

Original Research Article

The Writing of Women's Awakening Consciousness from the Perspective of Gender Criticism—Take the TV Series “The Little Nyonya” as an Example

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Abstract: Women's liberation has always been the focus of gender criticism. Television “The Little Nyonya” from the feminist perspective, with hybrid living space in the form of Baba culture as the background, shaped the survival during the Anti-Japanese War in under cover of male supremacy, especially in the feudal etiquette, social circles to days of Tianlan, Juxiang, and Yueniang has represented the typical female characters, depicting the intelligence and qualities of Nyonya, shows them from swallowing the defense, active resistance to victory break free of this growth process into confusion, explore, growth, struggle and sacrifice. As a hymn reflecting women's strength, courage, independence and confidence, “The Little Nyonya” has certain enlightening significance for the audience, especially the female audience, to think about their own life choices and pursuits.

Keywords: Gender Criticism; “The Little Nyonya”; Women's Cognitive; Feminism; Female Awareness

1. Introduction

As a criticism method with female value standard and aesthetic pursuit, gender criticism requires us to explore literary and artistic works from female perspective, female perception and experience. Literary and artistic creation should have not only the foundation of contemporary life, but also the blood of cultural tradition. The 45-episode TV drama “The Little Nyonya” takes the colorful traditional Baba culture as the perspective and the cultural spirit as the background, tells the story of the fate of women living in Malacca during the Anti-Japanese War and the twists and turns of the growth story, it is “from the female perspective, female leading role as the core figure of the entire TV series, with their legendary growth in adversity as the main line, the organization of the story, the plot of the TV series.”^[1] This paper mainly focuses on the fate trajectory of Three generations of Nyonya Tianlan, Juxiang and Yueniang, analyzes and discusses the development process of female consciousness of Nyonya in the feudal system, especially in the patriarchal society, from the defense of being subservient, active resistance and winning to escape.

2. Feminist thoughts and female self-cognition dominated by male power in “The Little Nyonya”

Feminist thoughts and female consciousness are ubiquitous in “The Little Nyonya”. Every woman of “The Little Nyonya”, no matter what level of her position in the Baba families, they have their own shining place, that is, they have their own thoughts and feelings, have their own pursuit of value, have their own unique personality, have their own subjective consciousness.

In that patriarchal society, it is women who have the final rights in the families of Baba. Huang Yuan is nominally the head of the family, and the power of the family governance is Guilan. But the laurel orchid only grasp the right not to power, the actual power is her daughter-in-law show Xiufeng. In the Chen clan, too, it is her grandparent, Granny Chen, who calls the shots, but in reality she is nominally the head of the family, and her grandson's wife, Huang Meiyu, runs the kitchen. Although these Nyonya held the power in the family, their self-consciousness was still the product of feudal etiquette. The laurel orchid, Xiufeng, Meiyu in “The Little Nyonya”, although not what the representative of the righteous good men, but also not full bad men. To say the least, without them, the families of Baba is also very difficult to be managed in order.

Although the Outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan before malacca has received the influence of western civilization, feudal etiquette and patriarchal ideology is very strong in some prestigious families of Baba. In the patriarchal society under the shadow of feudal etiquette, the unmarried Nyonya should be deep in the boudoir, do not leave the house and to contact with the

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outside world, even if there are guests visit, especially male guests, can only peep through the window of the pavilion. If she was obliged to go out, she sat down on a red cloth, and was wrapped up, and carried out of the house.

In the family of Baba, boys are required to go to school, while girls have to stay at home and learn to make Nyonya dishes, sewing, beading and embroidery, etc. “A woman without talent is virtuous” is not a joke, but a classical principle of feudal ethics. So the elder sister-in-law added to the gossip, “It’s their father’s fault for sending them to school, there is no need for girls to study, especially foreigners’ books... No matter how many books a woman reads, she will not finally marry and give birth to a child”. In the “cure” the influence of traditional ideas, the Nyonya who has married can only stay at home, slept late and get up early every day, not only to take care of her family, Manage the servants, but also be “Nyonya dishes” for the family to eat, the most important thing is to have children for her family, the Nyonya only have the traditional virtues such as virtuous obedience, bears hardships and stands hard work, to gain the respect of their families.

Under the shadow of feudal etiquette, especially in the male-dominated society, the lower-class Nyonya represented by Tianlan believed that “a woman’s life cannot be controlled in her own hands”. Tianlan was sold to the family of Huang Yuan in eleven years old, is to serve the old lady of the family of Huang Yuan. She was finally taken as a concubine by Huang Yuan, gave birth to a female named Juxiang. Although Tianlan is on the name of the second wife of the family of Huang Yuan, has been Huang Yuan’s original Guilan suppress call, plus her natural weakness, so all life in the tolerance of the stick to their own “duty”—“I am a humble servant”. Guilan, Xiufeng and Zhenzhu from the UK back to Malacca, To Tianlan’s granddaughter Yueniang extremely bully, insult—just as bullied her daughter Juxiang. She told Yueniang, must endure, because “this is your life, this is our woman’s life”, even before the moon married, in order to highlight their granddaughter’s innocence festival, she would rather to the family of Huang kow-cut head also want to beg for the Yueniang line “salute”. As a typical example of traditional Nyonya, Tianlan doesn’t care about “women’s liberation”, and her needs are extremely low, which is close to the nature of human primordial instinct, that is, she only desires for the right to survive. Therefore, in her whole life, she chose to sacrifice herself to save her offspring.

“Literary and artistic creation should not only have the foundation of contemporary life, but also the blood of cultural tradition.”^[2] The TV drama “The Little Nyonya” takes the colorful traditional culture of Baba as the perspective and cultural spirit as the background. Through the perfect contrast of “Nyonya food”, it tells the story of the fate of women living in Malacca during the Anti-Japanese War and the twists and turns of their growth. “Without the ‘foundation’ of excellent cultural traditions and the deep participation of humanistic spirit, literary and artistic creation will become a form of expression without connotation.”^[3] It is precisely because the life of women is integrated into the rich and colorful life background and cultural blood, the ideological realm and spiritual bearing of “The Little Nyonya” has been continuously sublimated, and has become a literary work with fresh vitality and lasting influence.

3. The awakeing consciousness of women in “The Little Nyonya”

There is also a kind of female consciousness of women who dare to pursue their own love and freedom in “The Little Nyonya”, which is different from the self-consciousness of the traditional older generation of Nyonya. This is a kind of courage to conquer themselves and dare to rush into the society. It is also an enterprising spirit with strong independence and self-improvement.

Because of the love of her grandmother suddenly left and sad too deaf-mute, Juxiang unable to speak. But she with a firm gesture tells the reader: “Women don’t have to leave things to chance. You have to take control of your own life.” Because of the maid identity of her mother, Juxiang from urination by the group of Guilan bully, suppress. But the more violent their oppression, the more stubborn she will be. When she knew her father Huang Yuan for the sake of the family business and sell herself to the traitors, Charles Zhang, even if the road ahead is uncertain, knowing that a weak and handicapped woman in times of war may not have a foothold, Juxiang finally chosed a road full of twists and turns, thorns and no turning back. Along the way, she was cheated, stolen, broken, but still single-handedly struggling to survive in the fate of the vortex, she eventually married Yosuke Yamamoto. In the eight years of the disappearance of Yosuke Yamamoto, even if again poor, then distress, hardship, she is still in the most difficult moment still adhere to, alone raise daughter Yueniang, in order to fulfill the original promise to raise the child’s commitment. Hold and keep watch of Juxiang making the feelings between her and Yamamoto Yosuke get pure and firm interpretation.

Yueniang articulate, intelligent, although for a woman, there is a man like bold—“little Nyonya, is not easy to provoke”. “Others may look down upon us, but we must think highly of ourselves. Or you’ll be trampled on for the rest of your life!” Her grandmother told her: “This is your life, this is our women’s life.” This is the gist of the play. However, Yueniang is not reconciled, issued a “no, I do not accept the fate, I do not accept such a life” shout, and shows the audience a path to achieve self-liberations with practical actions. The maid a’tao advised Yueniang to endure, submit, Yueniang retorted: “My grandmother, what will not, what do not understand, a lifetime of suffering will only endure, will only kowtow to people, but also get what? So why would I do what My grandmother did?” Yueniang does not listen to the fate of the arrangement, does not want to be anyone around her fate, even in the face of her beloved people, or solemnly said: “No, I do not want so, I do not want my fate is arranged by you, I do not want.” “In the process of their own modernization, women not only stare at the narrow personal world, their feelings are not limited to their own fate, but also face the whole social life, just like men, which makes women’s vision and way of thinking from their own world to the outside world to expand.”^[4]In backward and isolated Malacca, the living space of women was still extremely narrow, even though the social environment had changed, he external environment “only opens up a broad path for women’s liberation, and the real pursuit of the ideal state of gender equality depends on women’s self-reliance.”^[4] “I want to be a businesswoman and to make more money. When I have money, I do more business, and make more money... Use the money to make a contribution to society or masses, —build schools and buildings—so that the poor can afford to go to school and look after their health...” visible, Yueniang has already got rid of looking for men and overcome the traditional values such as family “governance”, in the face the resistance of man, family and society, she with her perseverance and courage, wit and intelligence,

operating small businesses selling bird's nest. She was framed, banished and beaten, but she survived, and eventually built a successful business out of nothing, also saved the grandfather on the verge of bankruptcy the family business of Huang Yuan. She is a trailblazer and leader from traditional female consciousness to female awakening.

In the long history of literary and artistic works, typical figures are both important and distinctive components. The height achieved by typical figures is not only the height of literary and artistic works, but also the height of the art of The Times. "Works on women should vigorously explore the independent value of women themselves and break the traditional concept of balance in marriage. Women should stand up and be a tree instead of a vine with men."^[4] "The Little Nyonya" make as stilettos to the female independent value of literary works, Truly and vividly portrayed the characters such as Juxiang and Yueniang, who lived in Malacca during the Anti-Japanese War in malacca. It depicts the talent and characteristics of the women in that special era, showing the confusion, exploration, growth, struggle and sacrifice in their growing up. Their story is a story of blood and tears during the war, but also a song of female strong, brave, independent, confident hymn.

4. The literature value "The Little Nyonya"

"The pursuit of truth, kindness and beauty is not only the true pursuit of individual life, but also the eternal motif of any literary and artistic creation. The authenticity of literary and artistic works is neither simple copy and imitation of life, nor rigid logical reasoning and scientific judgment, but to express the perception and understanding of social life connotation by ^[2] "faithfully reproducing typical characters in typical environment" to show the perception and understanding of social life connotation.

The authenticity of literary and artistic works is neither simple copy and imitation of life, nor rigid logical reasoning and scientific judgment, but to express the perception and understanding of social life connotation by "faithfully reproducing typical characters in typical environment" with the help of specific living environment. General Secretary Xi Jinping mentioned in the symposium on literary and Art work that literary and artistic works should "pour the passions of the people into one's own writing, eulogize the struggle of life, depict the most beautiful characters, and strengthen people's longing and confidence for a better life"^[2]. Among the many characters in "The Little Nyonya", A Tao, as a bottom matsu, supports her family by doing hard work. She often be discriminated, beat, torture, in addition to Tian Lan, Juxiang and Yueniang will "treat a stupid A Tao like a human", in the eyes of others she is alive and dead! A'tao as a bottom female, but it is the most just and frank matsu. Although she knew she would be scolded, will be beaten, and even will be thrown out, still wants to say what she wants to say, to protect Juxiang and Yuexiang, with her own practical action to maintain the justice of the world. She is both the patron saint of the family and the guardian of Juxiang and Yuexiang. Her presence makes the TV series "The Little Nyonya" a harmonious and unified organic whole.

The "good" and "beauty" of Literary works, refers to literary works to reflect respect for life, the pursuit of ideal and moral, the pursuit of happiness good life, and eventually use aesthetic care for life, found that natural and load ideal, resulting in the purification of the mind and the human spirit of mold, lead mankind itself and social progress.

The "goodness" of "The Little Nyonya", is mainly reflected in respect for life. Faced with a Japanese sweep, Shi yanzi could have avoided disaster. But when she heard the screams of the two girls next door, and worried about their safety, do not have the heart to see them to be broken into the Japanese wantonly, brave to go in, with her own body and life for the two girls' lives. As a woman, in the face of cruel war, Shi yanzi did not escape, but brave to stand out, she choose to sacrifice herself to save saved a young girl's innocence after another, maintain their dignity, expressed the deep meaning of the heavy fellow sisters. Although Shi yanzi is not an anti-Japanese soldier or hero, she uses her own actions to interpret the human glory, which brings the audience a touch and infiltration at the same time, so that "The Little Nyonya" has a grand and exciting sense of history, a painful indictment of the disaster brought to the people of Southeast Asia by the Japanese invaders, and sublimates the spiritual height of "The Little Nyonya".

A'tao is bullied by her master everywhere, again be driven out of that moment, Juxiang asks her mother to leave A Tao at home, take out her own money to pay A'tao's debts; Xiujuan in order to get her own love, design framed, Juxiang not only not angry Xiujuan, but standing in the perspective of women more sympathy Xiujuan's situation. In the eyes of all people, Big fool is a pure fool, but in the eyes of Yueniang, he is a decent person, need to eat, need others care, love and care of people. In the face of love, Yueniang and Chen can fly wing to wing, but considering sisterhood of her and Yuzhu, she hesitated to choose to give up. Again with her perseverance and courage, wit and intelligence, through the arduous struggle, selling bird's nest, do trade, open "Nyonya restaurants" and "Nyonya museum". Eventually, she started from scratch and had a successful career. She does not get past grudge, to let the family of Huang fallen leaves take root, she buys the old curia anew, rescued the Huang's family business that grandfather is about to go bankrupt. It shows the personality charm of Nynoya.

"All artistic creations are the interaction between the subjective world and the objective world. They reflect the essence of life in the form of art and extract the truth, goodness and beauty contained in life, thus giving people aesthetic enjoyment, ideological enlightenment and spiritual shock."^[4] The characters such as Shiyan-zi, Juxiang and Yueniang in "The Little Nyonya", vividly show the traditional Chinese virtues of treating others as one's own kind and loving others. The beauty of Shiyan-zi, Juxiang and Yueniang is not only the beauty of human nature of kindness, tolerance and respect for life, but also the beauty of women who are gentle and tough.

5. Conclusion

All excellent literary and artistic works must be the result of the organic unity of ideology and artistry. A literary and artistic work that combines rationality and sensibility and achieves a harmonious unity of content and form, "Rich but not empty, elegant but not vulgar, profound but not superficial, detailed but not rough."^[2] "The Little Nyonya" places the theme of women's liberation in the great historical event of the Anti-Japanese War, and narrates the development process of women's consciousness from submissiveness, active defense and resistance to victory in the patriarchal society under the cover of feudal etiquette. Is a positive

energy, bones, temperature, infectious literary works.

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