

The Ordinary World: Homeland and Love in the Changes of Times

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Abstract: The TV series "The Ordinary World" is adapted from the writer Lu Yao's novel with the same name, which depicts the historic changes of urban and rural life in northern Shaanxi from 1970s to 1980s. The characters in the story are living in the changing times, and both their lives and thoughts are varying along the times. The first part of this paper discusses the narrative of male growth in the conflict between urban and rural areas in the works, focusing on three male characters with different personalities and different experiences: Sun Shao An, Sun Shao Ping and Tian Run Sheng. By analyzing their situation, it reflects the influence of the changing era on them. The second part discusses the female images labeled by class in the works, mainly about 4 females characters Tian Runye, He Xiulian, Tian Xiaoxia and Hao Hongmei, and analyzes their portrayal, which leads to the following discussion on the imagination of rural love depicted by the writer in the changing era. The third part discusses three groups of love relationships across classes in the works and discusses the love imagination of the play from the realistic perspective of rural transformation.

Keywords: The Ordinary World; Rural Love; Change/ Transformation; Communication University of China Undergraduate Thesis.

1. Introduction

The 56-episode contemporary rural TV series the Ordinary World was adapted from Lu Yao's novel of the same name. It was first broadcast on Beijing and Oriental TV on February 26th, 2015, and attracted attention from all walks of life. The work epically shows the social life of urban and rural areas in northern Shaanxi, China during 1970s and 1980s, and truly reflects the living conditions and fates of people from all walks of life in urban and rural areas in a specific historical period. First of all, the TV series the Ordinary World positioned the story in the 1970s and 1980s, and the whole of China was in the midst of political, economic and cultural changes. Based on the background of the times, some major events are presented accordingly in the play, such as "Learn from Dazhai in agriculture " and "Land Reform". By deconstructing the grand narrative, the play reflects the normal life of ordinary people and outlines the struggles and dreams of many ordinary people. For example, Shaoping is a striver who went out of the countryside and became a coal miner with an urban residency. However, what left him a regret is that he couldn't live along with Tian Xiaoxia. Their love has always been romantic, just like a dream, but just as they were about to return to the village together and let their love settle down, Tian Xiaoxia died in the line of duty. I think neither Lu Yao nor the playwright of the TV series can find a way to make this love thrive and make it finally bear fruit, so they can only give such a ruthless choice-the cruelty of social reality. The same is true of the love between Shao'an and Runye. Shao'an is a man with affection, righteousness and responsibility. His series of excellent qualities, such as hard work, courage and self-sacrifice, are all in line with our impression of civilian heroes. But he can't control the love he wants either. He is a man who is firmly tied to a poor countryside by a miserable life. The reason why he gives up this love is not that he doesn't want it, but that he loves her too much. However, in the face of a powerful secular world, a proper match breaks them up from the psychological level.

Different from realistic TV dramas, which mostly end with happy endings, this play ends with people watching the lights on New Year's Eve, and the lively fireworks is full of the regret and helplessness of the characters. Love across classes seems romantic, but Lu Yao still chooses to return to reality and let everything fall onto the ground.

As a contemporary rural drama, the popularity and social response of the Ordinary World far exceeded expectations. Apart from its excellence and conforming to the mainstream ideology, the works depict life in the 1970s and 1980s, and the material conditions and lifestyle are in great contrast with those of today, but the theme connotation and heavy sense of social reality shown in the works make the audience involuntarily think about various social reality problems reflected in the works with a very respectful attitude. With the passage of time, these problems have changed their faces without changing their essence, and the audience's thinking caused by them is one of the important reasons for the popularity of the works.

2. Organization of the Text

2.1. The Narrative of Male Growth in Urban-rural Conflicts

2.1.1. Poor Family's Children Manage a Household Early: Sun Shao'an

A gifted child, dropped out of school and went to work in the fields after finishing study from primary school due to his poor family. Together with his honest and dutiful father Sun Yuhou, he supported the sky of this ordinary peasant family. He has already tasted the bitter burden of life. In the play, he breaks the conventional young man with mature characters, which is upright and humorous, and does things in a down-to-earth manner but there is no lack of change. Sun Shao'an represents the growth story of young people at the bottom, which is similar to the current online novels of diaosi counterattack story: the characters are thoroughly remolded by a relatively low social class through their own efforts.

However, diaosi is the aspiring young people of the lower class who have been blocked from their legal rising space. But the young people in the play are that society has provided them with a legitimate rising channel. Lu Yao has provided them with the belief that hard work can get fortune and good people will be rewarded, so the characters in the play are growing figures, not diaosi. Moreover, the room for improvement of diaosi in online novels is quite large or even exaggerated, but the growth of the characters in this play in terms of material conditions is not so exaggerated. Sun Shao'an was elected as the team leader of Shuangshui Village Production Team at the age of eighteen, and he was a good player in farm work in the village. He was the first to advocate household contract production and opened a brick factory in the village to drive the villagers to get rich. He was a capable person in the village. In the play, Sun Shao'an's growth has also been opened up the aura of the protagonist: he has solved the water problem and violent conflict with neighboring villages by himself, always made the juniors who make the big men in the village Tian Futang and Jin Junshan fear, and bravely broke into the private room of the provincial party secretary and got an interview... But these so-called aura of the protagonist are moderate and reasonable. Throughout the play, Sun Shao'an has been dealing with land and countryside all his life, and has never jumped out of his Shuangshui village, but has become a richer farmer, of which changes are quite reasonable.

In the midst of rural changes, Sun Shao'an had the opportunity to leave the countryside and achieve himself. Mr. Lu Yao's sensitivity before the change comes is vividly reflected in the character of Sun Shao'an. As the son of a native farmer's family with his back to the loess and facing the sky, his life was to take over the hoe and work hard all his life. The arrival of the household contract responsibility system changed his situation, and he became rich in life and baptized in spirit.

2.1.2. The World Concept of rural People: Sun Shaoping

Sun Shaoping, Sun Shao'an's younger brother, is different from his older brother. Sun Shaoping didn't return home to work until he graduated from high school. Sun Shaoping had opened up his knowledge in middle school and learned about the existence and form of the outside world. The heart of wanting to see the world has a strong impact with the hoe and land in reality, so it is inevitable to choose to leave. The sufferings in life has created his tenacity and bravery: taking jobs in Huangyuan City and working as a miner in Dayawan are all proof of his unyielding struggle with reality. Like Sun Shao'an, Sun Shaoping's growth and struggle did not exceed the audience's expectations, and the ending was a coal miner. Compared with his brother's self-sacrifice, he is more like an independent person, looking for his own life. In that era when food and clothing could not be solved, it was almost impossible for a farmer to change his destiny without farming. However, after reading many books, he regarded the embarrassment in life as a tempering for himself, and always kept the habit of reading. Some people may think that there are some shadows of Ah Q in Sun Shaoping's self-spiritual comfort, but every time his spiritual sublimation reaches a higher level after some hardships, which is completely different from Ah Q's unrealistic fantasy, so he is the driver of life, not a drifter [1].

Sun Shaoping in Lu Yao is more like a true portrayal of himself. Compared with his brother Sun Shao'an, the changes of the times have deeply influenced Sun Shaoping, making

him have a desire to go out and see the world from beginning to end. He uses his notes to write down the times and the changes of every character around him, all of which are a microcosm of rural China under the change.

2.1.3. The Transformation of a Playboy: Tian Runsheng

Tian Runsheng, a classmate and friend of Sun Shaoping, both the Tian family and the Sun family are poor peasants in politics, but the Tian family has Tian Fujun, deputy director of the county revolutionary committee (equivalent to the county magistrate level), and Tian Futang, village party secretary; Economically, the Tian's family is more powerful, which creates a completely different character image from Sun Shaoping's hard work and simplicity, Tian Runsheng. Compared with Sun Shao'an, who picked up the heavy burden of his family early, Tian Runsheng grew up as the only son in the pampering, and his mind was simply for his friends, but sometimes he was playboy, but his personality also hilarious sometimes. Tian Runsheng's growth is very similar to that of many of us today. Food and clothing are not the primary worry. We grow up indomitably, and we will eventually encounter the turning point for maturity. For Tian Runsheng, it is the battlefield after joining the army. he became silent and more mature after he became deaf in both ears.

One of the successes of TV adaptation lies in the combination of the daily life of the Sun family, an ordinary rural family, with great social changes, and then with the Sun family as the core, it leads to many complicated family relationships and emotional entanglements. Shuangshui Village is dominated by Sun, Tian, Jin and other families. Although they all live in the same village, there is also a class gap between families. In Sun Shaoping's father's generation, the Sun family and the Tian family were all farmers who suffered for the landlords of the Jin family. After the three major transformations, although the Jin family still had certain advantages economically, they lost the right to speak politically. The Tian family went out of the county leader Tian Fujun and the village party secretary Tian Futang. The Sun family wanted to train Sun Yuting as a worker but failed. The family was still full of farmers facing the farmland. From then on, in Shuangshui Village, the Tian family was in charge, the Jin family was in the neutral state, and the Sun family suffered the most. The relationship between the three families exists not only in the village, but also in the city. In the play, the historical changes of urban and rural areas are explained in detail, and Tian Futang is bent on making his daughter Tian Runye a public officer in the city. Whether life depends on working in the fields, whether food or money is earned, is the dividing line between farmers and city dwellers. The class division in the city is clearer than that in the countryside. The village includes village committees, communes and townships, and the city includes county committees, municipal committees and provincial committees. The growth of Sun Shao'an, Sun Shaoping and Tian Runsheng is largely the epitome of the development and changes of these three families.

2.2. Class-labeled Female Image Shaping

2.2.1. New Girl in the City: Tian Runye

Tian Runye, Tian Runsheng's elder sister, grew up in the countryside, worked in the city, and was cared for by her uncle who was an official in the county. According to normal development, Tian Runye will have a happy life that can be envied by people around her, but she is indeed one of the most

difficult characters in the play. Both Run Ye and Shaoping have been influenced by modern civilization and pursue independent self-awareness. Her view of love doesn't have to be right, but only seeks affection and righteousness. Runye is like a rich girl in the type story of "a rich girl falls in love with a poor boy". Under the influence of the type story, her excellent qualities related to love are infinitely reduced to invisibility, and she is nailed to the identity of "a rich girl who falls in love with a poor boy", and her character image is labeled. In fact, apart from the courage to pursue her own love, Runye has many excellent qualities: when her husband becomes disabled, she has no hesitation in her sense of responsibility for her family. This great behavior is easily regarded as a continuation of her bumpy life in the whole play with little attention. Runye finally found her own happiness, but at the expense of a car accident and her husband's health, which might be another kind of misfortune [2].

2.2.2. The Good Wife of the Village Family: He Xiulian

He Xiulian, Sun Shao'an's wife, is a hardworking and capable rural girl. She didn't have much knowledge since she only graduating from primary school. Because of her passionate love, she became Sun Shao'an's soul harbor when he was physically and mentally exhausted. Since childhood, she has developed the quality of being hard-working, respecting the old and loving the young, and is a typical good wife and mother under feudal moral ethics. She should be lucky as a traditional woman. Although she was born in a peasant family, she had the freedom to choose love. No matter the Shuangshui Village, where she lived after marriage, or her hometown in Shanxi, she was in a relatively mind-closed environment [3]. Without the impact of foreign civilization, it naturally created a traditional female image like He Xiulian. Compared with Runye's character image of going out of the countryside to gain independent consciousness, Xiulian's labeling is more serious, and she is a good wife and wife in the traditional sense. Run Ye and Xiulian are like Sun Shao'an's two possible emotional lines, representing imagination and reality respectively, while the story of the Ordinary World is urban and rural life from the perspective of realism, and Xiulian is an inevitable choice. Run Ye and Xiulian exist around Sun Shao'an's emotional line, and the images of the two women are largely labeled.

2.2.3. Authentic Rich City Fair lady: Tian Xiaoxia

Tian Xiaoxia, Tian Fujun's daughter and Tian Runye's cousin, is the only authentic rich city fair lady in the story. Since childhood, she has been a lively and intelligent child, restless, upright and compassionate. Influenced by her father Tian Fujun, Tian Xiaoxia liked reading books and newspapers since childhood, and cared about world events, which made her have a broad horizon and unique opinions. Under her influence, Sun Shaoping broadened his world outlook. The most important reason why they can get together is the match of their outlook on life found in constant communication and examination. However, in the description of the love line, Tian Xiaoxia's image has a lot in common with Tian Runye. They are both rich girls who take a fancy to poor boys, and they all have the pursuit of love and the yearning for independent personality. Tian Xiaoxia's scenes almost all revolve around Sun Shaoping, but her own growth as an independent woman is often overlooked: after graduating from high school with Sun Shaoping, the audience saw the story of Sun Shaoping working in the fields, becoming a teacher and going out of the countryside, while Tian Xiaoxia was admitted to Huangyuan Normal University with a few

understatements, and only after meeting Sun Shaoping arrived in Huangyuan did she have her story; The audience continued to follow Sun Shaoping's struggle. Until Sun Shaoping stabilized and became a coal miner, Tian Xiaoxia was already a provincial newspaper reporter. The process of college students' career choice after graduation and the story of women entering the workplace in the new era were almost completely erased, and Tian Xiaoxia's character image was also labeled.

2.2.4. The Weak Who Fell to the Bottom: Hao Hongmei

Hao Hongmei, born in a landlord family, was in a worse situation than Sun Shaoping, a poor peasant. If Runye's life was a bumpy love road, Hao Hongmei totally collapsed across the board: Gu Yangmin, a boyfriend with excellent conditions, but she lost her lover because of theft. After marrying in other places, her husband died young, leaving orphans and widows. After reuniting with Tian Runsheng, she thought she had waited for the hope of life, but she was humiliated and lost her confidence in life again. Most viewers scoffed at Hao Hongmei's move to avoid Sun Shaoping's approach to Gu Yangmin at the beginning of the play, and then Hao Hongmei's fate was regarded as "what she deserved". However, Hao Hongmei is the real most unlabeled figure. The fate of being a landlord made her inevitably in a difficult situation in that era, and her strong self-esteem became more sensitive because of her family who dare not speak out. Her high school education may change Sun Shaoping's fate, but it doesn't change hers. It is logical to marry into another poor family. People's livelihood is difficult, and her husband died young because of labor. Hao Hongmei's transformation came from her reunion with Tian Runsheng, and she ended her bitter life. This reunion is like an intolerance and love that Lu Yao gave her. It is Hao Hongmei who is freed, and most people who are not freed. Hao Hongmei's characters have the lowest degree of labeling, and she represents the majority of women at the bottom. But suffering and misfortune varied from person to person and from time to time, and the suffering she experienced was only one of them.

2.3. Three Groups of Love Relationships Across Classes

Besides the realistic part, the TV series the Ordinary World tells the love story of several protagonists, which is also one of the sources of spiritual strength for the audience. The play mainly tells the love story of three pairs of heroes and heroines, two sorrows and one happiness: Sun Shao'an and Tian Runye, who were forced to be separated because of unmatched family backgrounds, Tian Xiaoxia and Sun Shaoping, who were in love with each other but she lost her lives due to natural disasters, and Tian Runsheng and Hao Hongmei, who were finally together in the face of everyone's opposition to the torture of fate.

2.3.1. The Right Match Beats Childhood Sweethearts: Sun Shao'an and Tian Runye

Tian Runye and Sun Shao'an were childhood friends. In the era when both the Sun family and the Tian family worked for the Jin family, the relationship between the two families was still very good. In Sun Shao'an's generation, the situation of the Sun family was still a bad bag, but the Tian family had already upgraded to the county leader and village party secretary, and Tian Runye became the people's teacher in the county. However, Sun Shao'an dropped out of school early because he shared the family labor, and saw that he had to dig

for food in the fields all his life. Their love is not impulsive, although simple, it is no less than any flower before the moon. What separated them was not lack of love, but this kind of too much love. It was Sun Shao'an's voluntary giving up, shouting to his father, "Find me a suitable wife". This sentence put an end to their love, and also reflected Sun Shao'an's sincere feelings for Tian Runye. He was willing to give up because he didn't want to drag her down. The traditional view of marriage of the right family seemed to be the root of killing their love. The author's understanding of this love tragedy is the selflessness and helplessness of giving up because of true love.

2.3.2. Two People with Mutual Affection but God's Will is Unpredictable: Sun Shaoping and Tian Xiaoxia

Many scenes in TV dramas are focused on Sun Shao'an, but the character Sun Shaoping is far more touching than Sun Shao'an. The main reason is that there is a lively and bright woman Tian Xiaoxia in his love script. She is a perfect person in the play, just like rich fair lady in modern dramas. She will take the initiative to pursue her own love, and the love between her and Sun Shaoping is also mutually happy, the story ended in sorrow due to her unexpected death.

Sincere love without results has always been an eternal routine in artistic creation. In the context of realism, the two are not equal. Tian Xiaoxia played more role as a life mentor in Sun Shaoping's life, which not only had a great influence on Sun Shaoping in knowledge and insight, but also gave him the courage and strength to go out of the village and see the outside world spiritually. When their love was about to settle down and the promise of Guta Mountain came, Tian Xiaoxia died in a ruthless flood. Many viewers think that Lu Yao and the playwrights of the TV series the Ordinary World can't figure out a path to make this love with huge class differences go on, so they can only make the most ruthless choice. It seems that the cruelty of reality ends abruptly, but fundamentally, Tian Xiaoxia's death is the cruelty of reality.

Sun Shaoping seems to have walked out of Shuangshui Village, but in fact, like his brother Sun Shao'an, he is a person who is hard to break out of the loess package. It is their destiny to accept the heavy life of material scarcity. In the final ending of the TV series, Tian Xiaoxia's father, Tian Fujun, looked at the lights of Shuangshui Village and said when he missed his daughter, "Your Shaoping is still the ordinary Shaoping. He was admitted to the provincial coal technical school and wrote a book." Although warm, it is also an affirmation of the tragic ending of their love. One is a coal miner whose life is in danger at any time, and the other is Miss Fair in the provincial capital. It is almost impossible for them to get together.

2.3.3. Overcoming Obstacles and Ultimately Becoming Each Other's Soul Mate: Tian Runsheng and Hao Hongmei

Tian Runsheng and Hao Hongmei, like a pair of rural versions of "Prince Charming and Cinderella", have another change in their relationship, from not dealing with each other in middle school to warming each other after reunion. When Tian Runsheng was in middle school, he was full of passion for Hao Hongmei and his self-esteem. After the reunion, both

of them were mature, and only then did they see each other's lead-washed side. Tian Runsheng's love for Hao Hongmei has a sympathetic side, and he has a heroic feeling of fearlessness. Just like Sun Shaoping was given a teacher's quota to risk his life to be a soldier at the beginning, he was selfless at that time, and only after returning from the war did he become more mature and awe-inspiring, and his past casualty was gradually replaced by perseverance. This led to the ending that they could still persist in coming together under the situation that their parents opposed constant accidents.

Mr. Lu Yao is keen to the changes of the times and the arrival of social changes. For him on the eve of the era of change, a forward-looker's mind is full of all kinds of imaginations about the future, which are vividly reflected in the love of his story characters. For the author's imagination of rural love, it is not completely unrealistic. It will definitely exist. Under the change, the original rural traditional "Sun Shao'an-He Xiulian" love type is no longer the only type, but has infinite possibilities. From small to large, change affects them and is made up of them.

3. Conclusion

Since the reform and opening up, with the acceleration of urbanization in China, the urban population has increased rapidly, the rural population has been losing continuously, the gap between urban and rural areas has further widened, and the contradiction has become more and more fierce. In Lu Yao's works, the problems of urban and rural areas are expressed through a strong sense of misery, and "struggling to survive" has become his standard posture to describe men's living conditions. At this time, the love plot of "poor boy and rich girl" is not only the imagination of rural love from the perspective of realism, but also shapes the love of the times characterized by passion and persistence [4].

Including the TV series the Ordinary World, there are many outstanding people in China's local rural TV dramas, such as The Old Farmer starring Chen Baoguo, and some of them focus on the different living environments and local customs in cities and villages. Comedy is used to create plot contradictions, such as Xiaomai Entering the City, Man Cang Entering the City, etc. Although rural TV dramas are difficult to attract the younger generation of audiences in form and content, they have unique advantages in expressing sincere feelings and showing real life. The Ordinary World made a good example for the creation of Chinese rural dramas.

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