The "Her Suspense" and "Slow Narrative" in "The Long Season" and the British Drama "The Long Shadow"

Bangchen Shu

School of Theater, Film and Television, Communication University of China, Beijing, China

Abstract: This article compares and analyzes the Chinese drama "The Long Season" and the British drama "The Long Shadow", using "Her Suspense" and "Slow Narrative" as entry points to explore how suspense types reveal women's difficulties and social structural trauma. Research has found that 'The Long Season' portrays resistance and redemption under domestic violence through the dual identities of female victimization and victimization. The Long Shadow exposes police bias and victim guilt theory through real cases, criticizing institutional gender discrimination. In terms of narrative strategy, both dramas break through the traditional fast-paced mode: "The Long Season" integrates historical trauma with everyday scenes to achieve reconciliation between individuals and the times; The Long Shadow "depicts the lengthy process of case investigation from a restrained perspective, reflecting the oppression of victims by social fragmentation. Research has revealed that although the two dramas have different cultural contexts, they both use suspense as a carrier to deepen the exploration of gender, class, and the trauma of the times, providing cross-cultural references for narrative innovation and social criticism in the dramas involved.

Keywords: Her Suspense; Slow Narrative; Gender discrimination; Social trauma; Cross cultural comparison

1. Introduction

At the cracks in contemporary global cultural production, suspense dramas are undergoing a paradigm shift from entertainment spectacles to critical carriers. When the fast-paced narrative driven by the logic of capital becomes a carnival of symbolic consumption, the symbiotic experiment of "Her Suspense" and "Slow Narrative" tears open the wound folds of patriarchy and late capitalism collusion in the cross-cultural field. This article uses the Chinese drama "The Long Season" and the British drama "The Long Shadow" as a prism to analyze how suspense genre transforms personal trauma into a symptomatic fable in the public domain through the depiction of female bodies in the folds of time and space. The two works unfold a dual domain on the signifier chain of "suspense": the former is based on the historical trauma of the Northeast layoff wave, constructing a dialectical mirror of victimization/harm; The latter used the real case of the Yorkshire Ripper to expose symbolic violence within the judicial system. This narrative strategy not only subverts the disciplinary gaze of Lacan's "big other" on female subjects, but also reconstructs the ghostly form of traumatic memory in Homi Baba's "third space" - when the silent blade pierces the symbolic order of patriarchal violence, when Emily's body becomes a sacrifice for police statistical violence, the core of the mystery in the suspense drama has shifted from "who is the murderer" to the ultimate question of "what is justice". In the slow paced abyss, truth is no longer an object to be excavated, but a signifier game of self referential power discourse, exposing the cognitive violence and ethical dilemma of contemporary commitment. This study attempts to reveal that this narrative experiment with female trauma as a node is actually a symptom writing of self diagnosis in late capitalist society. In the dynamic network of symbol exchange, the suspense genre has completed a paradigm revolution from entertainment consumer goods to social dissecting knives.

2. "Her Suspense": Women's Imagination in Difficulties

Under various drama genres centered around "involvement in cases", "suspense+women" themed dramas have gained widespread attention worldwide. On the one hand, in the context of cyclical economic decline, the public's demand for anxiety release has increased. On the other hand, society has gained a deeper understanding of gender culture and humanistic care towards women. In the different cultural contexts of the East and the West, women have always been in the position of "second sex" as described by Simone de Beauvoir, and social issues such as women's employment have long been a concern for people. Therefore, with the prominent contributions of female workers in social and historical events, more and more people are realizing the importance of female workers. When social status does not match economic status, fragmentation arises and anxiety is amplified. And these collective unconscious projections into TV dramas have evolved into various main expressions of the female protagonist in "Her Suspense".

(1) The Long Season: Achieving Self Redemption through Victimization and Crime.

The Long Season "is the annual hot drama of 2023, which received rave reviews upon its release. The drama tells the story of Shen Mo, who unexpectedly becomes a murderer in Northeast China in the 1990s due to his rebellion against family and social difficulties. Taxi driver Wang Xiang and his brother-in-law Gong Biao accidentally discovered the perpetrator of a dismembered murder case 18 years ago. They decided to uncover the truth and teamed up with retired police officer Ma Desheng to investigate the case. The three old friends embarked on a journey of life redemption from there.

The drama not only presents the characteristics of suspense in its surface form, but its inherent essence is also full of elements of suspense. The main plot revolves around violence, murder, and death, with each plot gripping the heart. Unlike traditional suspense dramas, this drama changes the dominant role of male characters in plot development. The root cause of the dismemberment case in the story lies in the family background and social experience of the female protagonist Shen Mo. Shen Mo was originally resisting the situation in self-defense, but as a result, he was involved in this murder case and became the main suspect. In addition, female characters such as Yin Hong, Li Ru, and Qiao Yun in the drama also have important roles, and their lives and choices invisibly affect the fate and survival status of men around them. This not only makes the plot more diverse and rich, but also allows the audience to understand and feel the inner world of the characters in the drama from more perspectives.

Social themed films and TV dramas always aim to evoke emotional resonance among the audience. In "The Long Season", the female protagonist Shen Mo, played by Li Gengxi, is both the core character of the film and the shocking true culprit of the dismemberment case. The director cleverly highlights the strong contrast between the victim and the perpetrator in the character of Shen Mo through the presentation of external images and inner scenes. Silent isolation stems from her childhood experiences, where her foster father's abuse, molestation, and foster mother's indifference left her in a helpless state. Li Gengxi's pure image fits the setting of a high school student, making Shen Mo a victim in the eyes of the audience. However, it was precisely this pathological upbringing that gave her a cold and meticulous mindset. When encountering betrayal again, 'blackening' becomes inevitable. The silent resistance comes at a heavy cost, and while the audience is shocked by the plot twist, they also reflect on the real-life experiences of women reflected behind it. Of course, as the silent "twin flower", Yin Hong, under the appearance of being possessed by Pan Yan, is actually avoiding her mother's experiences; The core of tragedy, the sacrifice of Qiao Yun and the suicide of Luo Meisu, is actually the collapse of oneself. In the tragedy of the female group image, Shen Mo, as a victim, wields a knife and slays the perpetrator, completing the resistance against oppression and violence and the redemption of the self subject in the process of being victimized and victimized.

(2) The Long Shadow: Self Suppression Under Victimization and Harm.

The British drama "The Long Shadow" is adapted from the case of a serial killer known as the "Yorkshire Ripper" in Yorkshire and the northern regions of England in the 1970s. It uses a simple linear narrative logic to tell the story of the British police's pursuit of the "Ripper", presenting the occurrence and investigation of the case from a calm and observant following perspective.

In this lengthy investigation, the series did not showcase the wit and bravery of the police and bandits, nor did it show the pursuit and resistance of ordinary people. In this drama, the police are no longer just the embodiment of justice in the traditional national legal system, but a representative of arrogance and prejudice. The first female protagonist of the series, Emily, is forced to go out and make a living as a prostitute in order to repay her family's debts. Just as she was about to wash her hands in the golden pot and earn the last penny of gold, she was brutally murdered. During the police investigation, it was discovered that Emily had engaged in sexual work. Without investigating the reasons or circumstances, no matter how long she had been engaged in it, in the eyes of the police, she had become an experienced sex worker because a prostitute before Emily was killed by the same method.

So the police determined that this was a murder specifically targeting prostitutes, and they defined the perpetrator as a "prostitute killer".

In order to solve the case as soon as possible, the police not only vigorously promoted the identity of the victim in the media, but also said that all women who often go to bars and have lax moral standards should be vigilant. So, under the bias of the police, the inherent impression in the minds of the public was deepened, forming the "victim guilt theory", but this undoubtedly caused secondary harm to those victims and their families.

There was once a documentary about the Yorkson Ripper, in which Emily's son said that the shadow would never come out even when he grew up. Even some survivors did not leave their homes for three years after the incident. What's even sadder is that these survivors, who died nine times in a row, seem to be just tools for the police to catch the killer. They have wounds all over their bodies, bruises and bruises all over their faces, and even struggle to open their eyes. They have to be interrogated by a male police chief in a ward before they are fully conscious, and no one cares about their pain. Although

'The Long Shadow' is a drama involving cases, it also contains both occupational discrimination and gender discrimination of that era. Under the long shadow, the female victims are enveloped in a secondary victimization.

3. Slow Narrative: The Long Longing for Truth

"Long", In English, the span and interval between time and space are large, and its extended meaning is 'longing'. The Chinese and English titles of the two TV dramas coincidentally translate "Long" and "long" with the same associative meaning.

Since 'The Great Train Robbery', suspense related films and TV shows have usually focused on 'solving puzzles', closely connecting seemingly unrelated characters through the setting of mysteries. The narrative pace is fast, and the plot twists and turns, arousing strong curiosity from the audience. Curiosity is not only the audience's strong expectation for the truth, but also the characters' persistent desire for truth and justice, as well as the comfort and healing of shadow wounds in the drama. In the face of the increasingly rich elements of suspense dramas, "The Long Season" and "The Long Shadow" still maintain their universal narrative strategies and plot arrangements, but are not limited to the flat expression of "solving puzzles". Instead, they explore the breadth of society and the depth of characters, use the lives of ordinary people to showcase the historical landscape, and use the shell of suspense dramas to tear apart the trauma of the times.

(1) The Long Season: Seeking Reconciliation between People and Fate.

In recent years, with the social anxiety brought about by the economic downturn, the revenge stories of the insulted have become a global literary trend, producing numerous masterpieces. At the 2020 Academy Awards, the outstanding performances of "Parasite" and "Joker" were particularly noteworthy, as both films focused on the revenge of lower class characters. This creative trend is closely related to the intensification of class conflicts caused by the global economic downturn, demonstrating the complexity of revenge. At the end of 2023, 'Crossing the Sea of Anger' directly establishes the extreme tug of war of father avenging daughter and mother protecting son, demonstrating the extreme nature of revenge. The second installment of "Dark Glory," which will be released in March 2023, aims to solidify social classes and quickly sweep the global TV drama charts with a comeback journey of lower class characters, becoming a top performer on Netflix's global charts. This revenge trend continued until the release of 'The Long Season'.

The difference between "The Long Season" and the aforementioned revenge themes is that, in addition to the plot, "The Season" focuses more on the daily life trajectories of the characters and light hearted and humorous interludes, which to some extent eases the tense and exciting puzzle solving process, creates a unique slow paced narrative style, and thus shapes a unique online suspense drama mode. More importantly, 'The Long Season' targets the wave of layoffs in Northeast China in the 1990s and the 'trauma' behind today's internal competition society. Even after 18 years, they must independently recount their past and seek their own redemption.

This work uses clever narrative strategies to transform "trauma" into its own narrative structure, thus endowing a generation in history with the possibility of redemption. It not only shapes a vivid "group image" of ordinary people, but also deeply showcases the lives of ordinary people, enabling the public's values to truly "land". In this process, history and reality have reached a collective reconciliation at the cultural level. This not only goes beyond the simple logic of "revenge" and yearns for the arrival of fairness and justice, but also provides us with a profound perspective on how ordinary people face the past, seek redemption and reconciliation, and cross the long autumn and life, making the word "long" particularly heavy.

(2) The Long Shadow: Society's Traumatic Stress on People.

In 'The Long Shadow', the portrayal of characters is more like a record rather than a setting, without giving any special character aura, special skills, story preparation, detail amplification or other irrational artistic rendering. It only calmly records the first reactions of the actors' portrayal of victims, police, and related personnel in the progress of their work. Although 'The Long Shadow' tells the story of the Yorkshire Ripper case, the protagonist is not the murderer himself, but rather focuses on the victims and the police. Especially the stories of the victims and their families, from a new perspective, allow the audience to more intuitively feel their pain and despair.

A restrained perspective can keep the audience in sync with the police's grasp of the case, allowing them to more vividly feel the arrogance and cruelty of the criminals, as well as the social panic caused by several cases. In the process of delaying innocence and truth, the inner torment is actually amplified. This slowness is a psychological and emotional projection of the speed of case investigation, as well as a restoration of reality.

In reality, the British police conducted a continuous five-year search for criminals from October 1975 to January 1981, involving over a thousand officers. This is a very long process, and in the drama, this sense of slowness and powerlessness can be felt through the screen. Various accidental misses are actually inevitable oversights. In the drama, the audience watched as the police repeatedly missed the killer and allowed tragedies to happen, to the point where the public couldn't

even curse them. Because the police "tried their best" and "took responsibility", a large number of officers stayed up all night, and the leading officer even fell ill due to exhaustion... but they failed. The failure of the police represents the incompetence of the big other, while the bias of the police represents the discrimination against women in society.

When the police first limited the victims to a certain category of women, they overlooked other possible characteristics of the criminals; When they decided to release a recording of a person claiming to be a criminal and closely investigate the accent in the recording, they fell into a wrong trap, wasting a lot of manpower, material resources, time, and energy. Even more terrifying is that due to the police's failure to catch criminals in a timely manner, new women are constantly being victimized. The police have fallen into a vicious cycle of self verification and self-examination, deeply cutting off the lives of victims and their families. When the starting point of the police shifts from guarding the people to chasing the real culprit, its legitimacy is also questioned. Shadow "shows us the evil of Lacan's" Big Other ", casting a layer of rejection from the symbolic world over the victims who are already suffering from human evil. They should seek protection from the symbolic world, but are excluded and exiled. The truth pursued by the police is just a tool to maintain the authority of the Big Other country, which seriously deviates from the true demands of the victims.

Discrimination based on class and gender is often a breeding ground for evil. The birth of the 'Yorkshire Ripper' is closely related to the violent clients, police officers who humiliate and disdain sex workers, superiors who shout at female police officers, and colleagues who mock undercover female police officers. As screenwriter George Kay said, "This is not a story about the Yorkshire Ripper, but a story about how Yorkshire was torn apart. The long shadow is a long investigation, a long injury, a long injustice, and in the center of this shadow are all women, dead and alive.

4. Conclusion

"The Long Season"and "The Long Shadow" use suspenseful narrative as a prism to reflect gender and power. The complex spectrum of trauma reveals the critical core of two works that lead to the same destination under cultural heterogeneity. In Lacan's "symbolic realm" framework, the female subject is always in a rift of being gazed upon and disciplined - whether it is the silent and violent resistance to the patriarchal violence, or Emily becoming a symbolic "prostitute killer" under the gaze of the police's "big other", both expose the encoding and dissolution of the power mechanism on the female body. This encoding is not a one-way violence, but a dynamic "symbol exchange": silent crime becomes a symbolic revenge against structural oppression, while the police's "solving justice" in "The Long Shadow" becomes a ritualistic performance to maintain institutional authority. Together, they deconstruct the determinacy of "truth" in traditional suspense narratives.

The 'slow' narrative transcends temporal delays and becomes a metaphor for trauma. The Long Season "takes the wave of layoffs in Northeast China as its historical anchor point, embedding individual redemption into the folds of collective memory, making" slow "an ethical posture that resists linear progress narrative; The Long Shadow "takes an almost anthropological and stern perspective, transforming the ineffectiveness of case investigation into a satire on modern rationalism - when truth is simplified into statistical probabilities of power discourse, justice becomes a symbolic game of self reference. The two works reveal deeper symptoms beneath the surface of "involvement" through the self deconstruction of suspense type: in the conspiracy between late capitalism and patriarchy, individual trauma has never truly "passed", but continues to exist in the form of ghost studies, constantly questioning the conspiracy relationship between historical violence and contemporary society.

This type of narrative experiment suggests a new critical paradigm: suspense is no longer just a container for puzzles, but a dissecting knife for dissecting social textures. When 'Her Suspense' takes the female body as the battlefield and elevates private trauma into a public allegory, we may glimpse the potential of Homi Baba's so-called 'third space' - to renegotiate the ethical boundaries of subjectivity and redemption at the threshold of reality and fiction, oppression and rebellion.

References

[1] Su Zhan. How to express "slow narrative" superficially and deeply: an exploration of a new type of current film and television drama creation [J]. Art Review, 2024, (12):90-99.DOI:10.16364/j.cnki.cn11-4907/j.2024.12.011.
[2] Ding Ying. Spatiotemporal Dimension and Civilian Position: Multidimensional Interpretation of the Internet Drama "The Long Season" [J]. Film Review, 2024, (11):95-100.DOI:10.16583/j.cnki.52-1014/j.2024.11.012.
[3] Chen Geng, Li Ming. A Study on the Female Image in the "Her Suspense" web drama "The Long Season" [J]. Literature and Art Weekly, 2023, (16):87-89.
[4] Li Yuxin. Slow Narrative, Northeast Three Musketeers, and Visual Discourse: The Rise of the Domestic Internet Suspense Drama "The Long Season" [J]. Home Theater Technology, 2023, (16):94-98.

[5] Ai Fangyi. A Feminist Narrative Study of Domestic "Her Suspense" Online Drama [D]. Nanchang University, 2022. DOI: 10.27232/d.cnki.gnchu.2022.001596

[6] Wang Wei. A Study on the Slow Narrative of Small People in the Multiple Dimensions of Sadness in 'The Calm Wind and Waves' [J]. Film Review, 2021, (19):87-89.DOI:10.16583/j.cnki.52-1014/j.2021.19.008.