

Role Shaping of Clothing

Two-way Circulation between Identity and Clothing

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Abstract—Since human beings break away from the life stage of bare natural state, like a historical bond, clothing has connected the development of human and social civilization. Like other languages, clothing language has its own vocabulary and grammar. The symbolic sign language conveys the message for people to communicate. Thus, clothing becomes the effective tool for people to reveal and hide their identity. This paper first explores semiotics and psychology in the first two parts, and then further deepens its research on clothing sociology, forming a complete theoretical system and providing a scientific and complete theoretical framework for role shaping of clothing.

Keywords—Role Shaping; Code; Identity; Value System

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

On the stage, drama performers' clothing modeling will be retransformed to meet the role characteristics. In daily life, people often show their social status and the role they play through clothing. Although clothing is no longer the external form of class difference, it is still involved in personal behavior and social norms.

B. Raise of Question and Research Significance

The inseparable relation between people and clothing forms the integrity of clothing and human social identity, so the key part of research on role shaping of clothing will inevitably refer to social category. As the subject of the role, the social person restricts clothing form, reflecting the differences in role character; on the other hand, clothing identifies and reinforces social role. Due to the interaction between clothing and identity, we inevitably will go deep into the essence to explore and analyze the interactive theory of this two-way circulation. (Fig.1)

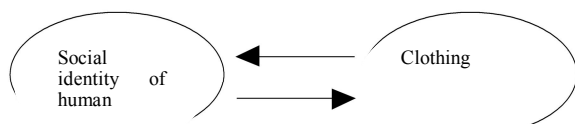


Fig.1. Interactive theory of two-way circulation between clothing and identity, 2010

It's self-evident that clothing plays an important role when the "biological I" is transformed to the "social I". "Role" originally refers to people's position in the society and in the group. The interactive circulation between social subject and clothing enriches the value system of clothing and deepens the social function of clothing in the process of historical research.

C. Research Status at Home and Abroad

People's gradual deepening of research on clothing has greatly enriched various disciplines of clothing. Review of the relation between clothing and social role makes a part of each subject theory of clothing. However, systematic comprehensive analysis which is combined with relative theories on interaction and restriction between clothing and identity is very rare. Therefore, this paper's innovative point lies in thinking about the topic with reference to the ideas and theories concerning the organization structure of the society, sign language and group behavior and also lies in study on Chinese and foreign clothing history.

D. Purpose and Contents of Research

This paper focuses on research on role shaping function of clothing, the influence of identity on clothing and value system of clothing. The two-way circulation theory between identity and clothing is put forward through discussing and revealing the close relation between role shaping of clothing and social identity. Hope that understanding of clothology can be fundamentally deepened through the presentation of clothing's role shaping function, and then it can be combined with clothing semiotics, psychology, sociology and other theories to deepen clothing culture and the scientificity of clothing culture's participation in social value system.

II. LANGUAGE OF CLOTHING

A. Introduction

Each art form has its own language and clothing is no exception. It's a kind of non-verbal communication. People live in the cultural symbols created by them. Roland Barthes, the French structuralist, once said that drama clothing's basic element was symbol, like a kind of writing. In order to try to interpret these art forms, structure meaning of these language symbols must be analyzed first. Thus, language structure of clothing can be revealed, in which linguist construction of human and clothing can be found.

B. Research on Clothing Code

1) Analysis on Clothing Code

Semiotics embodies the meaning of objective things and the structural relation between them, which is also the product of people's creativity and morality. Many contemporary design theories are trying to make their own theories universal and scientific with the help of semiotics. In Saussure's theory of semiotics, the symbol is the combination of form and meaning. When applying it to analysis on clothing code, "clothing" refers to objective existence, namely the structure of the symbol.

2) Structure Integration of Clothing Code

Saussure believes that language symbol is a two-sided mental entity and it must be formed by combination of signifier and signified. Only when the form and the content are created at the same time, can they be accurately called symbols. As a kind of code, clothing concerns the signifier and the signified, and is associated with human existence and social culture. Because clothing code is the sign and representation of social civilization.

C. Construction of Clothing Language

As a kind of symbol, clothing is greatly related to formation of the dressing body. As a kind of necessary decoration to protect the body with self-expression function, clothing forms a complete structure system with human. In a sense, clothing is not a natural object, but the product of social and economic activities. Therefore, like the linguist structure system of symbols, human and clothing are inseparable.

Through the interpretation of the theory of semiotics and from the behavior of human dress, it's not difficult for us to find that people's dress motivation also enriches the value system of clothing, namely identity showing function or role shaping function of clothing. That clothing shows its own social role in the form of language enriches the value system of clothing.

D. Conclusion

In the context of symbol, as an existing entity, clothing is characterized as a kind of code. Clothing is an important part of human culture. Clothing code is not only one kind of culture symbol, but also has the characteristic of art symbol. The paper starts from the theory of semiotics and uses its practicability, reality and guidance to scientifically analyze and explore language system of clothing. Through research on the attribute of clothing code, separation of linguist structure, the relation of symbol's signifier, signified and signification is revealed. Through combination of the relation and clothing code, we get the signification function of clothing. In-depth analysis is provided to prove that the attribute of clothing symbol and clothing phenomenon belong to the category of symbol. Then, from application of the theory of semiotics, the inseparable integrity and isomorphic relation between human body and clothing are described. When they two are seen as a unified whole, clothing has symbolic significance in the role and has the function of role shaping.

III. ROLE SHAPING OF CLOTHING

A. Introduction

Human society is a complicated structural complex and people unconsciously take part in social activities. Clothing has the symbol function to convey personal social status, occupation, confidence and other personal characteristics to others. This chapter focuses on discussion of clothing's role shaping function and continues to explore role shaping in varied form, from which we try to find the fact that people use clothing to establish the individual social role.

B. Evolution of Clothing's Role Shaping Form

As a kind of special culture, clothing reflects the characteristics of the times and witnesses the change of history. In modern society, as the subject of the society, human beings have the right to choose clothing. Like symbol, clothing dominates human's dress idea and image shaping.

1) Role Shaping in Earlier Feudal Society

There are many differences between Chinese and western culture and differences in clothing field are also evident. However, in earlier feudal society, class difference idea of clothing has the same performance.

During the period of ancient Rome, Roman men generally wear a kind of wrapped coat called "toga", which is the exclusive clothing for male citizens of Rome and marks their civil rights, like the ID card in modern society. In China's traditional culture, clothing undoubtedly becomes an inseparable part of politics. "Mandarin square" is the most evident rank mark in the Ming Dynasty among officials and clothing styles under feudal system more evidently reveal clothing limits on status. Thus, clothing's role shaping function is also explained here.

2) Role Shaping in Modern Development

The development of clothing culture is influenced by many historical, political, economic and cultural elements and clearly reflects our values and way of life. There are huge differences between manner of dress and ideas of earlier feudal society and modern society. Modern clothing not only bids farewell to the strict class difference, but also tends to be more personalized and diversified. With the rapid development of science and information technology, communication between people increases and the trend of globalization is also becoming more and more prominent in clothing.

3) Special Positioning of Social Occupation

Since social division of labor, occupation has emerged as the times requires. The clothing targeting at special occupation is different from our daily clothing, and the former usually is the specified costume in a company or collective unit, or is specifically required by a kind of occupation.

4) Effective Interpretation of Personalization

Entering the new century, the integration trend appears in domestic and foreign clothing style. However, people cultivate their own independent aesthetic ability in the fashion and dress style is gradually diverse. Clothing language

conveys the wearer's personal characteristics. Clothing beautifies human body, distinguishes one another, symbolizes human life, conveys the wearer's personal information and shapes people's personal social role at the same time.

5) *Reconstruction of Personal Image*

Human's self denial promotes self perfection. It's a law of development, in which people pursue new things and reform and carry forward old things. People are always looking for a sense of belonging in a group and expecting to get the approval of others so as to adapt to the requirements of the group. In order not to fall behind the times, human beings choose to update and change constantly. This chance in fact is that people purposely shape their own social roles to obtain a sense of belonging in a community.

6) *Film and TV Costume*

From the previous description of definition of role, we can know that the word "role" is derived from the field of drama. In film and TV works, it's the virtual character created by the creator according to the plot. Clothing's role shaping ability is very outstanding. If the same person plays multiple roles, apart from body language, clothing plays the most important role. Performing costume is designed according to special requirements and performers passively accept dress modeling. The former is human's influence on clothing while the latter is clothing's influence on character. Flow processes of the two are different, but they reflect the essence of shaping of the same role.

C. *Role Shaping under Varied Form of Identity*

Humans often play multiple roles in daily life, such as parents and children in family and staff and so on. Role is an abstract concept, which doesn't refer to a specific person. It essentially reflects a kind of social relation and a specific individual is the player of a specific role. Affected by social relations, people's expectations for dress behaviors of different roles are different. Of course, in the process of role change, psychological conflict between the individual and clothing is inevitable; especially that career apparel generally suppresses the performance of personal emotion and personality, which also promotes the development of personalized day dress.

D. *Psychological Demand to Show Identity through Clothing*

In the process of interpersonal communication, complicated emotional relationship between people is generated. Everyone is eager to get recognition and respect from others and modifies themselves comprehensively from the inside to the outside to achieve the expected social recognition. As an evident symbolic language, clothing is the external form which can mostly reflect personal identity. As to people's showing of identity, clothing's role shaping is the most effective means and it conforms to people's psychological demand to pursue social recognition.

E. *Conclusion*

Under the influence of social and political elements in earlier feudal society, dress standard is strictly limited by the

political ruler and people passively receive role shaping and identity representation of clothing under the restraint of regulation. However, in modern society, class difference idea is greatly removed. It seems that people are free to choose way of dressing, but clothing still participates in shaping of human's social identity due to constraints of social occupation, personal economic ability, knowledge, personality, taste and so on. Through description of role shaping function of film and TV costume and examples of role shaping in varied form of identity, non-verbal language function of clothing is enlarged continuously to find out the commonality of clothing's role shaping function. From it, the influence of clothing psychology is analyzed and thus a complete scientific structure is formed, which lays the great theoretical foundation for the research and exemplifies at the same time.

IV. SOCIAL IDENTITY RETURNING TO THE VALUE SYSTEM OF CLOTHING

A. *Introduction*

Like language, clothing silently tells about people's temperament, age, occupation, personality and so on. Returning to the value system of clothing, we still need to further discuss and explore its symbolic language to learn about identity's restraint and influence on clothing and to find out the interaction rule between identity and clothing.

B. *Identity—Expression of Human Society's Existence Value*

Identity usually covers some specific characteristics of a person in the society, such as gender, class, race, religion, occupation, language and so on. We generally take human identity as "social identity". Identity goal and pursuit play a dominant role in the formation of life values in human's social development. People form the ordered division of labor and cooperation in social life and continue the harmonious development of material and spiritual civilization in the competition.

C. *Influence of Identity on the Structure of Clothing*

1) *Dress and Dressing*

Clothing socializes human body and provides a means to give it meaning and identity. The social clothing is in the state of wearing, which needs the body's structural participation to form a complete structure existing in the society. Due to clothing's social role shaping function, the existence of social identity restrains the extended range of clothing behavior. Since the non-verbal system of clothing directly conveys the wearer's personal information to others in the society, it's necessary for the wearer to follow the identity positioning of the society to dress in order to meet his/her own psychological needs and obtain social recognition in social groups.

2) *Historical and Social Mandatory Factor of Body*

Body has a long history. Under the dominance of social customs, apart from appreciation of art, naked body is inappropriate. The body in dressing state conforms to the microcosmic social order, which has been involved in the scope of the study of sociology.

D. Conclusion

It's a scientific method to carry out the total construction of sociology research on clothing and the sociality of body. If clothing is discussed without human, the sociality, behavioral psychology and even the symbolic language of clothing will cease to exist. The reasons are as follows: If getting away from human's social needs, clothing is just a piece of cloth after sewing, having no existence value; if there is no wearer's psychological factor of social identity recognition and self perfection, clothing won't be needed by humans any more; if there is no social role of human, the symbolic language and symbolic meaning of clothing will become blank. The basic value of clothing lies in that it's both needed and used by human. When social identity returns to the value system of clothing, the dynamic relation of identity, clothing and social culture is also scientifically formed.

V. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

A. Main conclusion

This paper starts from the research on role shaping function of clothing and discusses the interactive relation between identity and clothing. Clothing evidently tells human's social identity in symbolic language. In modern society, it's necessary to dress reasonably according to human's social identity, otherwise, unbalance will appear and people won't get recognition from others. Clothing's role shaping function is evitable to exist, which participates in the formation of clothing's value system. Clothing will always dominate human's dress idea and image shaping, like symbols.

B. Prospect of Future Research Work

In this paper, integration and separation of the relation between clothing and identity are conducted and demonstrated in various relevant theories and disciplines, thus enhancing the cognition of clothing's role shaping function from perceptual stage to rational stage and deepening clothing's role shaping function to its value system. However, as to social research on role shaping function, since it involves a wide range of contexts, so there are some difficulties and more research efforts should be made. At present, people's dress taste tends to be personalized and diverse, so designers need to grasp the pulse of the times in the difficult design context and lead the fashion trend so that consumers are willing to invest in the visual currency of clothing, thereby strengthening their own identity and taste. As to the implicit language of the times during the development process of clothing, further research needs to be conducted, thus interpreting the language of clothing both in theory and in practice to promote the development of clothing.

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