

The Inheritance and Innovation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Opera Art in Contemporary Literature

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Abstract: This article aims to deeply explore the complex picture of inheritance and innovation presented by the collision and integration of opera art and contemporary literature from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage. The research goes beyond the superficial theory of subject matter transplantation and focuses on the core issue of how the aesthetic genes of traditional Chinese opera are internalized by contemporary literature and stimulate formal changes. The thesis first analyzes how the patterns, images and motifs of traditional Chinese opera are transformed into narrative strategies, poetic Spaces and speculative resources of literature, achieving the creative transformation of aesthetic genes. Furthermore, it discusses the modern narrative experiments and formal subversion of the traditional opera carried out by contemporary literature through reconstructing time and space, deconstructing roles and blending language styles. Finally, this paper critically reflects on the internal tensions between authenticity and disruption, elitism and popularization in the innovation process, and prospectively proposes that in the future, the paradigm elevation should move from "element borrowing" to "spiritual integration". This study holds that truly successful inheritance does not lie in replicating forms, but rather in completing a deep dialogue and integration regeneration with modern consciousness on the basis of a profound understanding of the aesthetic spirit of traditional Chinese opera, thereby providing important theoretical references and practical paths for the dynamic inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

Under the continuous impact of globalization and modernization, intangible cultural heritage, as a typical representative of China's fine traditional culture, urgently needs to go beyond the static museum-style preservation in its protection and inheritance methods, and explore more dynamic and innovative paths that combine with contemporary cultural production. Intangible cultural heritage of opera art, integrating literature, music, dance and fine arts, contains profound national aesthetic spirit and cultural code, providing fertile soil for its creative combination with contemporary literature^[1]. Many current practices and discussions still often fall into the superficial level of simple appropriation or nostalgic writing of opera symbols, failing to deeply touch upon the creative energy that may be ignited by the in-depth dialogue between the two art forms at the

aesthetic essence and philosophical spirit levels. This article precisely attempts to systematically answer a core question against this backdrop: How can contemporary literature truly, rather than symbolically, achieve the creative inheritance and innovative development of the core aesthetic genes of Chinese opera intangible cultural heritage? By constructing a three-dimensional analytical framework that encompasses "internalization and manifestation", "formal experiments" and "paradigm reflection", this study aims to reveal the internal mechanism, brilliant achievements and the profound paradoxes hidden in this cross-border practice. This will deepen the understanding of the living inheritance laws of intangible cultural heritage at the theoretical level and provide valuable academic references for future creations at the practical level.

2. Internalization and Manifestation of the Aesthetic Genes of Intangible Cultural Heritage Opera Art in Contemporary Literature

2.1. The creative transformation from stage performance routines to literary narrative strategies

The internalization and manifestation of the aesthetic genes of intangible cultural heritage opera art in contemporary literature is by no means a simple transplantation of themes or collage of symbols, but rather a profound and complex creative transformation process. The most exquisite manifestation lies in the fact that the writers have successfully refined and reconstructed the unique stage performance patterns of traditional Chinese opera into an internal and highly tense literary narrative strategy^[2]. The comprehensiveness of "singing, recitation, acting and martial arts", the virtuality of "one table and two chairs" and the stylization of "self-introduction" in the art of traditional Chinese opera, which originally relied on the stage and the physical expression of the actors, have been ingeniously deconstructed and reinterpreted in the imaginative space of literature. Contemporary avant-garde writers are no longer content with merely telling a story about opera, but rather attempt to make the text of the novel itself "perform": They draw on the rhythmic sense of "singing and recitation" to shape the rhythm of narrative language, transforming the concept of "virtual" stage time and space into the psychological time and space structure of free leaping and interplay of reality and illusion in the novel, and even deepen the "stereotyped" role characteristics into a symbolic writing of the complex personality masks of modern people. For instance, the journey of a thousand miles that was originally hinted at by the actors' postures on stage can be achieved in literature through the rapid shift of narrative perspectives and the montage-like splicing of scenes, thereby evoking equally intense images in the readers' minds. The surging emotional conflicts within characters can also draw on the "supporting voice" or "monologue" techniques, externalizing them as the interweaving and collision of multi-voice and polyphonic narrative voices. This transformation is by no means a rigid copy but a sophisticated "adaptation". It endows literary narratives with a certain dramatic "sense of presence" and "alienation effect", inheriting the charm of traditional aesthetics while greatly enriching the narrative expressiveness of modern novels. Ultimately, it enables the ancient genes of opera to acquire a brand-new life form within the body of literature.

2.2. The Construction of the Image System in Traditional Chinese Opera and the Poetic Space of Contemporary Literature

In the creative practice of contemporary literature, the highly condensed and richly meaningful image system of intangible cultural heritage opera art has transcended the simple level of cultural symbol citation and profoundly participated in the construction and generation of the poetic space of modern texts, becoming a core poetic force that activates the dialogue between classical

aesthetics and modern consciousness^[3]. In traditional Chinese opera, imagery units such as the tender and sentimental "water sleeves", the distinction between loyalty and cunning in "facial makeup", the galloping of a thousand miles represented by the "horsewhip", and even the boundless space and time symbolized by "a table and two chairs", which have gained stable aesthetic connotations through long-term cultural accumulation, have been ingeniously appropriated, transplanted, and creatively misinterpreted and transformed by writers with a high degree of self-awareness. They do not mechanically reproduce the traditional metaphors of these images, but rather implant them into the complex context of modern narratives, causing them to collide and integrate intensely with the psychological pictures of the characters, the deep themes of the stories, and the spiritual symptoms of The Times. For instance, the dancing of the "water sleeves" might no longer merely be a stylized performance, but could transform into the core metaphor of an inner monologue in a novel about emotional bondage and liberation. Its flexible and enduring nature is employed to depict the subtle and indescribable flow of desires in modern people. Through this profound intertextuality of writing, writers not only endow traditional images with brand-new modern interpretations, but more importantly, they construct a polyphonic poetic realm that is both familiar and strange, interwoven with historical echoes and current experiences. In this field, classical imagery is like a pebble thrown into the modern water surface, and the ripples it creates simultaneously swing towards the past and the future, greatly expanding the depth and philosophical thickness of literary expression, and ultimately achieving another kind of "immaterial" yet more essential contemporary inheritance of the aesthetic spirit of opera.

2.3. Restatement and Speculation of Traditional Opera Narrative Motifs in the Context of Modernity

The traditional narrative mothemes carried by intangible cultural heritage opera art, such as loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, family, country and the world, and the retribution of good and evil, have undergone a profound transformation from one-way inheritance to multi-dimensional speculation in the creative transformation of contemporary literature. The inherent ethical paradigm and modern individual consciousness within it have formed a huge narrative tension, becoming an important field for writers to conduct cultural reflection and philosophical exploration^[4]. Contemporary avant-garde writers no longer regard these motifs as unquestionable cultural dogmas, but instead use modern humanistic spirit as a scalpel to conduct sharp dissection, questioning and subversive reconstruction of them. For instance, a classic story of "loyalty to the monarch" might be placed in the absurd circumstances of existentialism, questioning the boundary between individual loyalty and independent will. The traditional framework of "retribution for good and evil" might incorporate the depth of psychological realism, revealing the complex motives and social causes behind it, thereby disintegrating the simple moral dualism. And that kind of "happy ending" pattern is more likely to be deliberately broken in modern narratives, replaced by an open and confusing conclusion, reflecting the transformation of modern people's understanding of fate. This restatement is by no means a simple negation, but rather a dialogue with greater philosophical depth. It not only uncovers the potential interpretive space obscured by history in traditional motifs, but also projects the spiritual confusion, value pursuit and identity anxiety of modern people into it. Through this creative confrontation and integration, writers have not only achieved the contemporary discourse rebirth of intangible cultural heritage operas, but also enabled them to transcend themselves, becoming a profound and sharp prism for reflecting on cultural genes and observing the spiritual conditions of modern people. Ultimately, in the dialectical movement of deconstruction and reconstruction, they have endowed the ancient motifs with brand-new vitality and contemporary value.

3. The Modern Narrative Transformation and Formal Experiment of Contemporary Literature on the Traditional Opera

3.1. From linear "sessions" to psychological reticular spatiotemporal structure

One of the most radical formal experiments in the modern narrative transformation of traditional Chinese opera in contemporary literature is the thorough deconstruction and reconstruction of the linear and coherent "scene" spatio-temporal perspective of traditional Chinese opera, thereby creating a highly psychological, fragmented and interwoven networked spatio-temporal structure^[5]. The art of traditional Chinese opera, relying on the sequential unfolding of "exit" and "turn", constructs a relatively complete narrative world driven by physical movements and external plots. However, contemporary writers have keenly captured the discontinuity and fragmentation of modern people's consciousness. They boldly abandon this external and objective temporal logic and instead delve into the unfathomable inner universe of the characters. They drew on and transcended the freehand principle of traditional Chinese opera, which is "three or five steps to travel the world, six or seven people with a million army", and were no longer content with suggesting geographical crossing through virtual actions. Instead, they directly employed modern narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness, inner monologue, dream collage and montage editing to completely break down the physical space-time and re-weave it according to the internal logic of emotions, memories and the subconscious. At this moment, a "circle" on the stage might be transformed into a psychological association spanning several pages and decades in a novel, while a fixed dramatic scene might split into consciousness fragments that occur simultaneously in multiple temporal and spatial dimensions, reflecting each other yet conflicting with one another. This spatio-temporal transformation from "scenes" to "networks" is by no means merely a display of technical skills. It profoundly corresponds to the complex way modern subjects perceive the world, endowing textual narratives with unprecedented psychological depth and philosophical capacity. Ultimately, it has achieved an extreme and internalized contemporary development and form revolution of the freehand aesthetic of traditional Chinese opera.

3.2. From typical "trades" to complex individuals in predicaments

The modern narrative transformation of the "role" system in traditional Chinese opera in contemporary literature can be regarded as a profound aesthetic experiment that pushes the highly stylized stage models into complex individuals full of internal contradictions in the existential predicament. The role classification of "sheng, Dan, jing, mo and Chou" in traditional Chinese opera, with its distinct moral orientation, fixed personality spectrum and patterned behavioral logic, efficiently carries the ethical order and collective aesthetic consensus of traditional society. Essentially, it is a symbolized and functionalized role production mechanism. This clear and stable typology, in the perspective of modern literature, precisely becomes the starting point for its deconstruction and reshaping. Contemporary writers do not simply abandon these profound cultural archetypes, but rather use the scalpel of modernity to sharply cut open their stable external masks, persistently exploring the suppressed unconscious abyss, the disciplined emotional trauma, and the identity anxiety that leaves them at a loss in the impact of the modernity wave beneath the masks. A "male lead" who represents justice and responsibility in a traditional opera might be depicted in a novel as a tragic character who is in a moral dilemma, suffering and wandering, and full of self-doubt. A stylized "clown" may have a profound philosophical understanding and painful experience of the absurdity of existence behind its comical appearance. And an originally symbolized "Dan role" may be endowed with extremely complex psychological dimensions, demonstrating their intense struggle between social discipline and self-awakening. This

transformation implies that the narrative focus has completely shifted from the functional display of external behavior to the subtle exploration of internal psychological complexity and existential predicaments, thereby transforming characters from "typical" individuals carrying collective ideas into "complex individuals" questioning the meaning of individual existence and full of uncertainties. This process not only greatly enriched the spiritual dimension of literary characters, but also completed a profound shift from traditional ethical narrative to modern humanistic spirit, enabling intangible cultural heritage opera art to participate in the profound writing of the spiritual picture of modern people in another form.

3.3. The juxtaposition of the dialogic nature of the rhymed vernacular in traditional Chinese opera and contemporary diverse language styles

One of the most avant-garde formal experiments of contemporary literature on the traditional opera is reflected in the separation of the highly stylized and musical opera rhyme from its original stage context and the bold integration of it into a narrative flow dominated by modern vernacular Chinese and mixed with various contemporary language styles, thereby creating a polytonal text in which multiple historical era language styles are juxtaposed and collided. This creative strategy is far from a simple language collage, but rather a highly intentional "dialogic" construction: writers deliberately place concise and elegant rhymes or recitations, which are rhythmically vigorous and carry profound cultural connotations, side by side with the mundane and daily spoken language, the calm and analytical written language, and even modern diverse language styles such as Internet buzzwords. This deliberate juxtaposition of "dissonance" creates a huge sense of era dislocation and aesthetic tension within the text, generating a unique effect of alienation. On the one hand, it parodiously reveals the "unappropriateness" and awkward situation of tradition in modern society. On the other hand, the poetic radiance of classical language seems like a "strange light", suddenly illuminating the mediocrity and fragmentation of modern language. This confrontation at the linguistic level compels readers to deeply reflect on the discontinuity and continuation of cultural inheritance in the mutual reflection and questioning of the two discourse systems. Ultimately, the language of traditional Chinese opera is no longer an object to be appreciated, but rather, as an active and critical vocal subject, participates in the generation of the entire narrative's meaning. This dialogic juxtaposition not only expands the expressive dimension of literary language, but also creates a unique modern narrative style that is both fragmented and integrated, both subversive and paying tribute, achieving a creative transformation and innovative development of the traditional language of opera.

4. Contemporary Reflections and Future Paths on Cross-border Inheritance and Innovation

4.1. The paradox between the authenticity of "protection" and the disruptive nature of "innovation"

In the contemporary literary transformation of intangible cultural heritage opera art, a core and almost paradoxical internal tension is highlighted between the authenticity and stability required by "protection" and the subversive and experimental nature inherent in "innovation". The two form a complex dialectical relationship that is both interdependent and opposed to each other. The preservation of authenticity emphasizes the faithful inheritance and maintenance of traditional forms, core aesthetic genes and their cultural contexts, striving to resist the wear and tear and alienation brought about by the passage of time. However, true literary innovation essentially demands a critical examination, creative misinterpretation and even bold betrayal of form. It must re-forge tradition in the crucible of contemporary spirit, which inevitably leads to a certain degree

of deviation, deconstruction and even subversion of the original form. If authenticity is overly emphasized, it is easy for creation to degenerate into rigid symbol transfer and superficial nostalgia, losing the vitality for dialogue with the contemporary era. However, if one blindly pursues the disruptive nature of innovation, it may slide into historical nihilism, sever the spiritual connection between the text and the bloodline of traditional culture, and make innovation a rootless duckweed. Therefore, the core predicament of contemporary practice lies in how to find a dynamic balance point between these two extremes: that is, a creative transformation path that can not only deeply understand and respect the essential connotation of opera aesthetics (rather than its surface form), but also activate and reconstruct it with a profound contemporary problem awareness. This requires creators to possess both the awe of archaeologists and the rebellious courage of avant-garde artists, thus making inheritance no longer a simple preservation but a productive and future-oriented recreation.

4.2. The gap between elitist narratives and the expectations of the general public for reading

In the contemporary literary transformation process of intangible cultural heritage opera art, an increasingly prominent aesthetic dilemma of acceptance lies in the formation of an undeniable acceptance gap between its increasingly sophisticated and complex elitist narrative strategies and the existing reading expectations of the general public. When writers are dedicated to profound intertextual references, complex narrative experiments (such as meta-narratives and fragmented structures), and highly abstract reconstructions of opera symbols, their works, while earning praise from the academic community, have, in an intangible way, constructed an understanding barrier that is difficult for ordinary readers to overcome. This creative tendency presupposes an "ideal reader" who possesses professional knowledge of opera and is familiar with modernist literary techniques, yet it neglects the aesthetic habits of a broader audience - they often expect clear plot lines, recognizable emotional resonances and relatively direct interpretations of cultural symbols. This paradox reveals that if innovation merely serves the self-reference and formal revelment within the ivory tower, it may, in the pursuit of aesthetic heights, unconsciously deviate from the public nature and dissemination effectiveness that intangible cultural heritage should possess, and even make traditional culture become more distant and isolated under the guise of "innovation". Therefore, the future path does not mean giving up the depth of artistic exploration to cater to superficial consumerism. Rather, it requires, on the premise of adhering to aesthetic features, actively exploring narrative harmony strategies that are more communicative and intelligent. For instance, embedding more relevant emotional threads and contemporary issues within complex text structures as a bridge to guide readers, or using cross-media narratives (such as collaborations with film and television, animation, and games) as converters. Transform the core of elite literature into more accessible and diverse artistic experiences; It is also possible to retain a certain level of "readability" in the creation process, so that readers of different levels can all obtain corresponding aesthetic entry points. The ultimate goal is to establish a new creative balance between "reaching a high level" and "harmonizing with the masses", so that the literary transformation of intangible cultural heritage not only retains its aesthetic avant-garde nature but also truly achieves the social breadth and cultural appeal necessary for dynamic inheritance.

4.3. The paradigm elevation from "element borrowing" to "spiritual integration"

After going through numerous practices of the intangible cultural heritage of opera art, from form imitation to element borrowing, the cross-border inheritance of contemporary literature is now facing a crucial paradigm elevation: that is, moving from the superficial and symbolic "element borrowing" to the deeper and creative "spiritual integration". This is not only the key to solving the

mentioned many predicaments, but also the fundamental turn to open up the future path. Simple "element borrowing" often content itself with embedding explicit cultural symbols such as facial makeup, water sleeves, and singing lyrics as decorative images within the text. Although they are decorative, they tend to be superficial and may even fall into the trap of cultural consumerism. The concept of "spiritual integration" requires the creative subject to deeply immerse themselves in the aesthetic core and cultural philosophy of opera art, and to carry out a profound modern transformation of the Eastern way of thinking, life perspective and cosmic concept behind its freehand, virtual and stylized nature. This means that writers no longer view opera as an external, detachable resource library, but rather as an internal aesthetic cultivation and a spiritual perspective for observing the world, enabling it to undergo a profound chemical reaction with the survival experiences, emotional structures and philosophical thinking of contemporary people. Ultimately, what literary creation will produce will no longer be modern stories dressed in the guise of opera, but a new artistic paradigm that is steeped in the aesthetic spirit of opera and fully belongs to this era, with a high degree of originality. This paradigm elevation marks the leap of inheritance from the technical level to the ontological level, thereby truly achieving the creative regeneration and value maximization of intangible cultural heritage genes in the contemporary context.

5. Conclusions

This study, through systematic and stratified discussion, reveals that the interaction between intangible cultural heritage opera art and contemporary literature is a multi-level and in-depth one, ranging from aesthetic genes, narrative forms to cultural paradigms. Research shows that successful inheritance and innovation are by no means passive transplantation or simple collage, but rather an active and sometimes even paradoxical creative transformation process. Contemporary literature, through a modern reinterpretation of the conventions, imagery and motifs of traditional Chinese opera, not only endows the ancient art with a brand-new literary vitality, but also greatly expands the expressive dimensions and philosophical depth of its own narrative. However, this process is also accompanied by an inherent tension between authenticity and subversion, elitism and massification, warning that innovative practices must avoid falling into rootless formalism or self-admiring ivory tower predicaments. Ultimately, this article holds that the core path for the future lies in achieving a paradigm elevation from "element borrowing" to "spiritual integration", which requires creators to delve into the spiritual core of opera aesthetics, transforming its aesthetic principles of freehand brushwork, virtuality, and stylization into a unique way of thinking for observing the modern world, thereby creating great works that are deeply rooted in traditional essence while also radiating contemporary spirit. Only in this way can intangible cultural heritage operas truly transcend their original artistic forms and achieve an immortal "immaterial" immortality in the vast realm of literature, providing an extremely wonderful example for the creative transformation and innovative development of China's fine traditional culture.

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