

The Western Elements of the Main Characters in “Thunderstorm”

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Abstract: “Thunderstorm” is one of our famous dramatist, Cao Yu's representative works. Since it was played on the stage, it received mass audience's affection. “Thunderstorm” has widely absorbed many western elements. This paper will analyze deeply the western elements which reflected on the main characters in the play from the original sin in the Christianity, Nietzsche's tragedy philosophy, as well as Oedipus complex in order to let us have a more profound understanding to this great work.

1. Introduction

Thunderstorm, the representative work of the famous dramatist Cao Yu, has been accepted by people in different times and countries since it came out in the 1930s. As a famous drama, we can find many the western elements which reflected on the main characters in the play, such as the original sin in the Christianity, Nietzsche's tragedy philosophy, as well as Oedipus complex, then the paper will analyze the book from these perspectives.

2. The Original Sin in the Christianity---Zhou Puyuan

The “original sin” is an important doctrine of Christianity. At the beginning of the Bible, it tells the story of Adam and Eve. It believes that Adam and Eve, the ancestors of human beings, made a sin by eating the fruit of the tree of wisdom against the will of god, and were expelled from the garden of Eden by god. This sin has been handed down to the descendants of Adam, and become the root of all human sins and disasters. This sin is the glory owed to god and cannot be compensated by human beings themselves, so it has been passed down from generation to generation and it was called the “original sin”. [1]

The “original sin”: Zhou Puyuan studied in western school when he was young, and received the education of the western bourgeoisie, and he was yearning for a bright future, and pursued a beautiful life of freedom and democracy. In terms of love, he truly loved Lu Shiping. He didn't have the concept of marriage hierarchy and pursued his love. He lived with Lu Shiping for three years and they had two sons before they got married. From many years of keeping the clothes and living habits she liked, it could be seen that his affection for Lu Shiping was not faked. He also made efforts to deal with the marriage of Shiping, but due to the strong feudal forces and his own weakness, he failed to live up to her. For this reason, he was always in deep guilt, memory and pain.[2] From this process, we can see that Zhou Puyuan was not born as a vicious capitalist, but was “tempted by Satan” later, just like Adam and Eve ate “forbidden fruit” against the command of god.

Punishment: Zhou Puyuan was the real owner of Zhou residence, and the owner of the feudal family. In the play, Zhou Puyuan seemed to be the one who controlled the fate of all people. However, the final result was that Zhou Puyuan lost his two children, Lu Shiping and Zhou Fanyi went crazy at the same time, and his family was ruined.

Confession: in the end, the author converts Zhou Puyuan to Christianity and quietly confesses, which reflects the Christian doctrine of “believing in salvation”. Zhou Puyuan's conscience has been strongly condemning himself all the time since he abandoned Lu Shiping. For thirty years, wherever he went, he kept the same room in which Lu Shiping had lived. In summer, the Windows must be shut and not opened by anyone; He put the picture of Lu Shiping in the most prominent place. He

remembered that her birthday was April 18th, and he wanted to go to repair the grave of Lu Shipping. He even asked a stranger about Lu Shipping.

Redemption: Cao Yu used Christian philanthropism to design for Zhou Puyuan, the character developed from a "bad" man to a "good" man, namely the redemption process. First, he donated the Zhou mansion to the church-run hospital. Second, he spent 10 years to find his son Lu Dahai, who was forced away by him, in order to wake up the long-lost memory of Lu Shipping. In the face of two crazy wives, he religiously listened to the nun who read the Bible to self conscience confession. [3]

3. Nietzsche's tragedy philosophy---Fanyi

Nietzsche's philosophy of tragedy is the core of his philosophy of life, and also the philosophical core of his life aestheticization. In Nietzsche's opinion, life is a tragedy, and the individual life who lived in the tragedy should treat the tragic life with an aesthetic attitude, feel the pain, and produce the beauty in the tragedy of life. The power which sublimates the tragedy of life into artistic aesthetics is the strong will of human beings, the quality and character that should be possessed by superman, and the will based on the body and integrated with the individual spirit. It follows the inner desire, the process of realizing the individual life will is also the process of realizing the tragedy of life. The process of presenting the beauty of tragedy is to examine the tragedy of life based on an affirmative attitude towards the life will. Therefore, the representation of Fanyi's tragic life exactly coincides with Nietzsche's tragic view.[4]

Fanyi was born in a big family, she was influenced by the new ideas, she is not only dignified, elegant, smart, beautiful, and energetic, she is longing for her love and marriage, but she lived in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial China, and married with Zhou Puyuan. Zhou Puyuan was a feudal patriarchal figure who followed Confucianism and paid attention to hierarchy. He pursued order and personal dignity in the family. At the first scene, Zhou Puyuan forced Fanyi to take medicine. The rational coldness imprisoned every life in the family, and led to Fanyi who lived without dignity, vigor and vitality, and her spirit was destroyed by Zhou Puyuan, human nature was oppressed and become twisted dissimulation. In such a harsh environment, Fanyi did not fall into this state and let her life become numb. Instead, she followed her inner emotional appeal and rebelled against the external moral constraints with the inner strength of sensibility, She refused to take medicine at the first act, and at the fourth act, and she met tit for tat with Zhou Puyuan after coming back from Lu house. In the final act, Fanyi showed her strong self-will as an individual. This self-will was externalized along with her emotional appeal, with a strong perceptual power of life and full of rebellion against social ethics, At the same time, she was not loyal to her husband, and fell in love with her stepson, she clearly know that love to Zhouping is only a hopeless desire, this desire violated the ethics, however, she did not give up, and walked the line.

4. Oedipus complex---Zhouping

The ancient Greek myth king Oedipus contains the complex of killing father and marrying mother, which is called Oedipus complex in psychoanalysis, The core plot of king Oedipus is that Oedipus killed his father and married his mother, the structure is simple, Laius abandoned his son for the will of the god of destiny, and the son killed his father when he grew up due to accidental factors, and he married his mothers for reward, and Jocasta, his mother, gave birth to children, then the truth finally exposed. Jocasta hanged herself, Oedipus stab blind his eyes.[5]

The core plot of thunderstorm is Zhou ping's Oedipus complex. This is the longest and most complete clue in the form of Oedipus complex. At the beginning of the play, the mansion was haunted for a long time, which indicates that their relationship was established long before the first scene. Zhou ping's Oedipus complex is reflected in her ambiguous relationship with Fanyi. On the other hand, it is also reflected in the jealousy and dissatisfaction of his father, which may lead to revenge or even vendetta. However, Zhou Ping did not take this step in the play, he actually completed the revenge in another way. It seemed Zhou Ping "admired" his father very much, in his

eyes, his father was just a little stubborn, cold, he thought his father was a flawless man in the depths of his unconscious. But he was hatred for his father in his heart, and did not show the struggle against the father face to face. He revenged in another way, he made love with his stepmother to replace his father. Zhou ping's Oedipus complex gradually developed into the intention of killing his father, and lured his stepmother, which was no different from Oedipus' marrying his mother. Although he did not have children with Fanyi, he made his half-sister Sifeng pregnant with his children. In his eyes, Sifeng was just a substitute, another object of Oedipus complex, because Sifeng looked like his mother who he has never met with. At the same time, the parties involved in this incest were completely unaware, which was also in line with the plot of "king Oedipus" who "killed his father and married his mother". Therefore, the incest between Zhou ping and Sifeng can also be regarded as the continuation of "Oedipus complex".

5. Conclusion

From the above analysis, we can see that the main characters in thunderstorm contain many western elements, such as the original sin consciousness of Christianity, Nietzsche's tragic philosophy, and the Oedipus complex. Therefore, thunderstorm is not only a work describes the semi-colonial and semi-feudal state of old China and the cannibalistic ethics and system, but also a modern drama contains rich western elements, which is a milestone of modern Chinese drama.[6]

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