

An Interpretation of the Cultural Implications in "Teahouse", the Treasure of Contemporary Chinese Literature

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Abstract: "Teahouse" is a play created by Lau Shaw in 1956. There are nearly 50 characters in the play. In addition to the family of the owner of the teahouse, there are many characters, such as the bannerman who is loyal to justice, the capitalist who is eager to prosper the country through industry, the treacherous eunuch, the impoverished farmer, as well as the spies, thugs, police, hooligans, physios, priests, etc. With the help of a small teahouse, it completed the description of the social unrest in China's modern decades, and showed people a unique modern history from a unique perspective. Not only that, Lao She also wrote the struggle, contradiction and change of the characters with the old way of writing, so that they are no longer the facial makeup in the drama, but the living people. By showing the choice of individuals in different times and the experience of different individuals in a unified era to show the social scene at that time, the cultural connotation of the society at that time was expressed.

Keywords: "Teahouse"; Cultural details; Literary treasure

1. Introduction

Lau Shaw's "Teahouse", only about one hundred pages long, shows us the vast history. Although this story happened in a teahouse from the beginning to the end, it is small and big, reflecting the turbulent history of the whole China. Through a simple background, the narrative of the grand historical background is completed, while taking into account the personality of the characters and the promotion of the plot. The excellence of "Teahouse" is not only reflected in the control of the historical background and its unique literariness, but also in its inheritance of the culture of the bottom citizens of Beijing. "Teahouse" records the changes of the culture of the bottom citizens of Beijing.

2. Introduction to "Teahouse"

"Teahouse" is another classic play created by Lau Shaw, a modern writer, in 1956. The play shows the social changes of nearly half a century in the three eras of the Reform Movement of 1898, the early stage of warlordism and the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Through the changes of teahouses and the life profiles of various characters in them, the dark and decadent social reality at that time was reflected. As the author said, "The teahouse is a place where all kinds of people meet, and can accommodate all kinds of people. A big teahouse is a small society. In the small society of teahouses, there is a character running through the whole play — Wang Lifa, the shopkeeper of Yutai Teahouse.

In the first act, he is young and strong, and has just inherited the booming teahouse business from his father (see Figure 1). He also inherited his father's philosophy of life. Be smart and prudent. Treat different people in different ways. In the second act, Wang Lifa is middle-aged. As a businessman, Wang Lifa is more and more timid and selfish. In order to protect his ancestors, he embezzled his helpers and scraped the oil from tenants. In order to find a way out, he pursued the trend and tried to improve. In the face of blackmail from the patrolmen, he handled it skillfully. However, his dream of becoming rich had a sharp contradiction with the dark situation of warlord melee. Although it is still as humble on the surface as in the past, there is injustice, anger and anger in its heart. Wang Lifa's fate changes, and new things appear in his character. Wang Lifa is a true portrayal of the dark society. In the third act, Wang Lifa is old (see Figure 2). In the face of the era when the US military and the Kuomintang spies were rampant, he was unable to meet his needs. At last, he could not survive. The old society swallowed up his ancestral family. He could only cry out in despair: "I have never done anything immoral or outrageous. Why don't you keep me alive?" This heartfelt confession is a vivid summary of the tragic fate of Wang Lifa.[1] In

addition to Wang Lifa, there are nearly 50 characters in the play, which focus on the whole society. As a member of the Eight Banners, Fourth elder Chang, who adhered to his patriotic sentiments, was determined to change China's reality, but Qin Zhongyi, who was defeated in the dark years, and Song Erye, the timid flag man who had no ability to make a living.



Figure 1: Young Wang Lifa



Figure 2: Old Wang Lifa

3. Cultural details in "Teahouse"

As an excellent representative of the history of contemporary Chinese literature, "Teahouse" not only truly shows the survival status of urban residents in Beijing from the Reform Movement of 1898 to the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China, but also shows people the cultural details of modern Chinese society. The excellence of "Teahouse" lies in the fact that it has completed the display of the culture of the bottom citizens of Beijing through concise language and concise three-act drama, and also achieved the display of the historical background from the Reform Movement of 1898 to the eve of the founding of New China. By showing the changes of the culture of the bottom citizens in Beijing, the importance of the social system for social development is expounded to people.

3.1. Dialect culture

"Teahouse" is a drama written by Lau Shaw according to his observation of the urban residents of modern Beijing, which records the changes of Beijing's modern society. In order to better show the face of Beijing's urban residents, he used a large number of Beijing dialect as the creative language, such as: 1 Both in the Jianghu, they are all hard-working people; A dead horse cannot live any longer, but a live

horse will die sooner or later; American needle, American thread, American toothpaste, American anti-inflammatory tablets, as well as lipstick, snow cream, glass socks fine wool. The box is small and the goods are complete, but the atomic bomb is not sold [2]. The use of Beijing dialect not only improves the readability of literary works, but also shows the open-minded and optimistic spirit of the bottom residents of Beijing in a few words. Although Beijing has suffered major disasters in modern times, the bottom residents of Beijing are still full of expectations for the arrival of a new life. In every witticism, it is not only the hard work of the bottom residents, but also the optimism and open-mindedness of the bottom residents.

3.2. Patriotism in "Teahouse"

The patriotic spirit in "Teahouse" is mainly reflected in two characters, one is Fourth elder Chang and the other is Qin Zhongyi. Fourth elder Chang is a regular customer of the teahouse. He is upright, brave, fearless of power and patriotic. He was caught and put in prison for more than one year because he said in the teahouse that "the Qing Dynasty is going to end". After coming out, he joined the Boxer and fought several wars with foreigners. "Qin Zhongyi has advocated saving the country by industry since he was 20 years old. The capital was accumulated to set up a factory in the year, which made a great success. However, later on, the factory was forcibly occupied by the Japanese. Their power was smaller than that of them, and they had to accept adversity. Although the final outcome of these two characters in the works is not perfect, their life-long portrayal shows the patriotic spirit of the bottom residents of Beijing to the audience.

3.3. Historical concepts in "Teahouse"

In "Teahouse", both Wang Lifa and Fourth elder Chang and Qin Zhongyi were at the bottom of the society at that time. Wang Lifa was diligent and prudent all his life, but he still could not keep his family. Fourth elder Chang was brave and upright, but his life was bumpy (see Figure 3). Qin Zhongyi pursued industry to save the country all his life, but finally the factory was robbed by the capitalist. It can be seen from the life experiences of the three people that every honest and kind person in the society at that time could not obtain the corresponding happiness. The root cause of this situation was the backwardness of the society. In the feudal era, the feudal rulers relied on foreign forces to consolidate their rule, and in the Republic of China, the rulers carried out civil war by squeezing national industries [3]. Only by establishing a democratic and scientific system can the rights and interests of each individual be guaranteed. Although the characters in "Teahouse" complain about the injustice of the world, this also shows the importance of social system for individuals. Although Fourth elder Chang fought, he still maintained the rule of the feudal aristocracy, so he finally failed; Although Qin Zhongyi's theory of saving the country through industry has made some progress, he did not realize the impact of social system on economic development.



Figure 3: Desperate Fourth elder Chang

3.4. Citizen culture in "Teahouse"

Wang Lifa in "Teahouse" is the main carrier of citizen culture. He inherited all the skills of the teahouse and his father to manage the teahouse business from his father. But in the first act, his superb

social skills could not solve the contradiction between the old customer, Mr. Chang, and the officers and soldiers. This, to some extent, also explains the disappearance of the culture of Beijing's bottom citizens. With the Opium War, foreign powers began to colonize China. As the capital of the Qing Dynasty, Beijing's urban culture also began to be impacted by foreign cultures. In order to adapt to the development of society, Wang Lifa has also continuously improved the teahouse, but the final result is still that the business of the teahouse is poor and there are few people left. "Teahouse" also describes the demise of Beijing's feudal urban culture to a certain extent.

3.5. The spirit of struggle in "Teahouse"

"Teahouse" reveals the importance of social system through the display of the fate of small people in the grand historical background. In this process, many people in "Teahouse" have realized the importance of social change. For example, Wang Lifa supported the operation of the teahouse by reforming the operation mode of the teahouse, Fourth elder Chang resisted the western colonialists through the Boxer movement, and Qin Zhongyi resisted the encroachment of foreign capital on the domestic economy through industry to save the country. The positive characters in "Teahouse" more or less reflect the spirit of struggle. In a sad social background, people can only obtain corresponding rights and interests through struggle.

4. The narrative structure of "Teahouse"

The narrative structure of "Teahouse" can be divided into six parts. The first part is the prologue. In the prologue of the play of "Teahouse", there is a separate scene called "monologue". It is an old man dictating his life experience. Through his memory, it shows the audience the social and historical background of that era. This part of the narration paved the plot of the whole script and led the audience into the atmosphere of that era. The second part is the first act. The first act shows the scene of a teahouse, where some elderly people chat and discuss some social, political, cultural and other topics. Lu Xun showed some contradictions and problems in the society at that time through the dialogues of these characters. At the same time, he also created some representative characters, such as officials, businessmen, priests, etc. The third part is the second act, which mainly shows the image of some farmers. They sold their land in teahouses, and also discussed their plight. Lu Xun showed the poverty and backwardness of the countryside at that time to the audience through the shaping of these peasant images. The fourth part is the third act. The plot of the third act revolves around an abducted girl. She was sold to a rich man as a concubine. This part of the plot shows the oppression and exploitation of women at that time, as well as the ugly face of the rich and noble. The fifth part is the fourth act, and the fourth act is the climax of the play. It mainly shows the expectations and fantasies of some characters in the teahouse in the face of the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the revolution of 1911. Political changes, social changes and the fate of the characters intertwined in this period, forming the climax of the play. The sixth part is the ending. The ending of the script is an old man's monologue. He recalled his experience in this teahouse and felt that time had gone by.

The narrative structure adopted in "Teahouse" has unique advantages in highlighting the main body, increasing drama, shaping tasks and strengthening ideological quality. First of all, through the display of different characters and plots, the script successfully displayed the social life and characters of that era, highlighting the theme. The audience can feel the social and historical background of this era and understand the interwoven social contradictions and the fate of the characters. Secondly, although the plots in the script are scattered, they all revolve around one center. Through the display of different plots, the drama of the whole script is increased, the audience is more engaged, and stronger emotional resonance is generated. Again, many representative characters are portrayed in the script. The portrayal of these characters is not isolated, but closely linked. Through these characters, the society of that era and the survival status of the characters are displayed. Finally, the plot and characters in the script are not only to show social life, but also to deeply explore social problems and human weaknesses through these plots and characters. The advantage of this narrative structure is that through the display of different plots, the audience can deeply think about social problems and human weaknesses, and produce ideological resonance.

5. The significance of the creation of Teahouse

Before the advent of "Teahouse", China's drama, on the whole, was a fixed and self-contained closed

system insulated from the development trend of contemporary life in terms of structure; The epic scale of the structure of "Teahouse" has expanded the possibility of the drama to reproduce life in both vertical and horizontal aspects, making the drama can accommodate multiple living contemporary life content, and the boundary between stage and life tends to be blurred, thus making the structure of the drama change from a closed system to an open system.

The structure of "Teahouse" is prosaic, and there are no traces of artificial arrangement. The whole drama is composed of parallel plots and appropriate details to form a brilliant drama scene. Tea drinkers chat all day as usual, strangers come and go, old friends meet and greet each other, everything is used to, even if it seems shocking in the future, such as the eunuch married a wife, and went into prison without paying attention to a word, but in fact, it often happened at that time [4]. Therefore, these scenes are more like real life scenes than dramatic elements, which are vivid prose features describing the unique environment and characters at that time. This kind of scene composed of the plot and details of the prose culture is closer to the natural state of life, strengthens the persuasiveness and thickness of the drama, makes people experience the universal meaning of the times and life in the daily and trivial life state, and also makes people feel the charm of artistic creation in the secular prose of the civil society.

The creative significance of "Teahouse" lies not only in its artistic value, but also in its reflection of the social history and people's life in modern China, calling for contemporary Chinese people to cope with the problems and challenges brought by history and reality. First of all, it shows the social history of modern China and the real situation of people's life. By reflecting the social contradictions, human weakness and political dark side from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the beginning of the Republic of China, it reveals the crisis and contradiction of Chinese society, and thus arouses people's deep thinking. Secondly, the play has deeply portrayed the characters of different classes and identities, and created a number of vivid, colorful and experienced characters. These images are representative and universal, so that the audience can better understand the characters of that era and have strong emotional resonance. In addition, it has also made important innovations in the form of drama, adopting the non-linear narrative structure of "four time changes, six reincarnation", which makes the whole script more vivid and interesting, and has stronger expressive force. Finally, through the reappearance of historical events and the discussion of human nature, the script calls for the responsibility and responsibility of Chinese contemporary people in cultural consciousness, national self-confidence, historical awareness and other aspects, which has very important historical and practical significance.

6. Conclusion

As an important cultural treasure in contemporary China, "Teahouse" tells a series of stories in a teahouse in Beijing based on the grand historical background, which shows the survival and resistance of Beijing's bottom citizens in that turbulent society. In this process, it shows people the patriotic spirit of Beijing dialect culture, traditional culture, the culture of Beijing's bottom citizens and the struggle spirit of the bottom people.

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