

A Comparative Study of Female Images Between Traditional Drama and Modern Drama

—Taking Two for the Road and Dou E Yuan as Examples

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Abstract: As a mature work of ancient Chinese tragedy, *Dou E Yuan* not only accuses the cruel reality of disregard for human life, but also has a great influence on later literature and drama. Up to now, it has also appeared as a classic in stage performances, teaching books, etc. Many dramas are deeply inspired by its artistry, theme and realism. The "red literary works" with the same goal as "two for the road" also need a strong political propaganda means to publicize revolutionary thoughts by means of this art form. From the perspective of female images in *Dou E Yuan* and *Two for the Road*, this paper comprehensively analyzes the embodiment of female personality characteristics, values and artistic techniques in the two dramas, and compares and investigates the characteristics, situations and changes of gender consciousness of female images in the two dramas.

Keywords: Tian Han, "two for the road", Guan Hanqing, *Dou E Yuan*

1. Introduction

Guan Hanqing, known as one of the "Four Masters of Yuan Opera", has always been popular for the richness and classics of his drama works. In particular, *Dou E Yuan*, which is based on the story of Zhou Qing, a filial woman in Tancheng, East China Sea in the Western Han Dynasty, was invaded by foreigners at that time. In order to meet the extravagant life and military needs of Mongolian aristocrats, some Mongolians who served as ministers colluded with local officials wantonly, dredged relations with money, were greedy for money, ignored the law, etc. The class wantonly exploited and oppressed the bottom, and the people's lives were miserable. There were countless corpses piled up under countless unjust cases; As a mature work of ancient Chinese tragedy, *Dou E Yuan* not only accuses the cruel reality of disregard for human life, but also has a great influence on later literature and drama. Up to now, it has also appeared as a classic in stage performances, teaching books, etc. Many dramas are deeply inspired by its artistry, theme and realism.

Tian Han, who founded Nanguo Society and tried his best to reform in the field of drama, once put forward the "three-reform theory" of "changing people, restructuring and changing drama". According to this strategy, he improved and sorted out traditional opera to some extent, which brought great social influence to opera; While cultivating outstanding drama talents, he also created many drama works. *Two for the Road* is one of the famous plays created by Tian Han. Its story selects a

special historical turning point as the background: Western countries invaded China, which led to China's decline from feudal society to semi-feudal and semi-colonial, and the economic market was controlled and the land was occupied; In addition, the revolution organized and established in Shanghai in the early days failed to succeed, and the heavy failure made the morale of the Communist Party low. Then, due to the turbulent period, the revolution turned into a secret underground, and Shanghai became a chaotic place where all forces fought against each other. It also combines two cases with great influence at that time: the Shanghai vendor incident on November 30, 1946 and the Shen Chong case in Beijing on December 24 of the same year. The "red literary works" with the same goal as "*two for the road*" also need a strong political propaganda means to publicize revolutionary thoughts by means of this art form. The purpose is to guide the people to understand the dark side of society and the responsibilities they should shoulder, strengthen the strength and support of the people's hearts for the revolutionary freedom movement, and stimulate the people's enthusiasm for the revolutionary movement.

From the perspective of female images in *Dou E Yuan* and *Two for the Road*, this paper comprehensively analyzes the embodiment of female personality characteristics, values and artistic techniques in the two dramas, and compares and investigates the characteristics, situations and changes of gender consciousness of female images in the two dramas.

2. A Brief Analysis of the Female Images in *Dou E's Unjust--The Root of Dou E's Tragedy*

Dou E's life can be called a long way to go. When she was young, her mother died, unfortunately and her family was poor. Her father Dou Tianzhang borrowed silver from Cai Po but was unable to repay it. So, Dou E was sent by her father to Cai Po to mortgage the arrears. Dou E became the child bride of Cai Po's family and married Cai Po's children. It was only two years ago. Dou E's husband died, unfortunately, and Dou E kept filial piety and took care of Cai Po wholeheartedly. The development between tragic childhood and the subsequent plot may have already produced causal connection. While expounding Dou E's childhood experience, the author not only shapes Dou E's character, but also lays the foundation for the contradiction of drama needs, which is convenient for the development of twists and turns of plot.

One of the contradictions is the conflict between Zhang Lver's father and son and Dou E Cai Po. At that time, Chinese society presented a patriarchal feudal hierarchy, which was based on the strict division of classes, the legal support for patriarchy in the family system and the social system of inequality between men and women. Zhang Lver, a local ruffian, saw that Cai Po and Dou E were just weak women who could not help themselves, and coveted Dou E's appearance, so he threatened them to give in, so that Zhang Lver and his son could marry them. However, compared with Cai Po's fear of abandoning ethics, Dou E showed an extremely determined attitude and refused to give in, and even accused Cai Po of disobeying chastity and forgetting ethics. Shameful behavior: Looking closely at the completely different attitudes of Dou E and Cai Po, we can see that the conflicts between the four people revolve around chastity and ethics. From the feudal patriarchal male system at that time, the existence of ethics limited women's norms: women were required to abide by chastity and ethics, and three obedience and four virtues [1]. Dou E's resolute attitude also confirmed the values instilled by the times and the female group image of three obedience and four virtues: supporting feudal ethics, observing the requirements of women stipulated by society and regulating themselves [2].

On the other hand, it is reflected in the feudal ethics of "filial piety", which is regarded as a traditional virtue in China. In the past, the concept of "filial piety" required children to support and love their parents, and "filial piety" also had the standard for others to measure their moral character. However, ironically, the traditional virtue of "filial piety" has become a butcher's knife to force Dou E to give in and plead guilty in the play. The government who received bribes from Zhang Lver

ignored Dou E's grievances and chose to use the "truth" that Zhang Lver slandered Dou E's innocence as reality, using lynching to force Dou E to extort confessions and admit "crimes". After several attempts failed, Dou E finally threatened to impose capital punishment on Cai Po.

Feudal ethics, which bound and influenced Dou E, Dou E's tragedy is the epitome of many people at the bottom who were squeezed in cruel reality, and it is also the projection of countless women who were destined to be attached to patriarchy and humble status in feudal society: no matter how well they were, filial and gentle, they could never escape the unfair treatment in feudal society. There is no doubt that Dou E is a perfect and representative tragic female image, which represents the encounter and tragedy of women's fate under the restriction of contemporary society [3]. Although there have been several special cases, such as Hua Mulan joining the army, Meng Lijun taking the top exam, female Xu Feng Suzhen, etc., they are very few people who step out of the narrow cage, but they still can achieve such "rebellious" behavior through the disguise of gender identity. The fate of women is so small under the torrent of the passage of the times. Hua Mulan may be the freedom that countless women yearn for in their hearts, but it is only used by people at that time.

2.1. On the Three Female Images in Tian Han's Two for the Road--Women in the Revolutionary Era

The first is Mrs. Wang Liang Ruoying, whose identity represents intellectuals who have come into contact with the introduction of Western ideas. At first, at the end of Qing Dynasty, Western countries invaded China in one fell swoop, which led to China's decline from feudal society to semi-feudal and semi-colonial; the economic market was controlled, the land was occupied, the former economic system completely collapsed, and people's lives were difficult to maintain. At the same time, to a certain extent, the Western forces also disintegrated the feudal society that had stood for a long time at that time. In order to save the nation from peril and develop the national economy, the reformists who advocated political reform and saved the national crisis were born, and the status of women also changed during this period, including the reform movement vigorously promoted the abolition of bad habits in feudal society and improved the social status of women, which broke the shackles and control of feudal thoughts in the past and initially awakened women's awareness of pursuing equality; The revolutionary cause is to meet the needs of people to fight against Western forces.

With the awakening of women's consciousness, many women have joined the movement of emancipating women's minds, among which the more successful one is that the goal of women's intellectual rights has been realized. Some women can receive education and come into contact with Western women's thoughts, such as equality between men and women, feminism, feminism, the birth of new women, etc. Along with these women's thoughts, there are also legal systems, such as relaxation and remarriage of marriage, freedom of mate selection, modern life (life concept is different from tradition, Westernization of Shanghai is urgent, and the rich class pursues luxury and enjoys the trend of novel life, clothing suits, dancing in dance halls, etc.)

In the play, Liang Ruoying once had her first husband, but out of the pursuit of wealth, her husband mysteriously disappeared, and values compared with life. At that time, Shanghai women were influenced by Western thoughts and gradually abandoned the rules of traditional ethics; As an intellectual, Liang Ruoying can feel the people's present situation after social unrest more objectively and clearly, and pursue life more. She is revolutionary and emancipated, and at the same time, she also has a compromise on cruel reality. Liang Ruoying, who couldn't find a husband, didn't want to give in to her work. In the end, she chose a man with good conditions to "get married". She became the wife of Wang Zhongyuan's cohabitation, which corresponded to the phenomenon of choosing to live together at that time [4]. Many women in Shanghai were popular with extramarital affairs. It is normal to live with men with good conditions and abandon their husbands; However, in the social era, the fate of women living in this way is not good. On the bright side, there is no voice of resistance

or resistance to this kind of extramarital affair. However, judging from the situation in Shanghai at that time, the fate of this behavior is either more and more dissolute, no longer taking care of it, or dying suddenly, ending a short and extravagant life... After being abandoned by Wang Zhongyuan, Liang Ruoying broke away from the environment that has always blinded her heart. After learning that the future expounded by the revolution is bright and brilliant, she suddenly repented [5].

Compared with Ruoying's pursuit of quality of life, Liu Jinmei, a female worker at the bottom of the drama, represents the oppressed people at the bottom, who are struggling to maintain their lives. She was raped by the Japanese army for no reason. At that time, when Western women's thoughts were first contacted by Chinese women with better assets, many women living at the bottom from remote mountainous areas or rural areas fled from the war, coupled with the rising prices and the urgency of survival in Shanghai. In addition, due to the rise of textile and cigarette industries, countless factories were established, so the number of female workers in Shanghai was constantly increasing.

Although the women's liberation movement ushered in the protection of intellectual property rights, equal rights for men and women, etc., for the people at the bottom whose economic conditions are still burdens, they are still in the stage of being bound by feudal ethics, so Liu Jinmei, who has experienced rape, has undoubtedly become the target of being criticized by others. Apart from groundless rumors, more attention is paid to chastity in the old ideas, and her only atonement is to die for her sins. After her husband went blind, the factory closed down, the main force to maintain family expenses was borne by her, the stall was restricted by the police and the goods were forcibly taken away, and all the dark and painful social events appeared on her one by one. She chose to sell her body in exchange for money to make a living [6].

At that time, the revolutionary demand was able to fight against the traditional oppression, the dark side of society and even the class, Combining the background of the revolutionary era with the trend of thought of the movement, many works are required to have the theme related to the revolution, and their purpose is to actively inspire people to join in the revolutionary cause. Interestingly, many red works add "heroes" to the female images. In order to cater to the images of "female warriors" and "lesbians" urgently desired by the revolutionary movement, they often highlight their characters from their gender identity, life experience, family background and experience. On the other hand, to show women's righteousness and sacrifice for the revolutionary cause (Luo Guangbin, Yang Yiyuan's "Red Rock" and Wang Yuanjian's "Party Fees") [7], women's ideological liberation and their resistance to feudal society have become distinctive characteristics. They accept and absorb the baptism of the new era trend of thought, and they have the courage to stand up and face the reality And the courage to resist them, all these female images reveal their pursuit of ideals, souls and national destiny [8].

3. Analogy female image

3.1. Comparison of Dou E's and Liu Jinmei's treatment of family and ethics

Dou E is a woman from an ordinary family. When she was young, she was sold to Cai Jia as a child bride by her father. The education she instilled was also the rule that traditional women should obey ethical codes, which made Dou E abide by and support the norms of ethical codes for a long time. However, the social status of traditional women has always been at the bottom in the feudal patriarchal society. No matter the court politics or business, under the heavy oppression of patriarchy and law, women have always been the position that needs to depend on men's lives, forming a kind of "men are superior to women" The image of Dou E in the play is a woman with a strong sense of autonomy at the spiritual level. She is hardworking, capable, well-behaved, beautiful and filial, but under the influence of the times, she always abides by the tradition of ethics and morality, and her husband still insists on himself when he dies early, taking good care of Cai Po; However, such a

woman ended up in a tragic death. When the jailer threatened Dou E with Cai Po's safety to plead guilty, Dou E worried that Cai Po was too old to bear such criminal laws, so she sacrificed herself and took the initiative to confess her sin, doing her best to be a child's love and filial piety for her elders. At the same time, it also shows how deeply the family is bound to women at the times.

On the other hand, Liu Jinmei in *Two for the Road* is also a woman of the bottom people. Although her past is not expounded too much in the drama, she can understand the poor living conditions of Jinmei in Westernized Shanghai and can't benefit from the baptism of western women's thoughts and thoughts, and has no spare money for use. Therefore, her living environment is still bound by feudal ethics. In addition to her relatives and mother-in-law, Liu Jinmei's family also has her husband who dominates and works in the factory of Western capitalism. Originally, her family expenses were enough to support a family of three, but because of the struggle of various forces in Shanghai, she inadvertently became a poor person involved in it. Immediately afterwards, countless troubles swarmed in. Because she was invaded by the garrison and attempted suicide, their family suffered a lot of accusations and satire for no reason. The already tense family atmosphere was even more embarrassing after her husband vented his anger for Liu Jinmei but accidentally lost his sight. While the family burden oppressed Liu Jinmei, even his job would face unemployment due to the turbulent situation and changes in the economic market. After experiencing many difficulties, she was once desperate, trying her best to maintain the family relationship, take care of her husband's injury, and try to find a way out to make money. But after another failure, she finally made a choice to sacrifice herself in exchange for the money she needed to survive.

The model of "revolution plus love" changed the theme of personality liberation and love freedom in the May Fourth Movement into the theme of revolution and politics, and replaced the signifier of love with the great signifier of revolution..... "Revolution" as the highest and last only signifier. As a lofty symbol and utopia, it provided great comfort for the young people who pursued ideals and were depressed and decadent in the 1930 s, and the promise and affirmation provided a warm and brilliant destination for the lost soul. "Kuang New Year's exposition really reveals the revolutionary vision placed in the novel "Revolution Plus Love" when revolutionary literature was in full swing after the failure of revolution.

What is worth noting is the "sex" element in the drama, and the role Liu Jinmei's attitude change towards feudal ethics; In the past, when shaping women's images, they deliberately emphasized the symbol of beauty in spiritual level, but the concept of ethical gender and physical indulgence formed an opposite relationship with spirit, and the emphasis on the latter often indicated that women degenerated from themselves and were not accepted by society [9]. During the revolutionary period and the drainage of western thoughts, the liberation of women's personality, the pursuit of ideals and the freedom of sexual love are no longer limited, which makes the female characters in Tian Han's works represent the progress and change of the times.

3.2. Different displays of ending art forms

The most classic climax of Dou E's injustice is that when Dou E made three poisonous oaths before her execution, combined with the above, just like the resentment in her heart at the moment, even though she obeyed the requirements of the patriarchal social system before, she still could not escape the tragic fate of traditional women and finally succumbed to the patriarchal society. The Yuan Dynasty was invaded by foreigners and restricted by law, and the status of Han people was very low, while officials shielded each other and oppressed the people. For example, in the drama, the government, which was supposed to uphold justice for the people and pacify unjust cases, was cruel and dark to harm the people, and Dou E's accusation against heaven and earth was the crowning touch of the drama, which was embodied in Dou E's experience, which was the projection of the people's

misfortune. When the government could not be done, it was oppressed and mutilated by officials and dark society, and people were eager to uphold justice and reward the existence of good punishment.

Dou E's poisonous oath profoundly shows that after all kinds of experiences, the faint officials did nothing and took bribes, and no one rectified them. The scoundrels who slandered others "ignored" the rules of ethical codes but were not punished. They suffered unjust cases for no reason, suffered capital punishment, and were almost angry to break through. They questioned the feudal ethical codes that once implemented her life. Today's situation made her truly realize the cruelty and cold of the dark society, thus being extremely disappointed with today's society and sprouting a rebellious spirit of resolutely fighting against it [10]. The purpose of punishing heaven and earth is not only to prove her innocence by the symbol of the order of heaven and earth, but also to despair of reality. Looking at this matter from a different angle and reality, it is almost impossible. People who die in vain can't unite their dead souls to wash away unjust cases. In reality, the events of accepting bribes and taking care of human lives will only happen again and again, and the beautiful ending is more like a tiny fantasy left before the dying people die in vain. However, the artistic technique of death itself often aims to sublimate or set off the dead characters and set off the created atmosphere or spiritual concepts to the climax. The author will "Dou E"

When depicting female images in *Two for the Road*, Tian Han not only focuses on describing the inspiration released by the inner self-instinct of female images, but also brings stability to the soul and spirit, especially sees the definition of "new female" in Tian Han's mind [11]. In the ending of the drama, the three women get together by chance, comfort and encourage each other, until the victory of the war is announced on the flyer flying abruptly, and the three women embrace each other in the afterglow of the sunset. After the liberation war, China gradually sees the road ahead and moves towards national independence, people's happiness and the democratic road of national prosperity, which opens a turning point in history. Just like the three women, after experiencing various hardships, they sprout a new goal of consciousness awakening, idealization and strong resistance spirit, which also corresponds to the beautiful expectation and future of women facing a new life.

4. Summary

From tradition to modern times, the female images in drama present their spiritual connotation and personality characteristics under different backgrounds of the times. Through the development of the times, comparing the traditional women's deep influence of feudal patriarchal social values, it is used to reflect the oppression of women by feudal ethics system, and to express the infectious and representative symbol of traditional women's true inner visualization and epitome in drama with dramatic development; Female images no longer stick to the embodiment of values and artistic techniques, but gradually become rich and diversified. They are not limited to emphasizing noble and dignified qualities with "spiritual beauty", but also realize a new look through the combination of physical desires and thoughts. Even though female images are still in the exploration stage in the relationship between the sexes, I believe that modern dramas can shape female images: diversified absorption, changes in chastity concepts, and pursuit and exploration of physical desires. I believe these phenomena and changes also indicate that we can seek a certain balance in the relationship between the sexes and find more possibilities for female images.

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