structure. It is in the midst of confrontation that women's independent consciousness gradually awakens, they find themselves in defeat and pain, and gradually clarify their rights and values. In this process, female characters are no longer just oppressed objects, but gradually transform into rebels who dare to face authority and break traditional shackles. Female resistance is not only a personal expression of emotions, but also a complete rebellion against old values and social structures. Li Tiemei in "The Red Light" initially had only a vague understanding of the revolutionary cause her father was engaged in, lacking a clear revolutionary consciousness. However, after experiencing the tragic event of her father and grandmother being brutally killed by the enemy, Li Tiemei did not choose to escape or sink, but bravely stood up and resolutely took over the unfinished revolutionary cause of her father and grandmother. When Li Tiemei picked up the gun in his hand, it not only symbolized his courage and determination in action, but also symbolized that his thought had broken away from the traditional feudal shackles and began to pursue his own Xintiandi.

On the basis of resistance, the growth of female characters has become another important dimension of image development. In the process of growing up, female roles are not only passive responses to oppression, but also actively engage in self-reshaping, thus completing the transformation from submissive traditional roles to steadfast revolutionaries. From initially passive acceptance, women gradually understand and integrate into the ideals of revolution, demonstrating a renewed self-awareness and firm choice of self-identity. The female characters in red dramas achieve individual awakening and the rise of female consciousness through resistance and growth, and their growth path is not smooth sailing, but accompanied by the victory over internal fear and resistance against external oppression. In the process of character growth, female characters not only change their external identity, but also undergo a thorough transformation deep inside their hearts. The process of growth and identity reconstruction is not only a simple change in personal destiny, but also a projection of social ideology. Women's roles have transformed from oppressed to promoters of revolution and witnesses of history.

3. Dedication and Sacrifice: The Sublimation of Revolutionary Mothers and Female Warriors

The female characters in red drama are portrayed as revolutionary mothers and female warriors, with dedication and sacrifice as their core values, showcasing extraordinary revolutionary personalities and a sense of mission. In these dramas, the images of revolutionary women are endowed with multi-level and multi-dimensional connotations, which not only demonstrate the art of shaping the images of revolutionary women, but also show the profound conflict and inner sublimation of female characters between personal emotions and revolutionary ideals. Revolutionary mothers usually serve as the core of the family, supporting the revolutionary cause with selflessness and steadfastness. These women convey revolutionary beliefs through daily life and labor, teaching their children, and maintaining family harmony. The revolutionary mother in the red drama always moves forward fearlessly and firmly in the face of difficulties and obstacles in life. The dedication of such women is not based on personal safety considerations, but on their heartfelt loyalty to the revolutionary cause. Whether in the era of war or in the arduous struggle environment, revolutionary mothers always appear with a firm and inclusive image, supporting the revolutionary beliefs of the entire family and even the entire community with their gentleness, delicacy, and resilience, becoming an irreplaceable and important presence in the red drama. In "Wildfire and Spring Breeze Fighting in the Ancient City," Yang's mother is willing to give everything for the happiness of her children and the peace of her family. However, when the country and society face crisis, she unhesitatingly chooses to stand on the side of the revolution, placing her personal family interests under the interests of the country and society. The spirit of sacrificing one's family for everyone not only reflects the greatness of Yang's mother as a mother, but also demonstrates her firm belief and lofty ideals as a revolutionary.

The image of female warriors, with their qualities of courage, bravery, and resilience, demonstrates a power that transcends gender. This type of woman takes revolutionary ideals as her own responsibility and demonstrates the same courage and determination as male soldiers when facing life and death choices. Female soldiers not only bravely enter the battlefield, but also take on leadership roles in the revolution, showcasing women's resilience, wisdom, and courage to the fullest. Unlike revolutionary mothers, female soldiers are often portrayed as brave and courageous, combining strength and flexibility. They fearlessly engage in battle and even sacrifice their lives to defend the ideal of revolutionary victory. In "Shajiabang", Ah Qing's wife uses a tea house as a cover to engage in underground party work. After the withdrawal of the main force of the New Fourth Army, she provides cover for the wounded and sick left behind, and with her instructor Guo Jianguang, she repeatedly shatters enemy conspiracies and cleverly navigates with the Japanese and Diao De, ultimately completing the organization's tasks excellently.

III. The Artistic Characteristics of Female Images in Red Drama

1. Symbolic expression of revolutionary women in visual representation

The women in red dramas are not only narrative drivers, but their images also directly express revolutionary emotions and political positions in the form of visual symbols. The camera language, color application, and clothing image of female characters can all reflect obvious artistic intentions, strengthening their unique position in revolutionary discourse in a deeply symbolic way.

In red drama, the use of the camera is not only a tool for narrating the plot, but also a key technique for shaping the image of female revolution. The camera showcases the unique identity of female characters in revolutionary environments through close ups, panoramas, and close ups. Close ups are often used to capture subtle facial expressions such as firm gaze or biting lips of female characters, implying their steadfast beliefs and inner struggles in revolutionary struggles.

Close up shots can make the audience intuitively feel the courage and belief in the character's heart, making the image of women go beyond simple character settings and become a strong symbol. Close up shots allow the audience to see how female characters display indomitable spirit in extreme environments, placing them in complex revolutionary scenes or historical atmospheres, and showcasing the oppressive environment they are in. Through scene based processing, the audience is not only brought into the psychological world of the characters, but also directed towards the grand narrative of the revolution. The panoramic lens enhances the collective identity of female characters in the revolution, placing them in a broad revolutionary context. Through composition, it shows the key position of women in the overall revolutionary cause, giving the characters a symbolic meaning of collective consciousness. Taking the red drama "The White Haired Girl" as an example, close-up shots frequently capture Xi'er's facial expressions: her face is filled with fear and helplessness while enduring the exploitation and oppression of landlord Huang Shiren; And as he fled into the mountains and forests, the close-up gradually revealed the perseverance and inner awakening in Xier's eyes, deliberately magnifying his psychological process of gradually moving towards revolution. Panoramic shots are commonly used to depict Xier's loneliness and difficulties in the mountains and forests, and to show her confrontation with the natural environment. This combination of shots not only reinforces her transformation from a delicate peasant girl to a rebel, but also allows the audience to feel her spirit of resistance, making Xi'er a symbol of revolutionary women who awakened under feudal oppression.

The design of clothing in red dramas is also highly symbolic, directly reflecting the identity transformation and revolutionary consciousness of female characters. The clothing design of female characters has gradually shifted from traditional restrictive clothing to functional revolutionary attire, symbolizing their ideological liberation from feudal constraints. Clothing design is not only visually simple and rustic, but also contains a strong revolutionary spirit. Female characters gradually shed their traditional long robes and cheongsams and transformed into revolutionary uniforms. This not only serves as a visual symbol of their character attire, but also as a symbolic expression of their identity and beliefs, allowing the audience to recognize their revolutionary identity through their clothing. The Red Guards of Honghu initially appeared in the form of ordinary fishing women, dressed in simple folk costumes, symbolizing their ordinary identity and life. But after Han Ying awakened and joined the Red Guard, her attire underwent significant changes, wearing military uniforms with revolutionary symbolic significance, completely breaking free from the shackles of the past. The transformation of clothing not only reflects Han Ying's transition from an ordinary citizen to a revolutionary soldier, but also symbolizes her ideological consciousness and the establishment of her revolutionary stance.

2. The multidimensional application of narrative modes and the shaping of female images

The multidimensional application of narrative mode essentially places female characters in a more complex network of historical and social relationships, and presents their psychological changes and character transformations through delicate and multi-level techniques. It can not only enhance the expressive power of characters, but also make the development of dramatic plots more attractive and impactful.

From the narrative perspective of red drama, the portrayal of female characters reveals different levels of traits and inner worlds through multi angle narration. Through a subjective perspective, drama delves into the inner world of female characters, presenting their pain, contradictions, and awakening processes delicately to the audience, making the characters more authentic and three-dimensional. In the process of self-awareness awakening, a subjective perspective can enable the audience to confront the characters' inner monologue and struggles, and feel their psychological conflicts and growth in pressure and struggle. At the same time, drama also utilizes the perspective of other characters to further showcase the social image of female characters, such as the perspective of family members or revolutionary comrades. Their evaluation, understanding, and emotional communication of female characters not only reveal the multiple roles of women in society, but also demonstrate the impact of their revolutionary actions on others and the significance of the collective. The alternating use of narrative perspectives endows female characters with both individuality and group symbolism, further enriching the spiritual connotations and social symbolic meanings of the characters.

In addition to multiple perspectives, the female characters in red dramas are also deeply explored through complex narrative structures. In theatrical works, non-linear narratives such as reverse narration, interlude, and interlaced narration are commonly used to present the growth trajectory of female characters in a multi-level structure.

Through flashbacks or interludes, the audience can trace back to the character's past, understand their struggles and oppression in the old system, and provide sufficient background for the character's struggle and awakening, thus forming a complete psychological chain of the character. The multi-level structural arrangement in narrative is manifested as the interweaving of character experiences and emotional fluctuations, allowing the audience to glimpse the growth and transformation of female characters at different time points, thus gaining a deeper understanding of their choices and actions in the current context [11]. The growth process of Wu Qionghua in the Yue opera "The Red Detachment of Women" is shaped by the non-linear narrative structure of the drama, which helps to shape her character transition. Wu Qionghua's growth from initially oppressing women to awakening as a revolutionary is vividly portrayed by a multi-layered structure. The play uses flashbacks and interludes, allowing the audience to glimpse Wu Qionghua's persecution by landlords through her flashbacks, thus gaining a better understanding of her steadfast faith in the revolutionary forces. The interweaving of flashbacks and interjections not only reveals Wu Qionghua's past and growth motives, but also presents her complete transformation from an ignorant girl to a determined warrior.

The diversity of plot settings is also a key factor in shaping female characters in red dramas. Through complex plot design, the independent personalities and inner worlds of female characters can be presented in three dimensions. Female characters in red dramas often face multiple contradictions and conflicts, displaying distinct personality traits in the decision-making of multidimensional dilemmas such as emotions, family, and beliefs. Female characters struggle between revolutionary beliefs and family responsibilities, with both attachment to family ties and persistence in revolutionary ideals, and the ultimate decision-making process demonstrates their willpower and spirit of sacrifice. The plot setting can enrich the levels of characters, making the female image not limited to the single identity of a revolutionary, but also reflecting her struggles and choices between multiple roles. In the multiple unfolding of the plot, the audience can glimpse the contradictions between family, friendship, love, and faith they experience, and feel their growth and transformation in complex relationships.

3. The Symbolic Role and Aesthetic Value of Revolutionary Women

The image of revolutionary women, with its distinct contemporaneity and sociality, has become one of the core symbols symbolizing revolutionary power and national spirit. Revolutionary women are not only simple characters, but also artistic symbols carrying ideals and beliefs, demonstrating noble qualities of perseverance, fearlessness, and self dedication. In red drama, the everyday revolutionary narrative naturally integrates women's revolutionary spirit into their daily lives, allowing noble revolutionary beliefs to be displayed in subtle details. Revolutionary women are not heroes who are detached from life and detached from the outside world, but they shoulder daily household chores, work, and social responsibilities like ordinary people. The integration of revolutionary beliefs into daily life by revolutionary women can enable the audience to more intuitively feel the practical significance of revolutionary spirit from their everyday narratives, and also make the sublime image of women no longer limited to grand revolutionary scenes, but demonstrated in their daily behavior and demeanor. Daily narrative enables revolutionary beliefs to be grounded from a high place, making them more authentic and close to people's hearts. The revolutionary faith demonstrated by women in daily life is not an isolated spiritual force, but a manifestation of profound social responsibility and national mission. Under the heavy pressure of family and social responsibilities, revolutionary women are still able to maintain a high degree of consciousness and dedication to the revolutionary cause in their daily lives. The daily dedication of revolutionary women not only allows the audience to understand the profound influence of revolutionary beliefs on their hearts, but also endows them with a noble and approachable image, enabling the audience to have a deeper understanding of the meaning of revolutionary spirit. In addition, in red dramas, the sublime revolutionary ideas of revolutionary women are not only reflected in their persistent pursuit of revolution, but also in their resilient attitude towards life. Revolutionary women demonstrate an indomitable spirit in their ordinary lives, constantly conveying their revolutionary beliefs to the audience through their daily choices and actions. When facing the tests and sacrifices of daily life, female characters always maintain a positive and optimistic attitude, demonstrating a spiritual realm that transcends personal gains and losses, making their lofty revolutionary ideas more deeply rooted in people's hearts. When the audience sees the efforts and dedication of revolutionary women in their daily lives, they can not only feel the profound connotation of revolutionary faith, but also understand the revolutionary spirit hidden behind their seemingly ordinary lives.

IV. Conclusion

In summary, the female characters in red dramas, with their distinct artistic characteristics and revolutionary symbolic meaning, construct unique aesthetic values in a specific historical context. This not only demonstrates the power of revolutionary beliefs, but also inspires subsequent creators to continuously explore gender and revolutionary themes. Female characters, through their steadfast and unyielding images, achieve a high degree of integration between faith and art in theatrical texts, thus becoming symbolic entities that transcend the times. In the future, red drama will not only continue its historical memory and revolutionary spirit in the new era, but also enrich the aesthetics of drama through innovative female expression, becoming a cultural symbol and spiritual carrier of the new era, leading the audience to rethink history, examine the present and look forward to the future in resonance.

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