

## **Research on "Gender Cross-linking" in Film and Television Works from the Perspective of Queer Theory**

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**Abstract:** Queer theory is a cultural theory of sexuality and gender that holds that gender identity and sexual orientation are not innate, but are formed through social and cultural processes. From the perspective of queer theory, this paper makes an in-depth study of the phenomenon of "gender cross-linking" in film and television drama works. Gender cross-linking, as a unique artistic expression technique, plays an important role in film and television drama works. By analyzing the historical origin, forms of expression and social and cultural significance of gender cross-linking, this paper discusses the inner connection between queer theory and gender cross-linking, and how this connection provides a new perspective for the creation and interpretation of film and television works.

**Keywords:** Queer Theory; Film and Television Drama Works; Gender Cross-pollination; Technique of Artistic Expression

### **1. Introduction**

Social gender is proposed by American anthropologist Gail Rubin, which refers to the social norms or temperament of the gender that the society assigns to the roles, behaviors, activities, attributes, opportunities or relationships that are considered to be related to women or men according to the biological sex of the individual. Unlike sex, gender is set by society, not determined by nature. Gender is a cultural factor that emphasizes the characteristics and differences of gender roles and temperament formed by men and women in social and cultural contexts. [1]

Gender research is an important way of thinking in the field of humanities and social sciences, which focuses on the generation and representation of gender temperament, the

division of labor and mechanism of gender roles, and the construction and identification of gender identity. Gender is first of all physiological, it is the characteristics of the living body itself, gender also has psychological significance, it is a person's inner gender identity, is an important dimension of gender cognition. [2]

Gender cross-linking, as a unique artistic expression technique, has been shown more and more in film and television drama works. It usually refers to an actor acting in a role of the opposite sex by not considering his or her sex. This form of performance not only enriches the diversity and expressiveness of drama, but also challenges traditional gender concepts and role positioning. From the perspective of queer theory, gender cross-linking has become an important cultural phenomenon and artistic practice, which provides a new perspective for the creation and interpretation of film and television drama works. Based on queer theory, this paper conducts an in-depth study on the theory of "gender rehearsal", and then combines it with gender cross-linking behaviors in film and television works to explore the deep connection between the two.

### **2. Queer Theory**

The term "queer theory" was first used by the famous American feminist Loides in 1991 in the "Lesbian and Gay Sex" issue of *Difference* magazine. She coined the term to replace the meaning of gay and lesbian in order to understand the multiplicity of sexuality and put it in their respective historical context. In her view, "queer" expresses differences in a broad picture of sexual and social diversity.

Liu Yumin mentioned: "As one of the three founders of queer theory, Judith Butler laid the conceptual framework and theoretical foundation for queer theory from the

philosophical dimension, and is a pioneer of queer theory. She questioned the stability of the subject from the opposites of heterosexuality and homosexuality in queer theory. She believes that the person as the subject does not exist at the beginning, it itself is constructed in a process, we can not bypass language to speak the subject in advance, and the subject can only be reproduced through language. Butler's subjective view unmasks the mystery of heterosexual matrix. In the process of continuous formation, the subject is divided into male and female binary opposites by means of physiological classification by power. Thus, the created subject prescribes heterosexual hegemony, which in turn consolidates the gendered body through binary gender attributes, confining identity to the discourse category, and in turn, this logic consolidates naturalized subject status." [3]

### **2.1 Main Contents**

Queer theory challenges the binary structure of heterosexuality and homosexuality as social "normalcy". The so-called normality mainly refers to heterosexual institution and heterosexual hegemony; Challenging the binary structure of male and female, challenging all strict classifications, its main critical target is the dominant Western way of thinking, the binary way of thinking. Queer theory offers a way of expressing desire that will completely shatter gender and sexual identities, both heterosexual and homosexual. Queer theory questions gay and lesbian identity itself, criticizes static notions of identity, and proposes a concept of flow and change. Queer theory treats gay and lesbian identity not as something with fixed content, but as diffuse, local, and changing. For some, identity is performative, created by interactions and role shifts.

Liu Yan said, "Queer theory is a very subversive theory. It will revolutionize the way people think, make all exclusive minorities seem narrow, and give people the weapons and the power to break away from all conventional ideas. Queer theory therefore has great vitality, and it shows us the dawn of a new century." [2]

### **2.2 Gender Performance**

The field of gender studies emerged alongside women's studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Theorists emphasize the idea that for this theory, the lines between gender identities are highly permeable and artificial. Theorists began to think of all gender as "performance," an imitation rather than an essence.

Butler's theory of "performance" is of special importance. She believes that people's homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual behavior does not come from a fixed identity, but is a constantly changing performance, like an actor. This performance is a "gender" performance about masculinity and femininity. This kind of performance makes people understand what is the binary system of biological sex and social gender.

The body is born out of this heavy social norm, and through repeated references to the performance of oneself, gender identity is constructed through a series of repeated performance behaviors, which are governed by the norms of social and cultural discourse, so that gender conforms to the norms and is consolidated. Gender identity is constructed through language, and there was no gender identity before that. Since both biological sex and social gender are constructed by discourse, we cannot distinguish between biological sex and social gender, and can only say that gender is formed in some continuous behavioral production. Du Lanlan put forward that "the generation of these behaviors is subject to discourse rules and practices, and it is these continuous discourse norms that stylize the gender of the body and temporarily stabilize the gender." [4] According to this, the nature of gender is not a fixed identity, but the repetition of a set of behaviors that conform to gender norms. Liu Yumin put forward: "The formation of gender identity needs continuous expression and practice, and these behaviors are not the essence of gender identity, so gender identity is formed through the rehearsal of gender expression, first there is the rehearsal behavior, then the gender identity, which is the gender rehearsal theory proposed by Judith Butler." [3]

### **3. Gender Performance and Cross-Dressing in Film and Television**

As one of the first ways of performing traditional Chinese opera, cross-dressing refers to the scene in which actors act in a play

different from their own profession. "Gender cross-dressing" refers to a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, and the dressers act themselves as a role of another gender through transgender dress, in order to achieve a certain stage effect. With the continuous development of media technology and the continuous change of social culture, movies and TV dramas have gradually introduced the performance form of "gender cross-dressing". For example, in "A Dream of Red Mansions", the actress Lin Qingxia transacted the male role Jia Baoyu, the male actor Cheung Guorong transacted the female role Yu Ji in "Farewell My Concubine", and the female actor Ye Tong transacted the male role Xu Xian in "The Legend of the New White Lady", which left the audience with profound visual and psychological feelings and resonance. The performance form of "gender cross-dressing" has been further accepted by the public. According to the rehearsal theory of queer theory, gender itself is the result of people's continuous performance, so gender cross-dressing performance is essentially the result of imitating and repeating the gender description of human beings.

### **3.1 Gender Transmutation**

Based on cross-dressing performance, Judith Butler proposes that cross-dressing performance is a kind of cross-dressing performance in a cultural sense, and the core of its gender theory is performability. The so-called "gender performance" means that "I" shape myself into a subject with the existing social gender characteristics by repeatedly playing or imitating them, and form an expression behavior of my social gender [5]. In other words, gender is not an inherent attribute of human beings [6], and the formation and internalization of gender roles is the main product of gender socialization, that is, gender individuals realize individual socialization by practicing the representational image of a certain gender role through gender identity. As a special cultural landscape, gender performance blurs the boundaries of social gender and is regarded as a challenge to social order and gender norms. Its practice reflects the essence of social gender construction, that is, performance obtains social identity or gender identity in line with

social cognition through the occupation of gender symbols.

Liu Chengcheng proposed: "Cross-dressing is embodied in two forms, one is the cross-dressing relationship between the gender of the performer and the gender of the performance, that is, the performance form of "male disguised as female "or" female disguised as male ". This kind of gender performance changes the gender attribute presented by the main body of the performer through the modification and camouflage of the dress, makeup and language of the performer. However, this form of gender performance does not fundamentally change the gender expectations and gender requirements of different genders in society, but strengthens the connotation as a social symbol of traditional gender, so that the audience has a deeper impression of traditional gender. Another form of gender performance is that the traditional gender expectation of the performer forms a cross-relation with the gender expectation presented by the performance. In this kind of gender performance, more of the gender symbols are realized through the combination of physical appearance, behavior and language. For example, female performers express certain gender characteristics or gender expectations contrary to traditional female gender cognition through relatively neutral or traditional masculine clothing shapes, movement forms and media environment creation, but they do not appear on stage as so-called "male" or play "male" identity, and their performance gender is still the same as their biological gender. This kind of cross-pollination "performance" may also be a real personality presentation, only with the help of the media to express. This process of reframing gender expectations is at the heart of cross-gender performance." [7]

### **3.2 Cross-Pollination of the Role of Cheng Dieyi in Farewell My Concubine**

The role transformation of Cheng Dieyi includes two contents, one is the gender transformation to achieve the similarity between him and Yu Ji, and finally put on the cloak of not being crazy and not surviving; the second is the reunderstanding of the overlord and sublimation. Both external and internal factors contribute to Cheng Dieyi's distorted psychology. At the beginning of the film, it is

implicitly introduced that Cheng Dieyi has a mother who is a prostitute. Freud mentioned that in the eyes of children, fathers are often regarded as protectors, educators and idealized images of their future. Fathers are regarded as role models and imitated by children's cognition, so that their own behaviors are more and more compatible with their fathers. The absence of Cheng Dieyi's biological father led him to imitate his mother without an object, which foreshadowed Cheng Dieyi's gender confusion later. The mother cut off the "six fingers" of the bean, and this castration is the bean as a sign of male castration into the Cheng butterfly, which can also be extended to Laura Mulvey's "castration threat", which is the first process of the bean's transformation into a woman. But at this time in Cheng Dieyi's subconscious or as a male. Then little stone with a bong after the mouth of the bean's face appeared obsessed, intoxicated expression shows that Cheng Dieyi completed the gender transition, became a female role.

In Chinese traditional Confucian culture, there exists men's satisfaction of women's desire, that is, women are the existence of secondary sex attached to men. Gender cross-dressing performance imitates the traditional gender image to achieve a high degree of internal and external conformity. Male self performers assign gender symbols with the "soft" characteristics of traditional female gender, and male body carriers are assigned the connotation of female gender symbols through visual performances such as "soft", which is opposed to traditional gender cognition and gender expectations. In the era of visual culture created by physical carnival, the body as a symbol has become the norm of narrative communication [8]. The common nature of body media makes the transmission of emotions more prominent. When emotions are expressed by body media, they can be closer to reality than imagination, thus evoking hidden emotional resonance [9]. In terms of visual image, according to the principle of color psychology, different color environments bring different psychological feelings and emotional effects to the audience. Compared with the traditional female Juxian's red expression, Chen's color application in Cheng Dieyi presents a discontinuous color effect. The so-called separation, is the film in the performance of Cheng Dieyi less use of

positive red, but choose the derivative color of red, one is to reflect the ferocious violence of scarlet, the other is romantic, fantasy light pink.

In "Gender Trouble," Butler refers to the performance of gender, that is, the manifestation of one's sexual identity through behavior and expression. In this kind of fake, very confusing cross-dressing performance, people often through clothing, makeup and other means to simulate the characteristics of another gender, so that people are difficult to distinguish its true gender, resulting in the boundaries between real and false become blurred, difficult to distinguish. Therefore, this cross-dressing performance can only show that the relationship between biological sex and social gender is accidental, rather than inevitable. Liu puts it this way: "Butler found dress-ups inherently subversive, arguing that dress-ups revealed the inherent contingency of gender identity, but later works denied that dress-ups could be an example of subversion. In the preface to the reissue of Gender Trouble, she emphasizes that cross-dressing is not a proper, imitative expression of gender, but rather an act that challenges gender dualism. By dressing up, people can break through traditional gender boundaries and display gender characteristics that are different from their biological sex, thus revealing the limitations of gender cognition and violence." [3](e.g., **Figure 1.**)



**Figure 1. Cheng Dies Dress in Cool Colors**  
Chinese scholars have studied the causes of homosexuality in China and found that in addition to genetic factors, education and upbringing environment have a greater impact on homosexual orientation. Cheng Dieyi's gender orientation is not the result of her nature, but the product of forced distortion of

human nature by external forces in a specific historical period and a specific living environment, and the result of alienation under the violent intervention of historical and cultural environment. As a "drama fan", Cheng Dieyi has an obsession and a yearning pursuit attitude towards the outstanding performances on the stage, especially Yu Ji's artistic image. I am a woman, I am the next concubine." In gender performance, the physical performance with the purpose of gender construction is creating a special field with gender consciousness. In this field, all performances may be linked with the exclusive attributes of gender, and the interactive attribute of new media accelerates the emotional mobilization and resonance among groups. (e.g., **Figure 2**)



**Figure 2. Cheng Die Yi "into" a Woman**

### 3.3 Gender Performance and Cross-Dressing in the Barbie Movie

The second largest category of gender cross-dressing, that is, the appearance of clothing does not have too obvious "transgender", but it deeply shows the cross-dressing of male and female temperament. The movie "Barbie" tells the story of a classic Barbie, played by Margaret Robbie, living in Barbie land, affected by unknown reality forces, life and body are no longer perfect, so she must travel to the real world to get her life back on track. "Barbie" from the beginning of the paradise dream, the classic Barbie from the Barbie park to the "real world", but also let the movie map the reality of our time and space. In Barbie, the status of women is completely reversed, women are subjectivized and idealized, and men are marginalized and disadvantaged. Although Ken wears traditional "male" clothing and has a traditional male body in Barbie Park, Ken plays the role of "female" temperament in Barbie Park, and they do not know and feel that everything is taken for granted, and then come to the human world after "power"

competition with Barbie and finally return to "equal rights".

The constant changes in society, culture, politics and economy constitute a new era context, which also leads to the constant change and improvement of gender context. As times change, so do gender norms. Millett emphasizes that, in fact, "the role of sex is taken as the status of sex" [10], so sexual politics, in order to be recognized, has to create the "socialization" of men and women in terms of temperament, role, and status. This extreme inversion of the film grafts on the deep understanding of masculinity and femininity. This gender cross-dressing is different from the normal understanding of transgender men and women, but reflects the opportunity for gender performance given by the social environment, according to Butler's gender performance, the so-called "gender performance" is "I" through repeated, Its practice reflects the nature of social gender construction, that is, performers obtain social identity or gender identity in line with social cognition through the possession of gender symbols. Through the "re-meaning" of gender, performers constantly repeat social behaviors to form specific gender norms in the ritual dimension, and generate gender subjects and gendered realities through discourse power and norms in the linguistic dimension [11], and such gender norms constantly adjust and update cultural meanings in the changing symbolic meanings of gender symbols. This kind of dynamic construction can, in a sense, dissolve the gender meaning forcibly constructed by the original repetitive social norms, and create the "possibility of reconstruction" for the body and gender meaning itself [12].(e.g., **Figure 3.**)



**Figure 3. Barbie and Ken in the "Barbie" Movie**

#### **4. Gender Performance and Gender Cross-Pollination and Their Social and Cultural Significance**

##### **4.1 Identity Construction of Gender Socialization**

In the socialization of performance, Fuman emphasizes that performance tends to become institutionalized with the expectations of the rigid form it arouses, and that it tends to have a meaning and stability beyond the concrete work carried out in its name. Performance and the social expectations assigned in the performance are consistent with the general social cognition, which is the ultimate goal of performance, that is, performance is to integrate certain characteristics into the social identity framework and be recognized by most social groups, and the essence of gender performance should be the same.

Performers integrate their self-living habits and certain characteristics into their daily performance details, and desire similar expectations and satisfaction in the gender field. Viewers can realize the role projection on the performers, and desire to obtain a more general sense of identity, capital, and behavior in the performance context. The interaction between the group level circles is based on the operation rules and logic of the gender circle in line with the cognitive framework of socialization, so gender performance must enable gender symbols to complete the assignment of meaning and power in the process of socialization. At the structural level, the social value orientation and role norms and expectations of gender are the key to the formation and presentation of gender culture and gendered ideology, and socialization gender plays an important role in the construction and stability of gender structure in the social structure.

##### **4.2 Gender Cross-Pollination Promotes Harmonious Gender Relations**

In recent years, social hot topics such as "feminism" and "gender equality" have continued to ferment in the Internet public opinion field and won wide attention. Let the "gender opposition" craze spread rapidly in the Internet field, most of the female audience support the bold ridicule of men, while most of the male audience think that it is demeaning

and insulting to men. The idea of "either/or" is a gender-opposite way of thinking, thinking that one party is valued, the other will be ignored, and it is difficult to find a balance between the two. In this mode of thinking, from the normal collision of ideas into endless emotional catharsis, the two sexes can not understand each other, and constantly consume themselves in the "public opinion war" of gender opposition.

"Men and women are different" comes from "Li Ji · Effect Characteristics", which means that men and women have great differences in physiological structure and psychological state, so the rites to be observed are different. The differences in male and female physical features, ways of thinking and emotions all come from genetic differences. However, it is precisely the existence of these differences that makes the performance of gender cross-dressing gain the love of both male and female audiences. Although they are in different gender positions, the audience can be resonated through the scene recreation performance of gender cross-dressing.

##### **4.3 Presentation of Diversity of Gender Temperament**

With the increasing development and changes of social culture, the gender concept of the public has gradually changed, and various fields have also opened the era of male economy. The popularity of "little fresh meat" has gradually increased, reflecting the gradual change of public aesthetic standards. The label of male image is no longer just "heroic" and "strong", and the "feminine" masculinity is also gradually challenging the traditional gender hegemony, and "female tough man" has also emerged one after another, further promoting the development of the diversity of male and female temperament. In this context, the development of gender cross-breeding in movies and TV dramas provides more possibilities for the diversification of masculinity and femininity.

In fact, masculine temperament and feminine temperament do not conflict, the two coexist in the society in different ways, to combine the gender temperament of cross-dressing works with the real gender temperament. Therefore, it is necessary to look at masculinity from an understanding and inclusive perspective, regard the diversified masculinity as social

progress, liberate masculinity from a single standard, and give masculinity more selectivity.

### 5. Conclusions

According to the gender rehearsal theory of queer theory, this paper explores gender performance and gender cross-linking in film and television works, and cross-linking will reveal the production mechanism of social construction of gender. The phenomenon of cross-dressing can reflect the difference between the biological body of the cross-dresser and the gender being performed. The performance of gender is to show one's gender identity through behavior and expression. In this fake, very confusing cross-dressing performance, people often through clothing, makeup and other means to simulate the characteristics of another gender. Gender cross-pollination in film and television works has emerged in an endless stream in recent years, which not only resonates with the audience, but also provides more selectivity for socialized masculinity and femininity, which is in line with the current development prospects. In addition, the improvement of social tolerance and the transformation of social aesthetics make the audience willing to accept this form of performance with a more open mind, and the cross-over "gender performance" provides a new possibility for the diversification of male and female temperament.

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