

Solness's Ideal Kingdom and Man -- A Brief Talk on the Images in *The Master Builder*



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Abstract: As for Ibsen's later work *The Master Builder*, most people are paying attention to the expression of ethical themes and the study of characters' self-consciousness. Since *The Wild Duck*, his works gradually began to explore characters' hearts, and many scholars classified it as symbolism. This paper analyzes many intentions in Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, and reveals how image, the ontological category of poetics and aesthetics, is applicable to drama.

Keywords: Ibsen; image; drama

1. Introduction

The Master Builder is one of Ibsen's most important works in his later period, and it is also his most powerful voice as a dying man. When the study of Ibsen was popular in China, although social problems seemed to be an unavoidable core vocabulary, many Ibsen drama researchers could easily see that Ibsen's later plays had more vigorous artistic vitality. After the publication of *Romsersholm*, the creation of image group in Ibsen's later plays gradually became the most important element, and Architect is one of its representatives (Paul, 1982). This paper will summarize and integrate the complicated images in *The Master Builder*.

2. The Imaginative character setting.

It is the main body in character drama to make movements and promote the development of drama, and the imagery character can carry this function. While playing this basic function, it moves the character from concrete to symbol, and becomes a symbolic carrier for dramatists to express their philosophical thoughts and feelings. The characters in some plays are also an image. In this case, the characters become an external manifestation of the dramatic image at the same time (Hu, 1999). Solness is such an image character in *The Master Builder*. From characters experience's point of view, Solness's life can be divided into three parts: the past full of fantasy, the present full of guilt, and the future full of destruction.

2.1 Fantasy past

No genius will be stingy with their talents. As an unparalleled genius in architecture, Solness certainly understands the importance of opportunities to him. However, his opportunity must be based on the destruction of the once solid family relationship, which is unbearable for the

of architecture but deprive him of other rights including family harmony and self-satisfaction. As a proud man, Solness had to stretch his hand to the sky, and his response was a betrayal of God. The spire is an upward demonstrative action, a platform for Solness to declare war on God, a symbol of his high genius and supremacy, and a platform for self-realization. But what he ignores is that there is a sky above him, which he can not reach.

2.2 The guilty present

Solness's challenge to God can only be described as Don Quixote's. This kind of daydreaming is bound to attract realistic revenge. The reason why Solness is full of guilt is precisely because Solness can not get rid of the essence of a person—the sum of all social relations. He is in a family, with a wife, old friends, subordinates and lovers. Even his work can not be separated from society. At the same time, the younger generation is gradually gaining a foothold in his field, which is too conceited for him to bear. On the one hand, his elitism led to his isolation, and on the other hand, he had to maintain his elitism for dignity. Such a person who constantly pursues self-realization is bound to ignore the feelings of those around him, but when his fragile conscience is inadvertently touched, his reason forces him to return to normal. The premise of this normality is being in this family, so when Solness is forced to share a room with his wife who he does not want to see, the image of that poor woman will only torment him constantly and drive him crazy. It is his own contradiction that leads to his need for salvation.

2.3 Destroying the future with strong breath.

Thanks to Hilda's arrival, the strength of the young people who had oppressed him temporarily kept him safe. In this girl, he saw his own shadow and the immortal and inheritable power. He had a goal to live, got this love, and led her to defeat Ragnar, so that his position would never be violated. However, he misjudged his own strength, and the perennial dizziness was not enough to be overcome by temporary courage. What's more, besides dizziness, his guilt

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and his overwhelmed heart became the important reasons for his fall. He has hope, so he can climb bravely, but fate will not let a person stay on the top of the tower forever. So the second illustrative action about the spire is falling.

3. Repeated collage images

In drama, a single image is difficult to form a complete expression and emotional transmission. Playwrights often connect them in a jigsaw puzzle through images with common characteristics to achieve emotional repetition and complete the overall expression of images (He, 2011). These images are not arbitrarily spliced, but follow the basic principles of drama creation, express the same drama theme, and place them in a complete drama structure.

3.1 Tower

Image group, which was extended from the Tower in *The Master Builder*, has played a vital role in the whole play. The core of this view is the confrontation between man and God when the concepts of ideal kingdom and man are defined. The tower is a part of the church. In Solness's own description, it is a symbol of God's will and a shelter for personal happiness. When his fate changed, Solness decided not to build a church, but only to build people's houses. However, he once again built a tower on top of his new house. From Solness's description of Hilda, we can clearly feel his break with God. After that, he wanted to build a tower on the top of his new house because he believed in religion and God's salvation. But when Solness saw that God had destroyed two innocent children, he began to doubt the existence of God, which is why he stopped building towers. On the other hand, Solness believes in salvation instead of religion. Since God can not redeem people, people can only redeem themselves. When religion's personal comfort ability is connected with people's residence, it reflects the realization of self-salvation, which may be one of the reasons why Solness retains the shape of tower. Perhaps Solness doesn't have such profound ideals, but his pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty is indeed reflected in his architecture. Solness chose to build for people, but he didn't abandon his understanding of beauty and reflected his own value from the artistic point of view, which is another significance of his being an architect rather than a cement worker. This kind of "tower" has two basic characteristics of the ideal kingdom: faith and beauty.

3.2 Ideal Kingdom

In the whole play, three images refer to the ideal kingdom: the orange kingdom, the castle and Spain. First of all, the orange kingdom, orange is a kind of sour and sweet fruit. This pure sensory metaphor is Solness's anticipation of the ideal kingdom of mankind. The point of the castle has been analyzed above. It is a church dedicated to people and the embodiment of human nobility. The last image is Spain. On the one hand, in Ibsen's time, Spain was still synonymous with the most pious propagator of Catholicism. On the other hand, moderns in Spain was gone forever, and the country fell into a silent and closed backward state again. Spain's fanaticism about religion is a template for Ibsen's fearless fanaticism about human pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty. At the same time, Spain's huge profits from plunder and overseas trade have been transformed into gorgeous buildings and sculptures that can be seen everywhere on the streets of

Madrid, and the peace and comfort brought by the decline of the national economy after the rise of Britain. These are the symbols of noble civilization that Ibsen admires. Therefore, Spain became the only synonym of Solness's ideal kingdom.

3.3 Castles in the air

Castle in the air is the last image we analyzed, and it is also the most important one associated with the tower. Before the end of the second act, the castle in the air became the most important illusion in the discussion between Solness and Hilda. It is not difficult to see that castles in the air are the ideal kingdom that Solness has been searching for. Its solid foundation is the common expectation of mankind for the future. It is an enlargement of the tower, and it is the most possible building that art can build. It can only be in the air, but it has a solid foundation.

4. Conclusion

As a result, these images were piled up layer by layer around Solness's contradiction, so when he climbed to the top of the tower for the second time, he presented to his ideal kingdom as an ideal person, causing an irreparable tragedy. Yu Besl, a French dramatist, thinks that it is meaningful to find out the signifier system composed of symbolic objects from all the works of a writer (Shi, 2007). Ibsen reveals the secrets of people's hearts through image symbols, which has certain appeal. The collage of repeated images is also a widely used expression technique in Ibsen's dramas, which is used to convey some spiritual experience, hint at the subtle inner world and indicate the special fate of characters. In this play, Ibsen's image-like characters and some archetypal images convey mysticism. This is also the embodiment of the unique charm of his later plays.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

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