

The "Rebel" Paradox: Hamlet and Jia Baoyu's Contradictory Attitudes towards Women's "Other" Identity as Seen from the Perspective of Secondary Sexuality Theory

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies on the character images of Hamlet and Jia Baoyu have mostly focused on traditional research dimensions such as "delayed revenge" and "anti-feudalism", with insufficient analysis of the contradictions in their gender consciousness. This study takes Beauvoir's theory of the Second Sex as the framework, combines patriarchy and the concept of "the other", and analyzes the contradictory attitudes of the two towards the identity of women as "the other". The research will adopt literature review, comparative study and text analysis method. Research has found that Hamlet struggled between humanism and patriarchy, instrumentalizing Ophelia. Jia Baoyu's "Theory of Daughters' Grace and Beauty" is actually an aesthetic gaze from a male perspective within the framework of patriarchy. Although the paths of their "rebellion" are different, both are solidifying the essence of women's "secondary sexuality". This study breaks through the limitations of text-centeredness and single-culture analysis, connecting the interpretation of classic texts with new gender issues such as "algorithmic patriarchy" in the current digital age, revealing the underlying logic of gender power operation, and providing inspiration for contemporary gender equality practices.

KEYWORDS

Hamlet; Jia baoyu; The theory of secondary sexuality; Patriarchy; "Other"; Digital age; Gender equality

1 Introduction

For a long time, in the field of literary studies, scholars' research on Hamlet and Jia Baoyu has mostly focused on the traditional research perspectives of "delayed revenge" and "anti-feudalism", but they have lacked in-depth analysis of the hidden contradictions in their gender consciousness. The issue of gender equality in today's society is a hot topic. With the emergence of new oppressive powers such as "algorithmic patriarchy" in the digital age, the re-examination of the operational logic of gender power in classic literary works has both practical and practical significance. Unearth the underlying logic of gender power from literary classics to provide historical references and theoretical inspirations for contemporary gender equality practices.

1.1 Overview of the Current Situation

1.1.1 The Theoretical Evolution and Literary Presentation of Patriarchy

Patriarchy was formed in the later period of the primitive commune due to men's dominant position in economic production, leading to the centralization of power and the marginalization of women. Patriarchy is reflected in the mechanism by which men exert gender oppression on women psychologically and consciously within the family ^[1]. In simple terms, the so-called patriarchy is a system where the son born between one's thighs insults oneself. However, for men, even if they can insult women, it is very difficult to insult their mothers, because that is an act of defiling their "origin"^[2]. Men discipline women with labels such as "forbearance, sacrifice, and good wife and mother", endow them with functional family roles and form systematic body control ^[3]. In literature, female figures such as Ophelia and Lin Daiyu are symbolized as the single trait of "pure yet fragile", becoming the carriers of male desires or political struggles. At the same time, the narrative mechanism shows gendered characteristics. For instance, Hamlet adopts a monopolistic narrative from a male perspective, and women are often placed in the disciplinary chain of "silence - madness - death". Beauvoir's "other" theory laid the foundation for feminist criticism. In patriarchal culture, women were defined as "non-essential others", and their values were attached to the male subject. Although the daughters in the Grand View Garden of "Dream of the Red Chamber" carried Jia Baoyu's ideal of "beauty in love and talent", they still could not escape the fate of being instrumentized ^[4].

1.1.2 The Cultural Differences Between Rebels in the East and the West

A comparison of the tragic love stories in "Hamlet" and "Dream of the Red Chamber" reveals the different forms of patriarchy in the East and the West. In contrast, in the West, it is manifested as an open conflict between humanism and

patriarchy, such as the death of Hamlet, while in the East, it is shown as the implicit oppression of women by Confucian ethics, such as the destruction of the daughters in the Grand View Garden ^[5]. However, the endings of their lives, namely Daiyu's death after shedding all her tears and Ophelia's transformation from an innocent girl to a madman, both reflect certain cultural significance. The endings of both are steeped in philosophical color at the explicit level of the text, carrying the author's ideological destination. At the underlying level, they all reflect the aesthetic tastes of the male society and the expectations of women. The specific manifestations at the two levels are completely different. The death of Daiyu indirectly reflects the patriarchal society's control over women, while the transformation before and after Ophelia directly and specifically expresses the crushing and value discipline of the male-dominated social order on the spiritual world of women.

1.1.3 A Historical Mirror of Contemporary Gender Equality

In contrast to the fatherly narratives in Chinese and American film literature, the long-standing "de-fatherly narrative" in China is actually a distorted state presented by the "respecting mother while concealing father" culture. Different from this, the "fatherly narrative" in the United States focuses more on the construction of fatherly guiding power. Such a comparison gives us enlightenment that we should break the concept of gender binary opposition. Transcend the relatively simple dichotomy of "anti-fatherly" and "reverent fatherly" to explore multiple approaches to gender equality ^[6]. To guide men from their original "oppressors" to "Allies", just as Beauvoir emphasized, men need to break the silence and defend women's rights. This is because Beauvoir's perspective reveals that gender is not a fixed attribute by biological factors, but a social construction.

1.1.4 Research Gaps and Innovation Directions

Existing scholars encounter three limitations when studying the character images of Hamlet and Jia Baoyu. Current research shows a rather prominent text-centered tendency, focusing on the analysis of the characters themselves, but neglecting the historical and economic foundation on which patriarchy relies. There are significant deficiencies in the perspective of cross-cultural comparison. Scholars seldom place Hamlet and Jia Baoyu, two literary classic figures from the East and the West respectively, within the grand framework of the evolution of global patriarchy for examination. The lack of contemporaneity also constitutes the third limitation. Textual research should serve current practical activities. Existing research has not fully connected with new forms of power oppression such as "algorithmic patriarchy" in the digital age. These limitations jointly restrict our understanding of the deep social and cultural mechanisms behind literary images.

Based on the above research gaps, this study raises the following core questions: Under the appearance of "rebellion", what contradictions do Hamlet and Jia Baoyu have in their attitudes towards the female "other" identity? How does this contradiction operate within the framework of patriarchy and solidify the essence of women's "secondary sexuality"? This study, through literature research, comparative research and textual analysis, systematically dissects Hamlet's struggle between humanism and patriarchy and his instrumentalization of Ophelia, while revealing the patriarchal aesthetic gaze behind Jia Baoyu's "Theory of Daughters' elegance". Ultimately, by connecting the analysis of gender power in classic texts with the "algorithmic patriarchy" and new gender issues in the digital age, the underlying logic of the operation of gender power is revealed, providing inspiration for contemporary gender equality practices and promoting men to break through the predicament of "ostensibly supporting but implicitly maintaining gender hierarchy", becoming true "Allies" of gender equality.

1.2 Article Structure

This thesis is divided into seven parts: The first part is the introduction, which elaborates on the research background, current situation overview, problems, methods and the structure of the article; The second part sorts out the "other" theory and the concept of patriarchy in Beauvoir's "The Second Sex", laying a theoretical foundation for the research. The third part analyzes Hamlet's contradictory attitude towards the "other" identity of women and explores her struggle between humanism and patriarchy. The fourth part analyzes Jia Baoyu's "Theory of Daughters' Grace" and the essence of his aesthetic gaze within the framework of patriarchy. The fifth part summarizes the commonalities and individualities of the two in solidifying the essence of women's "secondary sexuality". The sixth part uses classic humanistic texts as a mirror to reflect on the "patriarchy" of digital algorithms and related issues of gender equality in society. The seventh part is the summary.

2 The "Other" Theory and Patriarchy Concept in "The Second Sex"

The core of Beauvoir's theory originated from the philosophical thoughts of Hegel and Sartre. In his "Phenomenology of Spirit", Hegel proposed that the "other" is an oppressed and self-aware existence (such as a slave), and needs to rely on the "master" (such as a slave owner) to confirm the identity of the other party. Sartre, based on the distinction between "self-existence" (the mechanical material world) and "self-existence" (the conscious individual), emphasized that the individual must become "self-existence" through free choice and taking responsibility. On this basis, Beauvoir developed the "other" theory from a feminist perspective ^[7].

The social reality at that time was extremely difficult for women who had just begun to seek basic rights in education, career and politics. Men returned home from the World War II battlefield. Women, who had temporarily obtained employment opportunities and economic sources due to the demands of the war, were asked not to "take away men's jobs" and return to their families to have children, because they were "taught from a young age to be mothers", which was their "life goal" ^[8]. Therefore, compared with the primary subject social status of men, women have always been in a secondary and subordinate position.

The traditional patriarchal system, with gender power inequality at its core, has three major characteristics: First, the unidirectionality of the power structure, that is, men hold the dominant position in the distribution of social resources and the definition of values, while women are in a subordinate and passive position. As Beauvoirds stated, men are endowed with power and prestige in transforming the world, while women are forced to accept the preset gender roles. Secondly, the solidification of role division, the model of "men working outside and women taking care of the home" has become a social consensus. Women are confined to family areas such as childbirth and housework, and repetitive labor consumes their sense of autonomy, depriving them of the opportunity to pursue their self-worth. Thirdly, the concealment of gender discipline, by shaping an ideal image of a "beautiful and gentle" woman, uses culture and morality as tools to impose gender norms, making women unconsciously accept the identity of "the other", and even become "accomplices" in solidifying their own situations.

Patriarchy has an essential connection with the theory of "the other" : Patriarchy is the root cause of women's "otherization", shaping women into "the other" who rely on men through cultural construction, role restrictions, economic dependence and other means. The "Other" theory, on the other hand, reveals the essence of gender inequality under patriarchy and provides a theoretical tool for criticizing the traditional gender structure and promoting the awakening of female consciousness.

3 Hamlet's Contradictory Attitude Towards the "Other" Identity of Women: The Struggle Between Humanism and Patriarchy

3.1 Hamlet's Dual Perception of the "Other" Identity of Women

Hamlet's attitude towards women as "secondary sexuality" is clearly contradictory, and this contradictory attitude is mainly reflected in his perception of his mother Jotruide and his lover Ophelia. He criticized his mother, Jotruide, for her "infidelity" of quickly remarrying Claudius after her husband's death, and accused her of "fragility, your name is woman", defining women as a "morally weak" group. In his subconscious, he recognized his mother's "other" attribute, believing that she needed to rely on men to exist. Hamlet thought that his mother's choice to remarry was not only a personal moral issue but also a "betrayal" of the patriarchal order - essentially, he still regarded Jotruide as a "subordinate" in the patriarchal family rather than an independent subject with the right to choose. As for Ophelia, Hamlet initially appreciated her innocence from a humanistic perspective, calling her "the beautiful Ophelia". However, when he began his revenge plan, he used "crazy words" to deny Ophelia's personal value, deliberately belittling women, and declared, "I never loved you" and "Woman, your tears are fake." The core of this change in attitude still reflects that Hamlet has not broken away from the traditional patriarchal system, regarding Ophelia as an "accessory of emotions" rather than an independent individual. When Ophelia fails to meet his needs for revenge and development interests, she becomes the "other" of his emotions and plans.

3.2 The Root Cause of Hamlet's Contradictory Attitude: The Conflict Between Humanism and Patriarchy

Hamlet's contradictory attitude is essentially a conflict between humanistic thought and traditional patriarchy. As a humanist of the Renaissance, Hamlet pursued reason, equality and individual value, and recognized human subjective initiative, which enabled him to see the individual traits of women (such as Ophelia's innocence). But he was also deeply trapped in the patriarchal framework left over from the Middle Ages and unable to break through the cognitive limitation of "male dominance and female subordination" - in his view, the value of women still needed to be defined by men, and their existence was either "a mother who conforms to patriarchal morality" or "a lover who meets the emotional needs of

men". Once they deviated from these two roles, it will then be classified as an "abnormal" "other". This conflict ultimately ended with patriarchy taking the upper hand. Although Hamlet had a humanistic awakening consciousness, he did not extend the concept of equality to the female group. Instead, in the anxiety of revenge, he strengthened his "other" positioning of women. His judgment of Jotruide and Ophelia was essentially an act of maintaining the patriarchal order. Ultimately, it solidified his belief in the essence of women as "secondary sex".

4 Jia Baoyu's "Theory of Daughters' Grace" and the Essence of His Aesthetic Gaze Within the Framework of Patriarchy

4.1 The Manifestation and Superficial Progressiveness of Jia Baoyu's "Theory of Daughters' Grace and Elegance"

Jia Baoyu's "Theory of Daughters' Grace" states that "daughters are made of water, while men are made of clay." He praises the purity and grace of women and criticizes the hypocrisy and filth of men. He refused to follow the traditional "official economy" male path. Instead, he was more than willing to spend time with his daughters, respecting their emotions and wishes (such as styling Ping'er's makeup and helping Xiangling out of a difficult situation). Even when his daughters were wronged, he openly opposed feudal ethics (such as supporting Yuanyang when she was resisting marriage). On the surface, Jia Baoyu's "Daughter's Grace Theory" broke through the traditional patriarchal system's belittlement of women in the feudal era, endowing women with higher value and positioning. Jia Baoyu's thoughts demonstrated a certain degree of progressiveness, and thus he is often regarded by the academic circle as a model figure of "anti-feudalism".

4.2 The Essence of Jia Baoyu's Aesthetic Gaze: the "Other" Positioning that Has not Broken Through the Patriarchal System

Although Jia Baoyu had an unconventional and rebellious image, and his view of women endowed the daughter of the Grand View Garden with the metaphysical value of "emotional beauty and talent beauty", this respect did not transcend the framework of the feudal patriarchal system and ultimately failed to change the tragic fate of women^[9]. Jia Baoyu's "Daughter's Grace Theory" is essentially still an aesthetic gaze within the framework of patriarchy, representing the beautiful qualities of women from a male perspective. It limits the qualities of women to what men consider beautiful, such as "purity" and "grace", rather than based on women themselves and not exploring their beautiful qualities from their own position. In fact, it reflects that Jia Baoyu has not truly endowed women with a dominant position. Jia Baoyu regarded his daughters as "objects of appreciation", as if they were "pure works of art", but overlooked their survival predicament and autonomous rights under the feudal society and feudal family. Although he sympathized with Daiyu's tragedy, he was unable to secure her autonomy in marriage. Although he praised his daughter's intelligence and grace, he never questioned the feudal social system of "men being superior to women". Essentially, Jia Baoyu's "daughter's Elegance theory" was merely a "mild improvement" of patriarchy rather than a "complete subversion". Its significance was merely to satisfy men's emotional and aesthetic needs, and ultimately it still failed to break free from the constraints of the feudal traditional patriarchal system. Instead, Jia Baoyu's "appreciation" implicitly solidified the "secondary sex" nature of women in the feudal era of China.

Jia Baoyu often said, "Man is the most intelligent of all creatures by nature. The essence of mountains, rivers, the sun and the moon is only favored by daughters. Men and women are merely dross and impurities." A daughter is the flesh and blood of water, while a man is the flesh and blood of mud. When I see a daughter, I feel refreshed; when I see a man, I feel foul and stinky. "These two characters' daughter 'are extremely noble and pure. They are even more honored and incomparable than the names of Amitabha Buddha and Primordial Heavenly Lord!" " On the one hand, Jia Baoyu highly praises his daughter's fine qualities, but on the other hand, he regards young women as "the other" who are "respected by men" and possess the qualities of "purity, truthfulness, cleanliness and purity" under the gaze of "men". In Jia Baoyu's eyes, a woman's life can be divided into "three stages" : before marriage, she is an "invaluable pearl"; after marriage, she is a "dead pearl"; and in old age, she becomes a "fish eye". The syllogism of "precious pearl", "dead pearl" and "fish eye" reflects the incompleteness and singularity of Jia Baoyu's view of women, which is obviously both narrow and one-sided. This dichotomy of "purity before marriage" and "filth after marriage" is no different from the common division of "angels and demons" among women in literary works. Dividing into different camps means divide and rule, elevating angels or unmarried daughters to a pedestal while "demoting demons or married women" to the human world. Such a daughter complex implies prejudice and rejection towards "unchaste" women. Its root cause still lies in the concept of "virgins" within patriarchy, but it implicitly worships the chastity of virgins. This "groundless" worship further exaggerates the "qualities" of daughters. Are all young women necessarily of good quality and without "defects"? In essence, it subtly

magnifies the significance of a woman's chastity and age ^[10].

5 Hamlet and Jia Baoyu's Commonalities and Individualities in Solidifying the Essence of Women as "Secondary Sexuality"

In terms of commonality, both are governed by traditional patriarchy. Although Hamlet has the awakening consciousness of humanism, he still judges women based on Western patriarchal morality. Although Jia Baoyu praised his daughter, he still defined women by male aesthetics - both regarded women as "the other" in contrast to men, that is, the value of women needs to be confirmed through a male perspective, and the significance of their existence always revolves around the needs of men, neither breaking through the patriarchal system framework of "male dominance and female subordinated".

In terms of personality, although Hamlet had an advanced humanistic consciousness, he did not extend this concept to the female group. Instead, in the anxiety of revenge, he strengthened the "other" positioning of women. His criticism of Jotrupe and Ophelia was essentially an act of maintaining the patriarchal order, ultimately solidifying the "secondary sex" nature of women. Jia Baoyu's approach to solidifying women is mainly based on "aesthetic appreciation". By praising his daughter's delicate qualities, he portrays women as "the other" who "conform to male aesthetics", which more covertly conceals the essence of patriarchy. The differences between the two stem from the influence of different cultural contexts and historical backgrounds, namely the Western Renaissance and the late feudal period in China, on individual personalities.

6 Digital Age Connection: Reflecting the "New Form of Patriarchy" in the Digital Age Through Classic Texts

6.1 The Manifestation of "Patriarchy" in Digital Technology: The Continuation and Variation of Traditional Patriarchy Logic

Digital technology patriarchy refers to the covert reinforcement of gender hierarchy through algorithmic platforms, while digital algorithms act like an "invisible hand" to discipline users, similar to the oppression of patriarchy. The "new form of patriarchy" in the digital age is a continuation and variation of the traditional patriarchy logic. On the one hand, the "other" positioning logic of traditional patriarchy continues in the digital space: Algorithmic recommendation solidifies the stereotype that "women prefer beauty and parenting content" and "men prefer technology and finance content", confining women to the "other" category of "consumer subjects" and "family roles". For instance, female users are often pushed content related to "virtuous wives and good mothers" on short-video platforms, while male users are more exposed to "success studies" and "power topics". This algorithmic bias is essentially the "gender discipline" of the digital age, which is in line with the traditional patriarchal system's solidification of the female role. On the other hand, the patriarchy of digital technology algorithms is reflected in the fact that on digital media platforms, users must abide by the platform's regulations, that is, the "patriarchy" of algorithms, in order to obtain traffic and exposure. From the perspective of operation mechanism, the digital algorithm system is like an "invisible hand", controlling the distribution of traffic. This means that if users want to gain traffic exposure on the platform, they must follow the "game rules" set by the algorithm. For instance, short-video platforms tend to recommend content that features highly popular topics, strong entertainment value, and a fast pace. This is because such content is more likely to capture users' attention, enhance their retention rate and activity level, and meets the algorithm's criteria for "high-quality content".

This algorithmic "patriarchy" has led to the platform's content becoming monotonous and vulgar. In pursuit of traffic, a large number of creators have given up exploring in-depth and professional content and instead chosen to produce quick and eye-catching hot topics. Over time, high-quality content on digital platforms has gradually been marginalized, and the space for in-depth thinking has been severely squeezed, making it difficult for users' aesthetic standards and cognitive abilities to improve. From the perspective of creators, the "patriarchy" of digital algorithms restricts users' creative freedom. Creators no longer create based on their interests and values, but rather to meet the requirements of algorithms and traffic demands. This is like an invisible hand of the "patriarchy" under the feudal system suppressing creators' creative freedom. The algorithmic "patriarchy" is traffic-oriented and imposes mandatory constraints on the content dissemination of creators through rules. Although it has enhanced the commercial value of the platform to a certain extent, it has caused serious damage to the digital content ecosystem and user rights and interests. To break the oppression of this digital "patriarchy", it requires the joint efforts of platform providers, regulatory authorities and users to promote the transparent and fair reform of algorithms and reshape a healthy, diverse and equal digital communication environment.

6.2 It is Related to the Current Gender Equality Issue

The "patriarchy" in the digital age is related to many current social issues of gender equality: First, the issue of the digital gender divide. Women have obvious disadvantages in the use of digital technologies and access to digital resources. Essentially, it is still a continuation of the traditional patriarchal perception that "women lack autonomy", which exacerbates the inequality in the distribution of gender resources. Secondly, the issue of digital discourse power. Women's voices in the digital field are often overlooked or questioned. For instance, the viewpoints of female tech practitioners are hard to gain the same level of recognition as those of men. Essentially, this is a continuation of the traditional patriarchal logic that "men hold the discourse power".

7 Conclusion

This study takes Beauvoir's "The Other" theory in "The Second Sex" and the concept of patriarchy as the framework, and combines literature, comparative and textual analysis methods to analyze the gender consciousness contradictions between Hamlet and Jia Baoyu, and relates them to gender issues in the digital age. In terms of character analysis, Hamlet struggles between humanism and patriarchy, appreciating female traits while criticizing and instrumentalizing women through patriarchal morality. Jia Baoyu's "Daughter's Grace Theory" appears to be progressive on the surface, but in fact, it is an aesthetic gaze within the framework of patriarchy. Neither of them breaks through the logic of patriarchy and ultimately solidifies the essence of women's "secondary sex". Due to the differences in cultural context, they are respectively presented as "critical negation" and "aesthetic appreciation". In its connection with reality, the algorithmic "patriarchy" in the digital age is a continuation and variation of traditional patriarchy. It exacerbates gender inequality through stereotypes and traffic rule restrictions, giving rise to issues such as the digital gender gap and the lack of women's voice. The research aims to break through the limitations of text and single culture, reveal the implicit mechanism of maintaining patriarchy beneath the appearance of "rebellion", and inspire the transformation of men from "rebels" to "Allies" of gender equality. At the same time, in the digital age, to break the "patriarchy" of algorithms, it is necessary for platforms, regulators and users to work together to promote algorithm reform and build an equal digital space.

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