

Research on the Construction of Female Space in Ethnic Minority Themed Movies of "Seventeen Years" Period

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Abstract

It has created a glories of ethnic films for the films of ethnic minorities in the "Seventeen Years" period (from 1949 to 1966). This kind of films has constructed a space of carnival and imagination on ethnic heterogeneity by the means of depicting the existence and living conditions of ethnic minorities. The authors bring a unique female consciousness to the films, when write about the way to make a living of female characters, as an important composition of minority themed films, in an environment of ethnic heterogeneity. With the founding of the People's Republic of China, the slogan "Both men and women are the same in the new times" has been put forward one after another. Under the ethos of the new society, the women have been endowed with new "tasks". The role of women has been redefined as a kind of signifier with "symbolization" rather than in the limitation of pure or nimble one. The paper analyzes the living space and spiritual space of female characters in the film on the basis of female characters in ethnic minority films and in the use of the combination gender political theory with spatial narrative theory.

Keywords

Seventeen Years Period; Minority Themed Films; Female Space.

1. Introduction

Film is a highly ideological art product with multiple functions including propaganda, education and entertainment. At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the cause that has been left is to be relaunched. The seventeen-year film naturally focuses on and undertakes the mission of consolidating the new regime and publicizing national policies and guidelines, with the result of the temporarily ignorance for the relevant entertainment functions by the creators. At the same time, ethnic minority films, accordingly, have become a carrier, when it comes to the Chinese nation with the complex and diverse ethnic groups, to reflect the national style and life. As for the presentation of ethnic unity, it also can achieve the purpose of maintaining fellow countrymen of all ethnic groups united together and keep the domestic political situation stable.

It is not difficult to find that the subjectivity status of the female has been highlighted in the discourse system of the seventeen-year film by sorting out the history of Chinese minority-themed films. The reason, on the one hand, is that the top-down reform of political thought which is closely related is taken, since the founding of new China allowed women to have equal political status to men. On the other hand, ethnic minorities became another object of solidarity after the concept of "uniting workers, peasants and soldiers together". In addition, the liberation of ethnic minority areas is indispensable to ethnic minority women. The females have obtained the unprecedented liberation, though the presentation way in the film has also attached revolutionary and political labels, so that their living space has also shifted from the previous privacy and private life scenes to a broad revolutionary fight and socialist construction. Where the minority-themed film, as one crucial part of the film pedigree of Seventeen Years

Period and a cultural and artistic product that carries the consciousness of national unity, are concerned, the construction of female space is basically in accordance with the contextual expression of its in the whole course of the seventeen-year film. From the perspective of universality of social history and the particularity of ethnic minorities in the Seventeen Years Period, it empathizes on the analysis of the image expression of female space in ethnic minority films in the paper.

2. "Seventeen Years" and the Creation of Ethnic Minority Themed Movies

It is never been the result of a "product" of the separation of contemporary cultures for the film creation, but is closely to its coeval cultures. The film creation in the seventeen years period, firstly, aims at benefiting the nation's construction, so the political property of minority themed films is also put in the primary proposition.

In a large number of minority themed films, there are various "ethnic featured films" that seem to be novel and unusual, they rely on the paradigm of minority people's life to take on political themes, instead of superficially or directly reflecting the ideological education. The films, for example, *Ashima* and *San Jie Liu*, have made a lot of depictions of the landscapes and folk customs of various ethnic groups. On the one hand, it attracts the audience's interest in watching movies, which is conducive to developing a good understanding of minority cultures so as to deepen the integration of exotic customs and inland scenery. For the ethnic minorities, on the other hand, it is easy to accept for the local people by presenting their own real customs and life. We can get a potential effect to realize the purpose of political education with the help of combining the political themes with their real life. As far as the overall result is concerned, some issues of weak nationality in some films have been criticized by the local people, though, the ethnic minority themed films of the Seven Year Period have indeed promoted the exchange and integration of ethnic cultures. Secondly, it is in line with the political context at that time on the basis of placing female in the social surrounding through the presentation of the relationship between women and society. Meanwhile, it is obvious to present the liberation of the female and their own worth realization under the socialist environment. Finally, the purpose of praising socialism is attached.

3. The Living Space of Female in Ethnic Minority Themed Movies of "Seventeen Years" Period

The seventeen-year period can leave its own marks and brightest color in the history of film art. In the background of the "national plan" of film creation, the films are characterized a distinct political factor when maintained a high artistic level in this period. Therefore, they are different from the presentation of family ethics in early modern films. On the contrary, it changes the stereotyped mode, replacing the way of placing women in the space and environment of family with the construction of public space and social space for women's living environment. Specifically, the living space of females in the seventeen-year minority-themed films refers to both of the revolution space and of the construction space of the motherland. "The female characters in minority themed films are mainly in the two major spaces of revolutionary war and socialist construction"[1], showing liberation of females through the depiction of their living environment.

3.1. Expression of Revolutionary Space

The filmmaking has been co-existing with the immediate society all the time. The emancipation of the female in films has also become one of the significant elements of the narrative technique when "female liberation" has become the guiding ideology of new China. Throughout the history of Chinese film, it is always the focus on female's sorrow and oppression in the eye of

many directors. The oppression of women in the feudal era has become an important source of forcing their awareness awaken. A series of films account the living environment of the females in the patriarchal society from the perspective of multiple dimensions, thereby accusing the oppression caused by male. However, in the period of that seventeenth years, minority films firstly lead the female themed material to the big screen, abandoning the weak, coquettish, and tragic images, and turning the description of the female to the revolutionary space.

In a series of minority themed films, the female grew up in feudal society, but started to fight during the revolution. The Communists led them to the road of revolution, which undoubtedly highlights the political color of the film at a glance. In addition, although the two heroines of *San Jie Liu* and *Ashima* did not engage in revolutionary struggles, they also became representatives of resisting the old society and feudal forces. So it has, to a certain extent, explained the party's political strategy and ideology. Namely, in addition to continuing to overthrow the reactionary forces, it is also an essential task to sweep away the remnants of feudal rule and enlighten the minds of the people. The female has become an important presence in the revolutionary space, which is actually a description of the value of women in the historical process and a positive demonstration of women's important position in the revolutionary history. The demonstration of the female in ethnic minority themed films can effectively build a harmonious and united nation. It "not only reflects the prosperous development of revolutionary cause, but also vividly shows the great changes in social concepts in the process of women's engagement in the revolution in China, and there are considerable aesthetic and humanistic value, as well as strong artistic appeal and social influence in the terms of the revolutionary awareness and the self review of the female." [2]

3.2. The Social Space Expression of Building the Motherland

"In Chinese communist literature, women and men are both workers first, and then there are distinctions in gender and emotion between men and women." [3] In fact, it is same as the minority themed films of Seventeen Years Period, where the female and the male are both given the equal status of building the motherland. Women can be acknowledged by organizations and the public for their efforts to participate in the building of the motherland, and may also be condemned by the public for their laziness in the building process of country. Perhaps there are many limitations including ignoring the gender factor of the female and one-sided emphasis on the same between the men and women, from a feminist perspective. However, there is no denying that it indeed has establish a platform for the female to have equal rights between men and women.

In the minority-themed films of seventeen years, there is no shortage of texts that emphasize socialist construction, which shows the social atmosphere of socialization and collectivization. In such films, the female has become vital participants and promoters in social reform and the building of the society in China. For example, in *Five Golden Flowers*, by showing the process for searching his lover Jin Hua, A Peng met another four females whose names are also Jin Hua. In the film, it skillfully introduced the identities and achievements of the five females. All of them are model representatives who actively participate in social construction, showing the important role of women in social reform and the support and participation of people of all ethnic groups in the construction guideline and principle of new China. At the same time, the female in part of films also has expressed a deep affection for their own living space. After being rescued, they returned to their place of residence and became advanced leaders who fought against the local feudal forces and led the people out of their misery, such as the character Dai Nuo in the film *Jingpo Girls* and Yi Laihan in *Moya Dai*. In the film *Ashima*, the character A Shima turned into a stone forest and rested on the land of the Yi people for generations after being persecuted, becoming the guardian of the nation. The female images with maternity aura have a strong sense of belonging to the nation and the country.

The female has become an important member in the building of the new China. As a result, a further publication done about the concept of equality between men and women along with pace of the film development. Where the gathering places of ethnic minorities are concerned, it is of great significance.

4. The Spiritual Space of Female in Ethnic Minority Themed Movies of the "Seventeen Years" Period

The ethnic minority-themed films not only involve the expression of ethnicity, but also fit with romantic emotional narratives, creating a fantastic utopian field that is separated from the mainstream films of the seventeen years period. The female is naturally elected as the representative figure of the fantastic utopia in the context. For film art, what kind of spiritual space is constructed is extremely important, for which the audience's identification is affected by the cultural connotation presented in the film. "The personality composed of the character's language and behavior, as well as the relationship with others or the environment, forms a spiritual space. It is in this space that the audience expresses emotion for the fate of the characters and is influenced by their spiritual temperament. Meanwhile, the spiritual communication is taken in the sympathy and resonance with the characters." thought as Hai Kuo.[4]

4.1. Firm the Belief of Communist on the Spiritual Space

In the minority-themed films of seventeen years period, the female characters play an important role in the process of revolutionary history and the construction of the country as opposed to the images with the vulnerable groups hidden behind males. Undoubtedly, the female's belief from ethnic minorities to communism enables the public to establish a correct view of history. At the same time, the narration of the liberation of women by the Communist Party makes the content presentation of movies be multiple dimensions with deeply cultural connotations.

In terms of the female images in the minority themed films of seventeen years period, they choose to stand up to resist the oppression of the old society, fight against feudal forces, and lead their compatriots to resist feudal exploitation. Nevertheless, the support behind their growth and struggle benefits from the guidance and rescue of the Communist Party. For instance, in the films of *Jingpo Girl* and *Moya Dai*, the heroine comes across the Communist Party (People's Liberation Army) when she is suffered with sadness, misery and tragedy in her life. However, she gets a chance to reborn and a politic status tantamount to the male's in the help of the Communist Party. It is worth mentioning that the film, *Jingpo Girl*, reveals to the audience that the right of socialist road under the leadership of the Communist Party is equal to men and women. As the movie has revealed a such situation to the audience that Dinuo, a girl from Jingpo national minority who used to be a serf, is also able to be elected as the chairman of the village government in the construction of the socialist road. Such a story can make female audiences more convinced of the Communist Party.

These females fight against the feudal class, but the effect generated is weak. They are placed in the position of a disadvantaged group. Only after the liberation is realized by men or the Communist Party could they show their dominant position and realize the value of the female. For example, in the film of *Ha Sen and Jia Mila*, the imprisoned Jia Mila was rescued only after her lover joined the People's Liberation Army. In the another view of point, these females, who are in disadvantaged positions, represent the entire nation. The weakness of female is cast the vulnerable characteristic of the ethnic gathering areas. The ethnic minorities themselves do not have the ability to emancipate the people. Only the leadership of the Communist Party and the

new China can lead people to realize the liberation, ultimately moving and unifying the entire nation ahead.

Due to the limitations of the times, the female images in the minority themed films of seventeen years period have been placed in a rescued position, whereas their firm will and resistance embody their consciousnesses in the new society. Their reaction, including following the Communist Party and taking propaganda about the party's concept of salvation, shows that they have a high level of ideological awareness. Moreover, under the ambience of their beliefs, they eventually became a communist with firm ideals. Such spiritual space narrative obviously plays a role in broadcasting the integration consciousness of nation and ethnic minority.

4.2. Strive to the Demonstration for Emotional Desire Space

According to the policy of "all our literature and art are for the workers, peasants and soldiers", the mainstream films of the entire seventeen-year period are created based on the pedigree of heroic films, and the expression of emotions is almost hidden, while it is relatively looseness for the filmmaking of ethnic minorities. One of the major features of ethnic minority themed films during the seventeen-year period is the display of love stories, that is, adhering to the clues of "love narrative". Therefore, such movies are made as *Ashima*, *Five Golden Flowers*, and *San Jie Liu* that reflect the love stories of ethnic minority men and women. The female images with their unique feminine charm in these films have become the targets of males' admiration. The straightforward expression and pursuit of the females is in line with the male fantasy and promising. At the same time, when creators write the outer images of these females, they are portrayed as bright females with wisdom, kindness, and beautiful characteristics, and they can convey and promise love with songs, which meets men's visual desire for women. Although these woman images conform to the male-centered perspective, they have become classic screen images in the minds of that generation. The awareness of rebellion and independence is reflected through their indomitable struggle and love finding by themselves in the films of Seventeen Years Period.

The yearning for love is the nature of human beings. Most of the film creations in the seventeen years period are adhering to the presentation of the narrative of revolutionary friendship, and it is only a few for the expression of love stories. As far as the ethnic minority films of the seventeen years period are concerned, the love expression is taken in a multi-dimensional manner when depicting ethnic customs. And the love presentation of ethnic minority films is regarded as the entry point to show human nature and ethnic customs. By adhering to the "love" narrative mode, a new spiritual space has been constructed for the audience, so to speak.

5. Conclusion

The ethnic minority themed films of "Seventeen Years Period" have created a golden age for ethnic-themed films. These classic female images are also a key focus for the study on ethnic minority themed films. There is the presentation of the heterotopia narrative space that is different from the mainstream film narrative, because of the unique "marginalization" nature of ethnic minority themed films. As a result, the combination of gender research with space research provides a new observation perspective for understanding the construction of minority female groups under the mainstream discourse. In addition, it offers a new understanding for the relationship between the country and the nation, and the expressions of ideology as well.

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