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文本阐释与理论观照——20世纪70年代以来外国文学专题研究系列丛书

总主编 杨金才

范浩著

构建世俗教堂： 彼得·谢弗的戏剧观念与实践



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摘 要

英国当代著名戏剧家彼得·谢弗(1926—)笔耕四十余年,几乎囊括了英美所有的重要戏剧奖项。他的作品多次创造票房奇迹,是严肃戏剧中的异数。然而,现有研究资料大多为剧评,学术论文相对较少,多集中于几部知名剧作,且多数论者采用的仍是从主题、人物、语言切入的传统文本分析方法。虽然这对解读谢弗作品大有助益,但单一的文本细读难免遮蔽其独有的剧场感染力。本论文主要讨论谢弗的戏剧观念对其创作实践的影响,对其艺术特点进行整体研究。研究方法上不囿于文本分析,力图通过对剧本、剧作家随笔、访谈、与之合作的导演和演员回忆录、观众反馈的梳理和比照,多方面、多角度揭示谢弗戏剧特色。

谢弗的戏剧观念和实践深受宗教影响。他认为现代社会的主要问题是精神贫瘠、信仰缺失,戏剧是唯一可以重振信仰的公共艺术形式。而要启迪大众,宗教仪式中激发信众共鸣的手法颇可借鉴。因此,他常把剧场比作教堂,剧作家比作牧师,在创作中也广泛运用宗教主题和表现手法。但是,他对宗教传统中常见的盲信和教会的威权非常反感,他的作品中也呈现出对宗教既借鉴又背离的倾向。从这个意义上说,他构想的剧场教堂兼具宗教和世俗特征:一方面,拥有强大的精神感召力,另一方面,扬弃盲从,鼓励个体思考。

基于这一理念和长期实践,谢弗的戏剧创作形成了鲜明的特色:

第一,对于大众观众群的高度重视。与许多当代戏剧家不同,谢弗非常注意观众的接纳度,多方调动他们的兴趣,同时积极启发思考。譬如,他常常选取具有时效性或争议性的题材吸引观众,但在呈现这些题材时巧妙运用反讽、对照等手法,颠覆观众预期。再如,在叙事技巧趋于边缘化的当代背景中,他借鉴大众喜闻乐见的通俗文学叙事手段,设计悬念迭起的情节,激发观众的兴趣,同时通过对叙事结构的改编和既定角色的倒置,启发观众对主流价值观的质疑和反思。

第二,综合运用舞台资源表达精神追寻的主题。多数当代戏剧家的创作目的是智性讨论,主要表现手法是语言,对舞台资源的使用极尽简约之能事,而谢弗则提出“让壮观回归剧场,并以精神内涵使之丰富”。精神和情感领域需要直觉和顿悟,而语言作为智性讨论的媒介,常常力有未逮。相反,舞台资源营造的视听震撼可以直接诉诸观者的感官和情感。谢弗借鉴了宗教仪式中对色彩、服装、仪式的运用,融合多种舞台表现手法,营造了炫目壮观的戏剧效果。此外,他还灵活运用音效描摹、模拟人物的主观世界,使观众身临其境。但是,他的目的不仅仅是编排感官盛宴:夸张的仪式、哑剧和面具,表现的是个人对神性的独立追寻,而非臣服教会指引;色彩鲜明、对比强烈的服装,意在重新界定传统中泾渭分明的道德两极观念。

第三,充分拓展演员的创造性空间。许多戏剧家在创作中并不把演员纳入考虑范畴。还有部分戏剧家认为给予演员自由度会喧宾夺主,因而刻意压缩他们的表现空间。而谢弗则认为,演员在演出中替代戏剧家执行牧师职责,对传递作品主题、调动剧场气氛具有举足轻重的作用,给予演员表现空间,可使其在戏剧演出中更有效地与观众互动,加强剧本的感染力。同时,演员的个性化诠释也常常赋予剧本更丰富的内涵。因此,他竭力创造可信而有挑战性的人物、设置多义场景,并将戏剧主题和个体演员风格有机结合。这些方法不仅激发了演员的创造性,也激起观众的热烈反响。多位与谢弗合作的导演和演员都在回忆录中提到,谢弗戏剧的演出现场气氛热烈,有如“足球比赛”。另一方面,他也注意抑制演员过分重视剧场价值,凌

驾于戏剧家和戏剧主题之上的倾向。

谢弗对大众观众群的关注、对舞台资源的娴熟调度，以及对演员创造性空间的拓展，筑就了光彩夺目的“世俗教堂”。正是这一特质，不仅使他在当代英美戏剧家中独树一帜，也令他的作品跨越国界和文化的疆域，在世界各地常演不衰。

Abstract

Widely acknowledged as one of the foremost contemporary playwrights in Britain and America, Peter Shaffer (1926 –) has a career that spans four decades, during which his plays have inspired phenomenal appeal with broad-based audience and garnered almost all the important theatrical awards in the English-speaking world. Due to the outstanding theatrical quality of his plays, however, most of the existing scholarship consists of production reviews. The less than abundant scholarly essays tend to focus on one or several of his plays and few have attempted to conduct a comprehensive analysis. Moreover, despite the diversity of individual research topics, most researchers tend to focus on the literary aspects and evaluate the plays chiefly on the merits of theme, characterization, and language. While this approach helps to illuminate important aspects of Shaffer's dramaturgy, the limited scope has the danger of eclipsing the real strength of the playwright, who writes with a sharp awareness of the stage.

The present dissertation studies Shaffer's dramatic vision and its impact on his theatrical practice, which

remains an inadequately-researched area. Special efforts are made to consider the integration of multiple elements that make his plays work in the theater and effect multi-dimensional appeal with the audience. Apart from the plays, the study cross-references Shaffer's articles, interviews, director/actors' memoirs as well as audience feedbacks. While literary aspects of the plays are taken into consideration, the focus is shifted to the impact the script has or might have on a broad-based audience.

The study finds that religion has huge impact on Shaffer's dramatic vision. For Shaffer, the chief problem with the modern society is the spiritual and emotional apathy, and drama, "the only ultimately indispensable public art", should provide the cure by emulating religion's capacity to create communion and kindle faith. On several occasions he has compared the theater to the church and dramatists/actors to priests, and the themes and devices in many of his plays are reminiscent of those found in religious rituals. However, this does not mean he seeks a blanket reproduction of religious rituals. Instead, he has a deep distrust and resentment against conventional religion and organized churches for their monopoly of "Sole Interpretation" and their demand of complete subordination. As a result, his works witness attempts to both exploit and deviate from strategies found in religious ceremonies. In this sense, the secular cathedral he envisions has dual quality: on one hand, it possesses the spiritual and emotive appeal of religion; on the other hand, it encourages secular autonomy and inspires the audience to create their own individual faith.

The dissertation examines three leading

characteristics in Shaffer's theatrical practice, as shaped by this vision: the prior commitment to the engagement and education of broad-based audience, the delivery of spiritual themes with spectacular theatricality, and the efforts to empower actors, whom he regards as the real executors of sacerdotal responsibility, by leaving them creative space in the script. These qualities, which serve as the main pillars in his secular cathedral, largely account for the special power of his plays and the tremendous appeal he achieves worldwide, a record, as Shafferian critics agree, unmatched by any of his peers.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract in Chinese	vi
Abstract in English	ix
Abbreviations	xvi
List of Figures	xvii
 Introduction	 1
Chapter I The Engagement and Education of Broad-based Audience	29
1. The Manipulation of Exotic/Controversial Subject Matter	31
2. The Adaptation of Popular Narrative Strategies	49
3. The Disruption of Traditional Genre Expectations	74
Chapter II Epiphany through High Theatricality	94
1. The Conjunction of Gods in Mime and Ritual	99
2. The Redefinition of Moral Polarities through Costume	116
3. The Construction of Subjective Reality through Sounds and Music	142

Chapter III The Empowerment and Restraint of Actor-Priests 180

1. The Creation of Credible Characters 193

2. The Setup of Scenes with Multiple Possibilities 210

3. The Customized Parts for Individual Actors 231

Conclusion 256

Works Cited 267

Index 278

目 录

致谢	iii
摘要	vi
英文摘要	ix
缩写	xvi
插图	xvii
导言	1
第一章 大众观众群的文本策略	29
1. 处理异国性/争议性主题	31
2. 改造通俗文学叙事手段	49
3. 颠覆传统体裁期待	74
第二章 戏剧性与精神世界	94
1. 面具与仪式的“造神”	99
2. 服装与道德两极再定义	116
3. 通过音响和音乐构建“主体性现实”	142
第三章 牧师—演员的赋权与制约	180
1. 创作可信人物	193
2. 构建多义性场景	210
3. 量身定制角色	231
结论	256
参考书目	267
索引	278

Abbreviations

Abbreviations in parenthetical citations of the dissertation refer to the sources indicated below:

CP *The Collected Plays of Peter Shaffer* (*Preface*; *Five Finger Exercise*; *The Private Ear*; *The Public Eye*; *White Liars*; *Black Comedy*; *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*; *Shrivings*; *Equus*; *Amadeus*)

YO *Yonadab*

LL *Lettice and Lovage*

GG *The Gift of the Gorgon*

List of Figures

1. <i>The Royal Hunt of the Sun</i> (1972), directed by Tom Cooke	95
2. <i>Equus</i> (2005), stage set designed by Boyd Wolz	110
3. <i>Equus</i> (2005), directed by Tim Dang	110
4. <i>Equus</i> (2007), directed by Thea Sharrock	115
5. <i>Equus</i> (2007), directed by Thea Sharrock	131
6. <i>Lettice and Lovage</i> (2006), directed by Lucy Conroy	135
7. <i>The Gift of the Gorgon</i> (1993), directed by Peter Hall	168