

An Analysis of the Stage Rhythm of the Drama “Youth Taboo Games”

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Abstract: Rhythm is one of the important thrusts of drama, which plays an important role in the development of story plot, the discovery of characters' psychology and the enhancement of drama appeal. As the core of drama, the mastery of rhythm is often reflected in the internal structure of lines. At the same time, as a stage art, drama's arrangement and switching of scenes, actors' movements and demeanor also play an important role in rhythm. This paper attempts to grasp the formation of the rhythm of the drama “Youth Taboo Games” from both internal and external rhythms by using formalism and stage performance theories.

1. Introduction

As one of the most controversial dramas in the late Soviet Union, “Youth Taboo Games” (formerly known as *Dear Yelena Sergeyevna*), written by Lyudmila Rasumovskaya, a playwright and woman writer of the former Soviet Union, has become a model of a generation of dramas with its distinctive rhythm, fierce conflict and strong dialogue, and has strong power and worldwide influence. In China, this drama was first translated by Tong Ning of the Central Academy of Drama, directed by Cha Mingzhe and performed by the graduates of Grade 99. Once performed, it caused great repercussions and sensation. “(2003) An article about this drama published in the *News Weekly* published on March 17 has a subtitle-‘Hold the Life Gate of China's Reality’” [1], and its shocking power can be seen. Except that the theme or content it expresses has innate shocking factors, the author thinks that there should be reason to believe that the drama is just right in form and rhythm. Besides, from a certain point of view, “form is content, and content is form”. “Rhythm” here mainly refers to what Susan Langer said: “Rhythm is actually preparing for another new event by the end of one event. A moving and rhythmic person. There is no need to repeat the same action at all. But his movements must have a complete posture, so that everyone can feel his beginning and purpose until completion, and at the same time see the beginning and conditions of another new movement at the end of the last movement. The rhythm is accompanied by the disappearance of tension to achieve the establishment of tension, which does not need to last for equal time, but the accumulation of new turning points should be reflected in the previous end [2]. But at the same time, referring to Polje Slavski's viewpoint, the author thinks that “the fact that some special types alternate” is equally important [3]. The author thinks that the reality of the script can be divided into inside and outside, and the rhythm of the reality of the script can also be divided into inside and outside. External reality marks the scene of speech act, while internal reality marks the content of speech.

2. The Basic Forms of Rhythm in Youth Taboo Games

Obviously, “Youth Taboo Games” has returned to the traditional practice of drama, carrying out the “Three Uniforms”, and concentrating the scenes, time and characters of drama in one place--Teacher Yelena Sergeyev's home (with three scenes: outdoor, living room and kitchen) for a period of time--From dusk to early morning, certain characters (teachers and four students with different family backgrounds and different personalities) revolve around a story--The students persuaded the teacher to get the key to the safe to revise the examination paper. As a social psychological drama,

the writer naturally takes showing the characters' inner feelings as the first appeal, but Lyudmila Rasumovskaya does not sacrifice the plot on the premise of showing the characters' inner feelings, so the rhythm of the drama is slightly faster under the restriction of the three unifications. The basic rhythm form of the whole drama lines has been reflected in the first act. In the first act, when Yelena learned that the students came not to celebrate her birthday, but to tamper with the test scores, Yelena and Lala had a conversation in the kitchen:

“Ye: Lala, why, are you serious? This is a despicable business! Dirty!

La: But life itself is a mean and boring joke, Yelena Sergeyev, don't you see? (pause) Excuse me, do you have to squeeze the bus every day? Well, no need to ask, because you don't own a private car. Of course, you haven't paid attention to the female teachers and female staff in our school, their rusty faces...

(pause) Ye: So what?

La: I'm done.

Ye: I see. You want to live a comfortable life.“

In this paragraph, a large number of monologues of Lala are followed by Yelena's short pause and short lines, which breaks the original rhythm brought by Lala's long lines, and the pause reminder especially highlights the gap between the two rhythms. On the other hand, the repetition of words and phrases has also been widely used, which is a common technique to show the speaker's reflection process, such as:

Ye: Wei Jia, I didn't walk to your desk several times during the exam.

Wei: You are here.

Ye: I also reminded you.

Wei: You are prompting me.

Ye: And the result?

Wei: It's useless. (sighs)

Ye: (Stand up from the table and pause). What happened? Didn't write a number? Didn't even answer a question?

Wei: No.

La: (softly) How many points can he get, Yelena Sergeyev? Two points? (Yelena Sergeyev is silent).

Ye: I don't know.

It is generally believed that long lines will slow down the rhythm of drama and short lines will speed up the rhythm of drama; Long lines weaken the connection between the plot and the plot, while short lines strengthen the connection. Breaking a long monologue with short dialogue and short pause is the basic rhythm pattern of Youth Taboo Games.

3. External Rhythm and Internal Rhythm

I think there are two kinds of reality in the drama organized under the principle of “three unifications”. First, the current visual scenes, contradictions, characters, etc.; Second, it is the background or psychological reality which is generally invisible and displayed by the characters' language and dialogue. The former is called external reality, while the latter is called internal reality. For example, in Cao Yu's *Sunrise*, the meeting between Chen Bailu and Fangda Sheng in the hotel is an external reality, while their short-term relationship is an internal reality; The behavior of dialogue is external reality, while the content of dialogue is often internal reality. The existence of Chen Bailu and Fangda Sheng is an external reality, while the existence of Jin Ba Ye is an internal reality. The expression rhythm of external reality is called external rhythm, and the expression rhythm of internal reality is called internal rhythm. Internal reality is often expressed through long monologues.

If we take the presentation of the current scene (including the plot progress, scene arrangement, music coordination, lighting effect, costume position and action of actors, etc.) as the center of the drama, then we can find that the external reality has a centripetal tendency while the internal reality has a centrifugal tendency. Internal reality is relatively independent, which often leads us to a

deeper place, not just the present scene. For example, the dialogue between Wei Jia and Yelena at the end of the first act of "Youth Taboo Games":

Wei: Oh, guys, I can't stand it! I can't help it anymore, guys! Yelena Sergeyev, where is your cup? (fumbling in the kitchen cabinet). I can't stand this family tragedy anymore, and my strength is gone! Dad is a strict man, but even he has to avoid the thunder and lightning. I once saw it with my own eyes ... Then who is our goldfish girl? Dad's authority. (laughs). Well, who will drink with me?

Ye: (grabs the wine bottle hard). How dare you! I won't allow it! In my house! Pour the wine into the washbasin.

...

Wei: (Stand up from the floor as if nothing had happened). No, you see, I drink too much! But I can't stand this annoying thing... Later, somehow, I unconsciously became the stationmaster of the vegetable station. Whenever he drinks, you listen. His great philosophy! About every aspect of life, about art ... I, he said, Wei Jia, am a villain. Aha, spit out the truth. I, he said, sold my soul for thirty silver coins, and I, he said, sold all my sacred ideals and drank them all. But you can't do this! This is what he said to me. Or I'll come out from the grave to find you, remember. I said, dad, what is the ideal now? He shivered all over. People, he said ... I said, who contributed their lives? Dad, isn't that you? I said, people who gave their lives have been forgotten. I said, dad, don't be angry, what kind of times are now...

The content of Wei Jia's narrative is an internal reality, which leads us to the family background of Wei Jia, whose father is an alcoholic clerk, whose family is poor, and whose parents have many contradictions, which weakens the narrative of the present scene and slows down the development of the main story. From the perspective of life, it is completely unnecessary for one person to convince another person to state his family background, even if he states his own background, it will closely surround the conversation center. However, this paragraph is different. Wei Jia narrates his family and life a lot, and basically has little to do with persuading teachers. This is unreasonable in life, but it is reasonable in drama, because drama not only needs to express external reality (to promote the completion of events), but also needs to express internal reality (to shape complete characters), which is not only complete, but also has depth and breadth.

4. Internal and External Rhythm and Space-Time

The rhythm pattern of breaking large monologues with short dialogue and short pause appears repeatedly throughout the drama. While "having a complete posture", "you can see the beginning and conditions of another new action at the end of the last action". Long lines create conditions for "accumulating new turning points", while short lines and pauses provide a centripetal force for long lines. The so-called centripetal force refers to focusing the audience's attention on the external reality, that is, the present scene of the drama, instead of the internal reality (background, psychology or others of the character) guided by the lines, and returning the audience's attention from the internal rhythm to the external rhythm again, from the absolute abstract time and space to the relative concrete time and space again. Such as the conversation between Yelena and Lala in the kitchen in the first act, Lala's long monologue:

"But life itself is a mean and boring joke, Yelena Sergeyev, didn't you find it? (pause. Excuse me, do you have to squeeze the bus every day? Well, don't ask, because you don't have a private car. Of course, you haven't noticed the female teachers and employees in our school. They are rusty and frown on their faces. Everyone's face is full of pain and heavy expression. It's like how many catties of flour pockets are dragged in my hands. Especially when sending children to kindergarten every morning, look at their faces. I see other women in my life. What are they like? Get off the colorful cars, walk past the sweaty policemen who are busy maintaining order, and go to the Capital Cinema to watch the films of the International Film Festival, which ordinary people can't see. Oh, their faces are moist and smooth, just like gifts on glass paper.

Every sentence here, except the first two questions, guides an absolute abstract time and space, that is, a simple comparison of "two kinds of women". Although there are specific words in the

lines that prompt the time and place, such as “every morning” and “Capital Cinema”, these lines do not prompt the specific time and place. It is not as clear as “I went to Moscow yesterday to see the female teacher look bitter”. In fact, even if the words “every morning” and “Capital Cinema” are replaced or omitted, there is basically no influence on the expression of semantics, plot and emotion, which shows that these lines show a relatively concrete time and space. They are not the hero's statement but the hero's imagination, showing the hero's psychological reality instead of the reality of drama plot, that is, the reality in relative time and space. In relative time and space, drama shows that the plot is the external rhythm of the script, that is to say, the external rhythm is the display rhythm of the main line of the script. In the process of showing the external rhythm, the actors' movements, language and behavior are strictly restricted by the stage layout. For example, in the first act, after the students propose a toast to the teacher, they are going to persuade yelena to agree to their revision of the test scores:

Wa: yelena sergeyev, let me give you some advice. Can I have a minute of your time?

(yelena sergeyev and Valloja go to the kitchen.)

Wei: Heavy guns are coming up. Look at the skill of our diplomats.

Ba: It is the most troublesome to deal with idealists. I told you so. They can sympathize with you, shed tears for you, and help ... No way!

La: (mockingly). Yeah, it looks like it's over. The boys worked in vain.

Wei: Why? Where did you know that?

La: Intuition.

Wei: Fuck you. You are as good as Basha. No faith!

La: What are your beliefs?

Wei: Me? I believe in Varoja. I believe we can succeed.

La: (with a contemptuous sloped smile). Basha, let's go!

Wei: Listen, originally ... you had nothing to do, so you just got involved!

La: Wei Jia, I'm just curious. Maybe I can study my life through this matter.

Wei: (muttering something in his mouth). Why don't you study in your backyard! Hey, why are you two going?

La: Kiss.

(yelena sergeyev and Varoja are in the kitchen.)

Wa: yelena sergeyev, would you like to transfer your mother to Professor popov's clinic for treatment?

Wa: Varojia! Professor popov! My mother ... A world-famous clinic! the impossible.

Wa: Well, well, Professor popov treated my father, and I asked him to talk about it for you. I promise my father will agree.

(pause.)”

This story is a turning point in the whole drama, in which students' false blessings to teachers are transferred to the real purpose of action-asking for keys, and the story is transferred from “preface” to “text”. Therefore, this paragraph plays an important role in the performance of the external plot of the whole drama and is the key point of the external rhythm. Here, we can see that there are many prompts about the place in the lines, such as “yelena sergeyev and Valoja go to the kitchen.” ; “yelena sergeyev and Valoja are in the kitchen.” In the version directed by Cha Mingzhe, Lala entered the deep corner of the stage with Basha after saying “Kissing”, and in some versions, she stepped down directly. In any case, we can see the close combination of this line and scene scheduling, in other words, the dependence of external rhythm on the scene. The reason for this phenomenon is precisely because the external rhythm marks a rhythm of relative time and space, and the rhythm of relative time and space is constructed under the repeated hints of the scheduling and arrangement of these spaces. The display of internal rhythm is different, and his requirements for time and space are relatively loose. Sometimes even directly break through the space-time layout of the scene. As in the second act, when Basha and yelena argued, Basha had a long monologue:

“Ba: I hate heroes who use their chests to block their loopholes! Hate those who need people's

chest to block the loopholes! What you defend is not a lofty humanitarian ideal, but a bureaucratic machine together with its downright hypocritical and narrow morality!"

As for the handling of this line, Director Cha Mingzhe only let Basha walk back and forth without breaking through the existing time and space. The performance version of Shandong Theatre directly simplifies time and space, and there are only three chairs in the living room, so there is a hazy uncertainty about the time and space limitation of Basha's monologue; The version of our school's performance in 2014 directly broke the restriction-Basha walked off the stage and walked in the audience. These performances show that the rhythm display in drama is often based on an absolute abstract view of time and space, which emphasizes the internal psychological reality and neglects the external time and space reality.

5. Script, Stage and Rhythm

In the above three parts, we analyze the basic rhythm form, internal and external rhythm and its relationship with the text space-time. In this part, the author tries to analyze the different dependence of drama rhythm on script (line text) and stage performance (other stage factors besides line text). In other words, what the drama says and how it says affects the rhythm of the drama.

The external rhythm is built in a relative time and space, and at first glance it seems that it depends more on the stage performance than the internal rhythm. This is not the case. Because the absolute view of time and space is difficult to express through language, and the relative time and space are lack of continuity, the stage plays a vital role in the internal rhythm, while the line text plays a decisive role in the external rhythm. The performance of drama plot can only be promoted by lines, while the psychology, background and feelings of characters can often be realized by other means. For example, the "Youth Taboo Game" of Shandong Theatre Edition completely simplifies the scene layout, and the actors basically have no physical performances, and the plot can still be carried out smoothly; Different versions of the performance tell basically the same story, and the performance time is basically the same. Even we can imagine performing in a deconstructive way (such as reading lines in Donald Duck's tone or performing in Chinese tunic slippers). As long as the lines are unchanged, people will get the same external rhythm of the story and show it. (Although people will get different psychological experiences), the reason is that the external rhythm is directly related to the lines, and other factors only play an influential role. But the internal rhythm is different, and different stage performances will show different internal rhythms immediately. For example, the silence appeared many times in the play, and all the lines showed pauses, but different pauses reflected the characters' different psychology. At the beginning of the drama, the students wished yelena a happy birthday. After all the students finished the words of blessing, the script was written on the script: "Stop, yelena suddenly cried". Here, actors must express yelena's inner excitement and surprise through their own body movements and other stage performances. When Wei Jia said that he had written nothing on the paper, another pause appeared in the text.

Wei: Oh, I don't know. Yelena sergeyev, it seems that there is nothing written on my paper this time.

Ye: Why didn't you write it?

Wei: Yes, I didn't write anything.

Pause.

Ye: But you got three points this school year, which is actually three points.

...

At this time, if yelena's action is just a pause and does not go out of position, then the meaning conveyed by the next paragraph is: "yelena thinks Wei Jia is joking with her"; If yelena used the way of walking and walking to deduce the pause, and used the emphasis to say the lines of the next paragraph, then what he expressed here is: "yelena thinks what Wei Jia said is true, but he is puzzled by the emergence of this situation" ... No matter which way of expression is adopted, it has no great influence on the development of the rhythm of the plot, but it is obvious that the psychological rhythm of the latter way of expression is faster than that of the former one. This is

true of other pauses in the text.

Besides the action tone, music and other stage factors only affect the internal rhythm. Music is often used to strengthen the internal rhythm of the script or to set off the psychology of the characters. For example, in the dialogue between Basha and yelena, every short pause of Basha's ventilation shows yelena's inner shock or the strangeness of this dialogue with piano stress or treble. Therefore, although yelena has no lines, his inner psychological rhythm has been pushed forward, and through silence, it has been strengthened until Varojia's lines have reached its peak, and he said hysterically with the highest excitement, "Stand up when talking to your teacher!" This line. But this is not the only way to show this dialogue. This dialogue can be shown in a different internal rhythm. This further illustrates the dependence of internal rhythm on stage performance.

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