

A Literature Review on the Study of Teahouse from 2003 to 2023

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Abstract: Using the method of literature investigation and statistical analysis, this paper analyzes and summarizes the literature on Lao She's *Teahouse*. It is found that in recent years, the academic research on the text of *Teahouse* mainly focuses on three aspects: character image, language features and ideological connotation, which are still very common research fields. However, there are few literatures to study *Teahouse* from the perspective of innovation, and there are also few literatures to deeply study the details of the text. In fact, the *Teahouse* contains many different cultural connotations, such as space culture, tea culture, Beijing culture and so on. Researchers can use a new cultural perspective to study the multiple cultural connotations contained in the *Teahouse*. The purpose of this paper is to present the hot spots and general trends of the academic research on *Teahouse*, point out the shortcomings and limitations of the research, and provide a new direction for future research.

Keywords: Lao She, *Teahouse*, literature review

1. Introduction

Teahouse, a drama created by modern writer Lao She in 1956, is a classic work of contemporary Chinese drama creation. It is also one of Lao She's many dramas that receives the highest attention and the best evaluation. *Teahouse* is structurally divided into three acts, taking the rise and fall of the old Beijing Yutai Teahouse as the background. It describes the changes in Beijing's social landscape and people's lives during the past 50 years. It paints a huge picture of history. Since the 21st century, this classic drama has been studied and discussed in detail in many aspects such as dramatic language, character image shaping, narrative art and ideological connotation. However, the study of *Teahouse* is still not deep enough in terms of details, and it is still not innovative enough in terms of research entry points. Therefore, this paper hopes to systematically analyze and comment on the research results of Lao She's *Teahouse* on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) in the past 20 years from 2003 to 2023 through the method of literature survey and statistical analysis. Through the research, the author grasps the hot spots and general trends of the research on *Teahouse* in the academic circle, points out the shortcomings of the research, and provides direction for future research on Lao She's *Teahouse*.

2. Classification of Research Contents in Lao She's *Teahouse*

Through the use of a literature survey and statistical analysis, the author took “Lao She *Teahouse*” as the theme of CNKI, and set the publication time from “July 21, 2003” to “July 21, 2023”. Through advanced search, the author retrieved a total of 304 articles. After consulting the literature content, the author further selected 81 literatures that met the requirements of the theme. After summarizing and analyzing them, the author classifies the main research contents of Lao She's *Teahouse* text in Chinese academic circles as follows.

2.1. Character Image Analysis and Shaping

The character image is the soul of the drama. As a classic group drama, *Teahouse* has many characters, each of which has its own special significance, style and charm. Han Yabei's *Research on the character image pedigree in Lao She's Teahouse* and Li Chunmiao's *Analysis on the Characters' Image pedigree in Lao She's Teahouse* have studied the character image pedigree [1,2]. They analyzed the three central characters in *Teahouse*, namely Wang Lifa, Chang Siye and Qin Zhongyi, and some other secondary characters with common characteristics, which enriched the cultural connotation of the characters in *Teahouse*. The author thinks that their research entry point is very good. They studied the genealogy of the characters in *Teahouse*, looking for the commonalities and characteristics of the characters. Their research plays an important role in studying the development law of Lao She's character image in the literary world and comprehensively observing Lao She's literary creation. Li Hongmei's *The Art of Character Image Creation in Lao She's Teahouse* studies the art of character image shaping, discusses the art of separating primary and secondary character image, the art of creating the precise expression of character and the art of creating the meaning of character connotation in Lao She's *Teahouse* [3]. The author thinks that her research content is comprehensive, but the detailed analysis of the text is not deep enough, and the view is not novel enough. Wu Mengyu's *Narrative of Youth in Lao She's Teahouse* studies the images of youth in *Teahouse*, divides them into three living states, further explores the power of youth in social development, and thus gives a glimpse of the character of The Times at that time [4]. An Hong's *Awakening and Unrestrained: A Study on the Identity of the Female Image in Lao She's Teahouse in Literature and film* and Yao Xinyue's *On the Tragic Fate of Women in Lao She's Teahouse* study the female images in *Teahouse*, showing the core of The Times and tragic characteristics of women in a specific era background, and pointing out their tragic and defiant nature [5,6]. The author believes that it is good to study a kind of character image with some commonness, because the commonness often hides the development law and symbolic meaning.

2.2. Language Features

The domestic academic research on Lao She's *Teahouse* language mainly focuses on three hot spots, the Beijing language, subtext and the style art of humor and irony in *Teahouse*. Zhao Weiwei's *On the “Beijing Flavor” of Lao She's Teahouse* focuses on the regional characteristics of drama language, and analyzes the language characteristics of *Teahouse* by seizing the strong style of Beijing flavor in the dialogues [7]. Liu Juan's *Analysis on the meaning of subtext in Lao She's Teahouse* focuses on the application and artistic effect of the subtext in Lao She's *Teahouse* [8]. The use of irony and the language features of humor run through the whole play. Therefore, every analysis of the language features of the *Teahouse* will mention this feature. But they didn't go far enough into the details.

In recent years, language use in *Teahouse* has also begun to be analyzed from the perspective of grammatical structure, such as Zhang Zhiyi's *The Intertextual Construction Function of Dialogue Grammar: A Case Study of the Structure of “Change” in Lao She's Teahouse* [9]. Starting from the theory of dialogue grammar, he takes the structure of the word “change” in Lao She's *Teahouse* as

an example to analyze that the structure of the word “change” has dialogue grammar at the phonetic, lexical and grammatical levels, and forms intertext by recontextualizing at both the local and global discourse levels. The author believes that his introduction of foreign theories and a new interpretation of *Teahouse* from a new theoretical perspective will help *Teahouse* radiate new “vitality” and significance under the new research perspective.

2.3. Ideological Implication and Aesthetic Style

Since *Teahouse* came out more than 60 years ago, the research and debate on its ideological implication have never stopped. It has experienced three stages of “political funeral song”, “cultural elegy” and “historical lament song”, and the theory of “historical lament song” has occupied the mainstream in the past 20 years. Fang Weibao argues in *Teahouse “World Change”, “People’s Livelihood” and National Allegory* that the tragedy of “*Teahouse*” is not considered and expressed at the level of individual character tragedy or mysterious fate tragedy [10]. The tragedy of “*Teahouse*” is the tragedy of social history”, and *Teahouse* sings a historical lament. The domestic academic circles’ research on the aesthetic style of *Teahouse* has evolved from the “comedy” theory in the past to the “tragedy” theory in recent years, such as Sun Xujiang’s *On the Tragedy of Lao She’s Teahouse* [11]. It makes a comprehensive exposition and research on the tragedy contained in *Teahouse* from three aspects: the tragedy of characters, the tragedy of social reality and the tragedy of history. In recent years, academic circles have done more and more in-depth research on the tragic meaning contained in *Teahouse*, but most articles have repeated arguments. The author believes that the study on the tragedy of *Teahouse* has almost reached a saturation state, and the perspective should be changed in time to avoid the “platitude”.

2.4. Cultural Perspective

In recent years, the interpretation of *Teahouse* text from different cultural perspectives has also begun to attract academic attention. Jiao Yana’s *Research on Beijing Tea Culture in Lao She’s Teahouse* and Zhai Xingzi’s *Analysis of Tea Culture in Beijing at the end of Qing Dynasty with Lao She’s Teahouse as an Example* explore the multiple tea culture connotations in *Teahouse*, and analyze the teahouse culture, tea and tea set culture, and tea event culture in *Teahouse* [12,13]. Li Guo’s *The Studies of Space Culture in Teahouse Written by Lao She* uses space theory to divide the space in *Teahouse* into living space, social space and cultural space [14]. It analyzes how Lao She used the teahouse to construct the representational meaning of the space culture, so as to explore the connotation of the space culture of the teahouse. *The “Beijing Flavor” of Lao She’s Teahouse* by Zhao Weiwei focuses on Lao She’s own special conditions, and interprets *Teahouse* from four aspects: old Beijing dialect, Beijing people’s leisure style, old Beijing people’s unique philosophy and human behavior, and Beijing people’s humor, so as to explore the unique Beijing flavor culture contained in *Teahouse* [7]. Li Chunyu takes Lao She’s *Teahouse* and a series of other Peking dramas as the research object to analyze the contemporary development of “Beijing flavor” dramas [15,16]. The author believes that the study of Lao She’s *Teahouse* should not be confined to the field of literature and drama culture. Exploring the different cultural connotations hidden in *Teahouse* from a new perspective and injecting new “vitality” into the interpretation of *Teahouse* is a good way to solve the dilemma of the study.

3. Conclusions

In the twenty years from 2003 to 2023, the research on Lao She’s *Teahouse* has almost reached a saturation state in the aspects of character image analysis, language characteristics, ideological implication, aesthetic style and so on. The phenomenon of repeated arguments and one-sided

arguments in the study also reflects that the research space provided by *Teahouse* is limited. Although it is still a work of art with a rich theme and connotation, unique structure and techniques, and significant aesthetic style, the research cannot be “platitudinal”. Most scholars in the domestic academic circle regard *Teahouse* as a realistic work, but few people really study the design details of *Teahouse* from the perspective of reflecting reality. For example, in the aspect of character image, the debate on the issue of “son inheriting father’s business” involves many theories. Some scholars believe that “son inheriting the father’s business” is not good, and is the legacy of feudal thought. Some scholars believe that the “son inherits the father’s business” is due to the consideration of the stage hypothesis, and this design facilitates the performance of the *Teahouse* on the stage. However, there are still no scholars in the academic circle to demonstrate the rationality of the plot of “son inheriting father’s work” from the perspective of reflecting the real society by using the realism theory. Based on previous research, researchers need to enter new fields and pay close attention to new theories at home and abroad, such as space theory and cultural memory. Researchers interpret the text of *Teahouse* with new theories, and explore the connotation of different cultural fields in *Teahouse* from a new perspective. At the same time, researchers should also grasp the details of the text and see the big from the small, so as to open up a new way for the study of *Teahouse* and shape a new soul.

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