

An Analysis of the Dilemma of Shaping the Characters of Female in TV Dramas in the 21st Century in China

--Taking *Nothing But Thirty* and *Ode To Joy* as Examples

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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of the 20th century, China's female consciousness gradually awakened and "her" culture became prosperous, which led to a great increase in the production of TV dramas created with women as the center and aroused widespread attention and discussion. However, there are obvious dilemmas in the portrayal of women in these dramas. This paper aims to bring dynamics and breakthroughs to the portrayal of women in dramas by analyzing the dilemmas. Using a case study approach, this paper selects two Chinese TV dramas - *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty* - as case studies to explore the dilemma of portraying women in Chinese 21st century TV dramas. The limitations of image portrayal prevent TV dramas from spreading an advanced and forward-looking female consciousness for the society and fail to bring new dynamics and vitality to popular culture. This not only causes aesthetic fatigue and resistance among audiences but also is not conducive to the development of China's TV drama industry. It is even more negative to the further reflection of society on gender consciousness. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze and discuss the dilemma of portraying women in TV dramas. Taking *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty* as examples, this paper summarizes the problems in the portrayal of women in Chinese TV dramas in the 21st century into three dilemmas, which are the dilemma of stereotyping images, the dilemma of lack of true expression, and the dilemma of lack of social guidance. The specific expression is the stereotyping of aesthetic temperament and self-worth realization process; set-up of characters and their experiences are not realistic; female characters cannot inspire the audience. The article analyzes the reasons for the dilemma, including the fact that social aesthetics and value judgments are male-dominated; the creation is detached from reality to satisfy the audience's perception and to gain more popularity; the lack of thinking on the reality of women and the inability to break through the stereotypes of thinking. The last part of the paper proposes measures to break out of the dilemma from the perspective of the subjects involved in culture, including creators, viewers, the TV drama industry, the media, and the government.

Keywords: *TV series, female characters, stereotypes, male perception, female valuation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, China was gradually awakened to female subject consciousness under Western feminist thought and the modern Chinese women's emancipation trend. In addition, women's pursuit of gender equality and self-worth realization became more intense. These contributed to the prosperity of "her" culture. In recent years, the production of television works created with women in mind has

increased greatly and has generated widespread attention and discussion, such as *The First Half of My Life*, *Ode to Joy*, and *Nothing But Thirty*. There are certain breakthroughs in the portrayal of women in these TV works, such as the subversion of women's career, love, dress, behavior, and temperament. All these have some positive and realistic significance. But at the same time, there are still problems with the conservative, patterned, and stereotyped portrayal of women.

TV is one of the important carriers of mass cultural communication, and the China TV/Web Drama Industry Report (2020) mentions that “With a coverage rate of nearly 96%, TV is currently the best medium for reaching a national audience.” “In 2019, a total of 254 domestic dramas with 10,646 episodes were produced, completed, and approved for distribution by various types of TV drama production organizations nationwide.”[1] This shows that China produces a huge number of TV dramas every year, and TV dramas have become an integral part of people’s cultural life and have subtly influenced the cognitive and behavioral patterns of audiences.

Chinese TV dramas have obvious difficulties and limitations in portraying women. These limitations prevent TV dramas from spreading advanced and forward-looking female consciousness for society and fail to bring new dynamics and energy to popular culture. To a certain extent, it has also caused aesthetic fatigue and resistance among viewers, which is not conducive to China’s television industry development, but also the further reflection of social gender consciousness.

This paper selects two TV series *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty* as analysis cases. Starting from the characterization and plots in these two dramas, it analyzes the dilemma of the female images in Chinese TV dramas from the outside to the inside. The characters and plots in the two dramas provide comprehensive material for analysis. Problems can be found in the shaping of friendship, love, marriage, workplace, family relationships, and personal growth. The age span is also wide, so the issues will be discussed more comprehensively. *Ode to Joy* tells the story of five girls from different families with different personalities who live on the 22nd floor of the *Ode to Joy* Community. They help each other and grow up together from unfamiliar to familiar. It focused on the issues of 20-30-year-old women in the workplace, growth, native family, and love. The drama won the top ten in the 22nd China Top 100 TV Series Satisfaction Survey at the tripod Award; the 11th Outstanding TV Series at the National TV Production Industry Top Ten Commendation Conference; and the 31st Realistic Outstanding TV Series Award in the Flying Apsaras Award. *Nothing But Thirty* takes three thirty-year-old women as examples to show the story of urban women encountering multiple stresses at the important age of thirty. This drama won the 2020 Outstanding Overseas Communication Works on January 18, 2021; in April 2021, it won the television model-the 2020 annual quality drama series.

Research on the portrayal of women in TV dramas in China has made some progress, and some of the dilemmas of female portrayal have been analyzed in the studies of *Nothing But Thirty* and *Ode to Joy*. In Hao Xiaowen’s “Analysis of the media image of women in their thirties in popular dramas: taking the urban emotional drama *Nothing But Thirty* as an example”, the

study found that the twist of fate of female characters always requires the appearance of male figures to promote them, and it can be said that women always live in the value of men[2]. In Zhu Xuanjie’s “A Study on the Portrayal of Women in the TV Drama *Ode to Joy*”, it is concluded that the portrayal of women is influenced not only by the absolute control of men over the mass media but also by the cultural context in which the concept of patriarchy is deeply rooted. Moreover, the female image, driven by capital, has the problem of consumption and “being consumed”[3]. In the study of “The Breakthrough and Confinement of Women’s Image in TV dramas”, Zhang Xingyu points out that the creation of women’s image in TV dramas is covered up by masculinity and the tendency of modern media to consume women[4]. Liu Qing, in “The construction strategy of the female image in drama series with urban themes”, points out that due to the progress of China’s social concept, the discourse strategy of the female image in urban dramas in the new era is changing from male perspective to female perspective, and urban dramas need to focus on the rationality of characters and the completeness of narrative in their creation[5]. In Zhang Zeqi’s “Breaking Stereotypes and Constructing Identity: A Study on the Image of ‘Strong Women’ in Dramas with Urban Themes,” it is argued that the image of “strong women” in dramas with urban themes is often based on the trauma of their original families or unhealthy gender relationships. They have never escaped from the image of the principle of “Big Man”[6]. In Chen Dengqi’s “Study on the stereotypical image of women in China’s urban emotional television works”, it is suggested that the influence of the patriarchal social mindset and the fact that new women have become the main force are the main reasons for the formation of stereotypical images of men and women. To shape the image of women, it is necessary to change the social concept actively and strengthen the sense of responsibility of the media to show the real-life of women and avoid the negative influence of conservative thinking, while ensuring that women are respected[7].

From the analysis of the above literature, it could be learned that there have been some research results on the dilemmas and causes of female portrayal in TV dramas. Most of the existing studies have analyzed the problems from the perspectives of masculism, social concepts, and stereotypes, and have also put forward relevant suggestions and measures to different degrees. However, the current studies do not take a more comprehensive view of the dilemma of female portrayal in TV dramas, and the exploration of the dilemma mostly stops at the problem of stereotyping.

This study will complement the research on the stereotypical portrayal of female characters in terms of both the problem of aesthetic temperament and the realization of self-worth. In addition, this study explores the dilemmas of female portrayal in TV dramas from two

relatively new perspectives: authenticity of expression and the social influence of characterization. In terms of relevant solutions, suggested measures are presented from the perspectives of various groups involved in culture, including creators, viewers, the television industry, the media, and the national government. Such a research perspective encompasses both the macro and the specific, making the proposed measures more instructive and practical.

In order to fill the research gap on this issue, this paper will analyze the current situation of female portrayal in Chinese 21st century TV dramas and the reasons for the formation of the dilemma, using *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty* as case studies. The dilemmas are not conducive to the dissemination of advanced female consciousness for society in TV dramas and the development of China's television industry. This study is conducive to giving more discourse power to female characters in television productions, and to promoting more media empowerment for women in reality. So that the mass media can present a more diversified and three-dimensional media image of women and promote women to break away from the stereotypical image of society and further stimulate women's gender consciousness

Mainly using the case study method, two popular Chinese TV dramas *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty* were selected as research cases, from which rich research data were obtained to understand the value of the cases and to analyze the cases from multiple perspectives, so as to come up with representative and realistic research contents.

Auxiliary use of literature analysis method. Collection and analysis of relevant data and literature on the analysis of female image in television works are used to understand previous research results, as well as various theoretical views and research methods related to the study.

2. DISCUSSION & RESULT

2.1. Stereotyping dilemma

There is a serious stereotyping phenomenon in the creation of female images, and the male perspective is always an important yardstick for the aesthetic value of women. The stereotyping of women's image is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, the stereotyping of women's aesthetic temperament; second, the stereotyping of women's self-worth realization process.

First of all, there is a serious stereotyping in the aesthetic temperament of women. Aesthetic temperament includes femininity and beauty, i.e. both inner and outer aspects.

In terms of inner femininity, Andy, Qiu Yingying, Guan Juer and Fan Shengmei in *Ode to Joy* and Zhong Xiaoqin and Wang Manni in *Nothing But Thirty*, the main character of these characters are all embodied in the tone of the so-called feminine character of sensuality, fragility and tenderness. Even if there seems to be a breakthrough, but also follow the principle of beauty, beautiful women can have the anti-traditional character. The reality is male dominated social aesthetic perspective. For example, Qu Xiaoxiao in *Ode to Joy* is a change from the image of a gentle woman to a spiteful, capricious and arrogant woman, such a character on an ordinary woman may not be praised by people, but Qu's image is praised as "wicked and smart" and is accepted and loved by people, the basic setting of her image and the display of her image. In *Nothing But Thirty*, Gu Jia, who is regarded as a representative of excellent women, is gentle and considerate to her husband, takes the family as the center and has certain ability and opinions, neither too weak nor too strong, which also satisfies the aesthetic embodiment of femininity from the male perspective.

There is also a certain stereotypical portrayal of women's appearance, dress, and consumption on the external aspect. Women have symbols that refer to them, such as high heels, dresses, designer bags, high-end cosmetics, etc. People materialize women's pursuit and success into such high-end consumer goods. Women's success in business tends to be expressed more in terms of being able to afford authentic brand names without having to scrimp on food and clothing, thus living a sophisticated, tasteful and quality life. For example, Wang Manni in *Nothing But Thirty* lives a life of "exquisite poverty", using the money she could have spent on a few pairs of ordinary shoes to buy a pair of expensive brand-name shoes. The character in the drama explains that this is the pursuit of the quality of shoes, but in fact it is still the pursuit of brand added value and brand effect. In addition, the portrayal of women in TV dramas also emphasizes the stereotypical aesthetic standard of "femininity" in appearance and dressing, such as Guan Juer in *Ode to Joy*, who is always complained about by other characters in the drama for being old-fashioned and conventional in her daily dressing, but on the contrary, Qu Xiaoxiao and Fan Shengmei are praised and enviable for their fashionable dressing and wearing skirts and high heels. The actual fact is that the actual people in the world are the most popular and the most popular. The "freedom to dress" advocated by society is more one-sidedly understood as women can show more of their bodies naked to show beauty and sexiness. But in fact, this understanding has put a shackle on the freedom of dress for more people and "deprived" some people of the right to choose conservative dressing. And the aesthetic of exposure is sexy should still be under the male aesthetic system, women's beauty has always been examined under the male perspective, without reaching the independent freedom of women's aesthetics.

“The aesthetic crisis is a concrete manifestation of the mixed values in today’s society. Women’s physiological vulnerability and psychological dependence lead women to easily adjust their aesthetic expectations according to the prevailing value standards, resulting in the identification with class discrimination, the worship of consumption, money and the blind obedience to the theory of appearance.” [8] This sufficiently explains the causes of the aesthetic crisis of women and shows the necessity of paying attention to women’s aesthetics. In general, from the female images in the two dramas *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty*, women’s aesthetics are under a male-dominated aesthetic perspective, presenting a stereotype of female character building in terms of temperament and aesthetics, and thus causing a sense of crisis and a tendency of blind obedience to their own aesthetics among women in society.

Secondly, there is also a serious problem of stereotyping the process of realizing the self-worth of female characters. The process of female self-worth realization is in the process of constantly meeting social expectations, which are also dominated by men.

This stereotyping is firstly reflected in women’s life experience. As Pavlova said, “Women are not born as women, but become women.” In existing creations, more often than not, women are directly associated with the identity of motherhood, and women must go through such an evolution of roles from love to marriage to motherhood. The lack of any link is like a great disappointment for a woman. Wang Manni in *Nothing But Thirty*, Guan Juer and Fan Shengmei in *Ode to Joy* all have the experience of being urged to get married and have children. The drama emphasizes the sadness of “leftover women” and exports to the audience the value that it is natural for women to get married and have children. In the new era, the concept of independent women is a step forward, but some aspects are questionable and alarming. In the portrayal of women in TV dramas, it is not difficult to see the shaping of independent women. But this is also a process of setting a new standard for women. It is also a process of putting new shackles on the development of the female image. For example, the image of independent women portrayed by Gu Jia in *Nothing But Thirty* requires them not only to take care of their families, but also to be able to have their own careers. “Nowadays, society has changed the temperament requirements for women. Unlike the traditional concept that requires women to be gentle and considerate, virtuous and family-friendly, today’s society requires women to have these traditional female virtues in addition to masculinity such as calm, rational, driven and assertive, and to be able to adapt to the workplace and create value together with men in the public sphere.” [9] In essence, this adds more shackles to the order of women’s lives. This not only adds to women’s anxiety about their families and careers, but also about their identity as “independent women”.

What’s more, the growth turning point of the female character is also another representative of the stereotyping problem. The breakthroughs, growth, and difficulties faced by women in TV dramas often require men’s help, guidance, or stimulation after hurting. Andy from *Ode to Joy* - In her business life she is rational and strong and doesn’t mind gossip. However, she has a barrier to intimate contact and is never able to get over the hurt of her past. It was only after she met and fell in love with Yifan that Andy grew out of her painful past. The growth of the image of Fan Shengmei is inseparable from the push of men. First, she experienced the blow of love - by Qu Xiaoxiao’s brother Qu Lianjie slag, and then she renewed her relationship with Wang Bochuan. These men both hurt her and gave her help and support in many things. It is also these emotional experiences that make Fan Shengmei become more mature and realistic. Qu’s metamorphosis was also influenced by her boyfriend Zhao Qiping. She started reading which she did not like in order to maintain her relationship and started running her own business. Before that she was also just an idle rich girl. Meanwhile, Qiu Yingying also grew after being hurt by Manager Bai and Ying Qin in love. In *Nothing But Thirty*, Zhong Xiaoqin meets Zhong Xiaoyang, a younger admirer than herself, after her divorce. In *Nothing But Thirty*, Zhong Xiaoqin meets her admirer Zhong Xiaoyang, who is younger than her, after her divorce. She eventually publishes her novel and remarries her ex-husband. The character Wang Manni is finally able to break out of her existing life and study abroad, also after being hurt by Liang Zhengxian. Although their relationship is not happy, it leaves a strong and colorful mark on Wang Manni’s path of growth in life. It can be said that the self-realization process of these female characters cannot be achieved without the assistance of men. On the one hand, this creates a pattern of plot design. On the other hand, it is also a stereotypical perception of women’s self-growth, which conveys the wrong perception of “women depend on men” to the society.

The problem of severe stereotyping of female image creation is generally based under the domination and evaluation of the male perspective. The image of women on TV series, whether in terms of temperament, aesthetics, or in the exploration and practice of self-worth, has never been free from male-oriented judgments. This is one of the fundamental and most difficult dilemmas in the portrayal of women to break through. But as the philosopher Zhang Shiyong points out, “the reason why tradition is considered legitimate has reached the point where it is accepted without argument or thought. When people doubt and discuss a certain tradition, that is the day when that tradition is shaken.” [10] With the growing awareness of women, stereotypes and portrayals of women are bound to be challenged.

2.2. The dilemma of the lack of real expression

The image of women in television dramas is disconnected from the social reality. The audience can easily find that there are many “bugs” in the plot and characters that are relatively detached from the social reality when watching dramas. For example, Andy in *Ode to Joy* is portrayed as an elite returnee from Wall Street with the ability to influence the Shanghai economy. But she is so idle in her daily life that she often doesn't even have to go to work. This shows that her image is very different from the reality of the stressful life of people in the financial industry. In *Nothing But Thirty*, Wang Manni, who only met Mr. Wei once at a wine party, received his contact information at the second meeting and was given the opportunity to be promoted to the position of store manager of Mixiya. But in fact, Wang Manni previously worked in Mixiya for eight years and she failed to be the deputy store manager. Therefore, the promotion opportunity for her transformed the drama into a drama with the theme of a potent man. And when Wang Manni went back to her hometown for a blind date, she directly became a civil servant in the town, and many viewers directly said they envied her for being so lucky. And everyone who has a bit of common sense in life knows that to be a civil servant needs to take a series of difficult exams, and the work of civil servants is not as leisurely as reflected in the TV series. So why do the creators pretend not to understand what the audience can see, and even risk the damage to their reputation by being unwilling to stop loss in time? This paper analyzes the following possible reasons for this problem.

1. Cater to the needs of the audience, so that the audience can get “immersion satisfaction” through television works in a stressful life to reduce psychological pressure and alleviate negative emotions. In daily life, “happy” is a common and popular emotional expression, and in recent years, the term “happy drama” has gradually emerged as an iconic buzzword in the field of television in China. With the love of the audience, “happy dramas” are gradually sweeping across the screen. Many viewers like to enjoy “happy” dramas on TV and cell phones after a busy day at work, as these works are set closer to their daily lives, catering to and releasing the hidden desires and impulses of viewers and satisfying their sense of security and fantasy. In the production of television, the producers will create for the audience's needs of “happiness”. As mentioned in the article *Vision and Pleasure*, beauty has fallen into the enjoyment of human life, rather than the peak of the ideal world. It represents the interests of the masses and has a special romantic meaning.[11] For example, in *Nothing But Thirty*, Gu Jia's son was locked in a room by the mother of another child. After learning about this, Gu Jia used her fists to take revenge for her son on the spot. The drama series itself is created by the accumulation of “happy points” that are common in movies and dramas,

such as “revenge on the spot without hesitation” or “the heroine meets a rich and wealthy man accidentally”. It makes up for the lack of real-life experience, and it resonates with the viewers' innermost feelings, which makes them fall into the imagination with a strong sense of immersion. “The feeling of being at the bottom of power, being exploited by capital, the feeling of powerlessness and the fear of individual stability are precisely the prerequisites for the creation of ‘happiness’.”[12]. The audience temporarily forgets their social roles in the joy and sorrow brought by the characters of the movie and drama, and is mentally liberated in the non-realistic imagination when they are free from their self-restraint. However, the negative effect is also obvious. Too much fantasy can exaggerate the plot of the work and make it a suspended drama that is disconnected from reality. When a drama needs to have dramatic conflict, it certainly needs some dramatic elements to be fabricated. But the fabrication in some dramas is out of logic, without common sense, and the plot is only for the sake of “happiness”, which will make people feel absurd and ridiculous, forming a mishap of the whole drama.

2. The creator's selfishness of sentiment. The creator conveys his own consciousness of values through the shell of a TV series. Almost all of the television works on the market today are essentially television presentations of literary works, so a large part of the values conveyed in a television series are the personal feelings of the original author. Some say that today's online literature has the basis of a well-developed industry chain and assembly line behind it, and that there is pressure from multiple parties (directors, investors, etc.) in the process of filmmaking. Nonetheless, there are clever creators who bring out their own state of mind and fantasies in a passionate way, leading the audience to experience an alternate world of “daydreams”. This can lead to works that overly sell anxiety and do not really resonate with the audience. Even if a drama is not in line with the real social context, it will not stand the test of time even if it is well produced, and time will dilute the temporary recognition, and eventually it will be discarded by the audience with aesthetic fatigue, thus being expelled from the market.

3. The more disconnected from the real society, the more attention the ridiculous plot can get, and thus the greater the commercial value is. Nowadays, the cake of the television market is getting bigger and bigger because of the involvement of capital and media. Therefore, in order to get more returns and occupy a larger share of the market, creators and investors are rigidly inserting eye-catching plots that are disconnected from reality into their works, resulting in distortion of the characters' images. The investors who are eager for quick success and profit are mindlessly scrambling to imitate a typical example of success, which is one of the reasons for the current “severe winter of television winter”. This

problem will lead to a false prosperity of manufacturing in a rough way in the TV drama market, especially in today's pan-entertainment environment, where economic capital has formed a "hegemony" in the entertainment industry in order to get a lot of attention and traffic, which will deteriorate the education value of television culture. It can also interfere with the market order and weaken the viewers' independent thinking and value judgments. At the same time, TV dramas have a wide audience, including many minors who are fascinated by their attractive plots and characters. In many television works, the image presented by the heroine and what she does is contrary to the right attitude of conducting oneself. For example, in *Nothing But Thirty*, Wang Manni intrigues against her colleagues in sales, and Lin Youyou does not hesitate to destroy other people's families for the sake of her love. These are all wrong values with strong egoism lurking in them, which have a subtle negative impact on the ideological and moral education of young people.

2.3 The Dilemma of Lack of Guiding Meaning

In recent years, the life of the urban middle class has increasingly become the focus of today's movies and TV shows, there are also more and more works featuring "women to the works channel". Whether it is the TV series like *Nothing But Thirty* which starts with the idea of peddling age anxiety, Or works like *Ode to Joy*, which focus on women's struggle and growth, can trigger a wide range of social discussions. However, in the current television works, the dilemma faced by women is still only presented and discussed, and there is a lack of positive guidance and positive solutions.

Compared with movies, TV dramas and online dramas can grasp the mentality of *The Times* more quickly and directly. It could be seen that TV dramas aimed at female audiences begin to emphasize feminist concerns, which reflects the rising spending power and discourse power of urban Chinese women. But on the other hand, in the narratives of these dramas, it is not difficult to find a cruel reality: even in the 21st century, for women today, love and family are still the main battlefields of life. Take Fan Shengmei in *Ode to Joy* as an example. Fan Shengmei was born in a family with traditional values that favored sons over daughters. Her parents were always partial to her brother, so she could not get the warmth brought by equal treatment in this family, which was the root cause of her personality self-conflict. At the same time, Fan Shengmei could not bear to abandon her family with blood relationship. She assumed the responsibility of supporting the whole family and became the sole source of income for the whole family. Despite her inner resistance to jump out of this "bottomless pit" of bottomless family members, she is not brave enough to draw a clear line between herself and her family. Therefore, outside the family, Fan Shengmei had to choose the method of self-paralysis,

with a strong false shell to cover up her fragile heart; and when she faced his family again can only be forced to fight back to the original shape, the inability to choose to bear all the pressure which should not be borne by her. In the drama, it highlights the problem of Fan Shengmei's native family preferring sons over daughters, as well as the female dilemma that the character's own value has not been recognized. In the whole drama, the struggle, pain and helplessness of this character can be seen, but not her real liberation. Fan Shengmei represents a large number of women who are bound by the relationship of their native family. The play reflects the family ethics in China, and the tragic cause of Fan Shengmei's fate is actually caused by the thought of "son preference". From a positive point of view, the script writing author criticize this Chinese family problem directly, but it only stays in the criticism, and does not provide a feasible way for women in the society to get out of the dilemma through the character of Fan Shengmei.

In another TV drama, *Nothing But Thirty*, Wang Manni, a Shanghai drifters who wants to stay in Shanghai, finally chooses to study abroad as a way to solve her difficulties after experiencing anxiety and ups and downs in life and career. This kind of treatment is too idealistic, in reality, most of the Shanghai floating young people can not study abroad to solve the difficulties in life. Lin Youyou did not pay any price for his unethical behavior after he intervened in Gu Jia's marriage to Xu Huanshan, but left Shanghai unharmed after Xu was put in prison. It also does not produce positive guidance for the general public. Successful woman Gu Jia quit her job to become a full-time housewife for the sake of her family. She constantly sacrifices herself for her husband and son. Finally, faced with her husband who was put into prison after cheating on her, although she filed for divorce, she still helped her husband pay off his debts. Today's marital difficulties of professional women are by no means caused by work, and there are more complicated reasons behind it. The husband's cheating does not mean the loss of personal value, which is what this domestic drama wants to express but fails to express. In fact, in recent years, most of the domestic TV productions have always been rigid and weak in their imagination of women's situation in marriage and family, and the way to solve family problems is accompanied by the compromise of women at various levels. However, in reality, it has been found that the subject consciousness and the discussion on the emotional topic of marriage of many female audiences have jumped out of the category of family defense and gone deep into the structural injustice faced by women under the patriarchal ideology. The separation between television works and audience consciousness just reflects the development dilemma of feminism in China. Although the current television creation tries to present the new image of independent women to the public, due to the lack of real female consciousness, the plot direction conflicts with the values

of independent women obviously, and cannot bring positive guidance to the audience.

The lack of guiding significance in the creation of female images first comes from the lack of deep thinking about the difficulties encountered by women in real life and the lack of consciousness to stimulate women's awakening and resistance. And for a long time, Chinese scriptwriters and directors are mainly male, which inevitably reflects the "male gaze" in their plays. Dai Jinhua pointed out, "What women are encountering in today's culture is a situation of mirror city. In the mirror of male culture, she is either Hua Mulan disguised as a man, or she is mirrored in the mirror of male all kinds of female images that men need, such as witches, demons, virgins and mother earth. It is only in the faithful writing of the woman's own experience that all mirrors can be broken and turned into distorting mirrors." Therefore, only by engaging in their own creation can women change the fate of being stared at and controlled; only based on the female perspective can this paper completely eliminate the visual pleasure of the male subject and break the traditional pattern of "the man is looking and the woman is looking" in the image. Only women's own voices can express the truth of women's inner world[13]. Therefore, the drama should start from reality, and truly depict the process of the characters' self-growth and breaking through the dilemma, avoiding the idealization of plot setting.

Secondly, the author holds the fixed thinking that women cannot break the traditional social distribution and ethical concepts to change the reality, and believes that women often need external forces to change their fate. So when a female character tries to change her life, there is often a man to help her. This leads to the unhealthy logic that women don't want to leave home and thrive again without being hurt by men, and that women must rely on a man's emotional support or appreciation in order to make a difference in their careers.

As the Beauvoir wrote in the 1940s, being a woman was a lose-lose situation: one became unworthy of love as one was, and one had to give up one's self if one wanted to be loved. This is the conflict between the individual standard of modern women and family values. Man's desire to pursue a career is never in conflict with their own happiness as lovers, husbands, and fathers; sons' self-actualization and family needs are in line; women's are the opposite. Therefore, the shaping of female images in television works should make the turning of characters' fate the result of spontaneous and active actions, so that the choice of characters always revolves around the realization of self-growth and self-worth.

2.4 Solution

Television creators are the most direct modelers of

female images and the core to break through the difficulties in shaping. First of all, creators should actively study the gender view and gender consciousness of continuous progress and development, and establish the correct gender concept. Abandon female stereotypes and gender discrimination actively and consciously. Secondly, the creation should pay attention to the reality, based on the reality, to truly depict the process of the character's self-growth and breaking through the dilemma, and avoid the idealization of the plot setting. The shaping of female images should break through the dilemma of stereotype, make the turning of characters' fate the result of spontaneous and active actions, and make the choice of characters focus on the starting point of self-growth and realization of self-worth.

The audience, as the consumers of culture, should accept the new gender consciousness and the progressive female consciousness with an open attitude. Audiences should also actively improve their aesthetic literacy, uphold the correct values, and severely criticize and give feedback to those TV dramas that slander women and are poorly produced.

At the macro level, the television industry, the media and the national government should cooperate with each other to publicize and convey positive and advanced gender awareness, and guide the society to change the stereotype of women through media publicity. The media should adhere to industry norms, media workers should adhere to professional ethics, disseminate positive and correct social values, strive for more voice for women, and give women a real platform to express themselves. Insulting women for thou shalt be prohibited, disposal, against the backward feudal decadent, spreading gender consciousness of the national government need introduced aiming at the problem of television industry of creation, production, investment and industry standards, divided "forbidden zone" in terms of creation, prohibited the backward, with negative, feudal gender consciousness of creation, and formulate the corresponding to the judgment standard and punishment. After the policy is issued, the government should guide the television industry to implement industry standards and regulate industry order. In addition, publicity, education and training should be used to improve the social responsibility and professional ethics of the industry practitioners, so that the purpose of television creation is no longer the result of capital chasing, but to give more realistic significance to the progress of the society and achieve the result of culture for the people.

3. CONCLUSION

Taking *Ode to Joy* and *Nothing But Thirty* as examples, this paper analyzes and explores the plight of Chinese female images in TV dramas in the 21st century. Through research, it is found that there is a serious stereotype in the creation of female images in current

television dramas. This stereotype is manifested in the realization of women's aesthetic temperament and self-worth, which is due to the domination of men's perspective. This may lead to women's blind obedience to their own aesthetics and convey the wrong values of "women depend on men" to society. On the other hand, the female images in television are divorced from the social reality. This phenomenon is caused by catering to the audience's psychology, expressing selfishness and making profits in business. This may cause the plot to be exaggerated, unable to resonate with the audience, disturb the laws of the television market and give negative guidance to minors. We need to coordinate all sectors of society to take responsibility and enhance aesthetics, and focus on combining the main theme at present, paying attention to social reality and putting an end to bottomless propaganda. In addition, we also found that there are no measures to solve and improve the problem of female image in television. Because of the creator's lack of thinking and advanced consciousness, the thinking is framed, which leads to the works aggravating the audience's anxiety and negative emotions, and not exerting the positive influence that television works should present. In this regard, we should set out from reality, truly shape the characters, and make every life choice of the characters reasonable and spontaneous.

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