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**«ЖЕНЩИНЫ, ВЫДАЮЩИЕ СЕБЯ
ЗА МУЖЧИН (擬男)» В ОПЕРЕ
ПЕРИОДА ДИНАСТИИ МИН****«WOMEN DISGUIISING
AS MEN (擬男)» IN MING
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На протяжении 276 лет правления династии Мин в Китае развитие оперы прошло сначала стадию первоначального упадка, а затем процветания. В среднем и позднем периодах династии Мин создано большое количество оперных произведений, включая «женщин, переодетых в мужчин». Этот вид оперы отразил постепенный прогресс социальных отношений. Эти оперы показывают четыре главных мотивации поступков героинь, вследствие которых они переодевались в мужчин: следуя любви, под давлением обстоятельств, ради вынужденного сокрытия идентичности и по зову таланта. С современной точки зрения тема «женщин, переодетых в мужчин» в опере династии Мин стала отражением изменений в социальных и культурных понятиях того времени, но все эти тенденции имели определенные ограничения. Героиня должна была в конечном счете возвратиться к семье и выполнить свои обязанности как женщина.

Ключевые слова: Китай, династия Мин, опера, драматургия, женщины, переодетые в мужчин, общество, исторические изменения.

During 276 years of the Ming Dynasty reign in China, the development of its opera went through a state of initial depression, and then of its prosperity. At the Middle and Late Ming Dynasty, there was a large number of opera plots, including the one of «women disguising as men». It means that women became protagonists and pretended to be men to do things beyond the scope of women's actions. This kind of opera reflected the gradual advance of social thoughts. In addition, play writers changed their minds towards women's social value. Those operas show four main motivations for the heroines to disguise themselves as men: pursue love, forced by the situation, conceal identity, and talent driven. From a contemporary point of view, the theme of «women disguising themselves as men» in Ming Dynasty opera reflected the changes in social and cultural development concepts of that time, but it still had limitations to a certain extent. The heroine must eventually have returned to the family and perform her duties as a woman.

Keywords: China, Ming Dynasty, opera, playwright, women disguising as men, society, historical changes.

«Women disguising as men (擬男)» [1, p. 303] is a very important story type in ancient Chinese literature. Starting from the folk song «Mulan Poem (木蘭詩)» in the Northern Wei Dynasties (386–535 CE)¹, the character image of «women disguising as men» has officially entered literary works [2, p. 424-428].

That plot got its farther development, and it formed a relatively fixed narrative structure and pattern during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE), also it became a common artistic creation motif. Furthermore, in the middle and late Ming Dynasty, when opera was highly prosperous, «women disguising as men» naturally appeared to find itself in the opera creation.

When I am talking about Chinese opera of the Ming Dynasty time, I mean the following two types of Chinese play:

Zaju (雜劇): A form of classical Chinese opera. Produced in the late Jin Dynasty (1115–1234 CE) and early Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368 CE); there are many performance forms named Zaju in the history of Chinese opera. Although Zaju in the Yuan Dynasty still uses the name of Zaju, it has formed a specific system and it is a complete and mature dramatic art form in the history of Chinese opera. In terms of structure, the basic form of Yuan Zaju is a four “Ze (折)” plus a “Xiezi (楔子)”. Each Ze is equivalent to today's scene; the Xiezi

¹ Folk song «Mulan Poem (木蘭詩)», a folk song believed to have been composed during the Northern Wei dynasty (386 - 535 CE), and first compiled in an anthology of books and songs «Ancient and modern music records (古今樂錄)» during the Southern Chen dynasty (557 - 589 CE). The historical setting of the Mulan Poem is usually the Northern Wei's military campaigns against the nomadic tribes. A later adaptation shows Mulan active around the founding of the Tang dynasty (c. 620 CE). It was included in the «Yuefu Poems Collection (樂府詩集)», a collection of Yuefu poems from ancient times to the Tang and Five Dynasties compiled by Guo Maoqian, a writer of the Northern Song Dynasty. The story of Mulan was taken up in a number of later works. For example, the Tang Dynasty Wei Yuanfu's poem «Mulan Song», the Ming Dynasty Xu Wei's drama «Female Mulan», the Qing Dynasty drama «Mulan Goes to War in Her Father's Place».

is a short scene, placed at the beginning of the whole play or added between the four acts, serving as a prologue or transition scene, but it cannot be placed at the end.

Chuanqi (傳奇): A form of opera that emerged after the mid-Ming Dynasty. It got its name because of its strange and magical plot. Originally refers to Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE) novels. Each Chuanqi is usually divided into forty or fifty «chu (出)» sections, which are based on the character's entry and exit, entry and return. It was most popular from the Jiajing period (嘉靖) (1522–1566 CE) of the Ming Dynasty to the Qianlong period (乾隆) (1736–1796 CE) of the Qing Dynasty.

Regarding all them had scenario, music, actors and singing, it gives the author all the reason to use the English word of "opera": a form of theatre in which music makes a fundamental component and dramatic roles are taken by singers.

This type of opera shows the female as the protagonist of the play, using the male identity to do things those women cannot do, thereby expressing the author's own thoughts and emotions towards women's social value.

In addition to this, there is another way of existence of «women disguising as men», which only exists as a plot: in opera with male characters as the core, women exist in the form of «women disguising as men» and as a foil to the men protagonist, this kind of performance is also called «cross-dressing (反串)». Based on this, the "women disguising as men" in this research needs to include the following two meanings:

1. Ming Dynasty drama works centered on the female image with the plot of «women disguising as men».

2. Ming Dynasty drama works where the heroine not only changes her makeup by wearing men's clothes, but also hides her female identity and achieves her own goals by pretending to be a male.

According to the statistics of existing plays included in the «Compendium of Ancient Opera Repertoire (古代戲曲劇目提要)» edited by Li Xiusheng (李修生)¹, in total there are 11 drama works with the theme of «women disguising as men» in the Ming Dynasty, 4 of which are recreations based on original historical stories. Furthermore, a female writer wrote only one of those 11 works [3].

The long-term cultural awareness of the phenomenon of the gender in ancient and medieval China has effected at in the theme of «women disguising as men» in the way, it has

¹ Li Xiusheng (b. July 1933). Professor of Chinese ancient books, member of the National Working Committee on Collation and Research of Ancient Books in Colleges and Universities, «Compendium of Ancient Opera Repertoire» won the first prize of Beijing Social Science Award in 1998.

received different characteristics in different historical periods. During the Song (960–1279 CE), and Yuan Dynasties (1271–1368 CE), the traditional ethics of «preserving natural principles and destroying human desires(存天理、滅人欲)» [4, p.144] put its constraint to people's thoughts, and women were restricted to small boudoirs. That was why the «Women disguising as men» lost the creative soil.

In the early Ming Dynasty, the autocratic monarchy continued to strengthen itself, its ideological prescriptions became more serious, and opera creation entered a low period.

元明人多恒歌酣舞，不事生產，明太祖(1328-1398 CE)於中街立高樓，令卒偵望其上，聞有弦歌飲博者，即縛至倒懸樓上，飲水三日而死。[5, p. 12]

After the mid-Ming Dynasty (1601 CE), with the rapid development of the commodity economy, the trend of individual liberation and the worship of talented women emerged in Jiangnan (South-Eastern China). Popular folk arts, mainly opera, gradually prospered.

萬曆辛醜年，父叔輩張燈龍山……山無不燈，燈無不席，席無不人，人無不歌唱鼓吹。……父叔輩臺於大松樹下，亦席，亦聲歌，每夜鼓吹笙簧，與宴歌弦管，沈沈味旦。[6, p. 594]

The number of drama creations on the theme of «women disguising as men» has increased, bursting out with new vitality, and the aesthetics of dramas got its new features. Those plays formed 4 basic types:

Pursue love (追求愛情).

In the traditional Chinese mainstream culture, there are hard restrictions on the interactions between a man and a woman. The entire marriage procedure was completely the subject of their parents. Young men and women have no right to make independent choices. Many women even met their husbands for the first time, when they married them.

不待父母之命，媒妁之言，鑽穴隙相窺，逾牆相從，則父母、國人皆賤之。[7, p.110]

In that collision between emotion and reason, in dramas of the late Ming Dynasty times, to find their sweethearts heroines began to appear as «disguising as men». For example, Zhu Youdou's (朱又燉)² «Taoyuan Jing (桃源景)», the heroine has its name as Taoyuan Jing (桃源景)³. Her

² Zhu Youdun (February 6, 1379 - July 8, 1439) was a playwright of the Ming Dynasty. The grandson of Zhu Yuanzhang, Taizu of the Ming Dynasty, and the eldest son of Zhu Ding, King of Zhou Ding. He wrote the most extent works among the playwrights of the Yuan (1271-1368 CE) and Ming Dynasties (1368-1644 CE).

³ Taoyuan Jing: Zaju script written by Zhu Youdun. The full name is «(Meiyiyuan fengyue Taoyuan Jing (美姻緣風月桃源景))». It is recorded in «Yeyiyuan Bibliography (也是園書目)» and «Jinle Textual Research (今樂考證)». «Taoyuan Jing» was written in 1431. The whole play is 4-«Ze» and 2 «Xiezi» in total.

parents sent her to a brothel, when she was a child. When she became an adult, her parents arranged her to marry Zhang Yao (張咬兒), who was also a slave.

In order to get rid of her fate, Taoyuan Jing met scholar Li Zhao (李釗), and secretly decided to live with him. Unexpectedly, Li Zhao was frustrated in his officialdom, and was finally demoted to suburbs. Taoyuan Jing disguised herself as a man to look for Li Zhao. Zhang Shuer (張舒兒) in «Er Qiyuan (二奇緣)»¹, and Luo Xixi (羅惜惜) in «Jingyuan Ji (景園記)»² are all «women disguising as men», violating the ethics and traditions to find their own love.

Forced by the situation (形勢所迫).

In ancient Chinese traditional society, women have always been regarded as men's accessories, and thus excluded from any activity of mainstream society.

君至尊也，父至尊也，夫至尊也。君雖不仁，臣不可以不忠；父雖不慈，子不可以不孝；夫雖不賢，妻不可以不順。[8, p. 307–310]

Once something unexpected happens, dressing up as men is the best option for women to protect themselves. For example, Jia Wuyun in (賈烏雲) «Zeng shu ji (贈書記)»³ did it, because her father died, her uncle wanted to occupy her family property. It happened that the palace was recruiting beautiful women, so her uncle reported Jia Wuyun's name. Wuyun did not want to enter the palace, so he listened to her nurse's advice, disguised himself as a man, and escaped overnight.

“衣妝暗換非情願，只因避難。逢人處怎不赧顏。况深閨久安，久安那識程途險，這苦楚若個垂怜。” [9, p. 37]

Lou Jinhua (婁金花) in «Jinhua Ji (金花記)»⁴, her husband went to Beijing to take the exam, leaving Jinhua alone to serve her mother-in-law. During this period, her mother-in-law passed away. The bully Jiang Yuan wanted to marry Jinhua because of her beauty, but Jinhua refused, used paint to corrode own appearance and disguised himself as a man, went to Beijing to find a husband, and won the first prize (狀元).

“若把女妝卸却，改扮男子模樣，方不能惹禍起衅。” [10]

In «Chun deng mi (春燈謎)»⁵, Wei Yingniang (韋影娘), an official lady, goes out to enjoy lanterns

for the Lantern Festival. She disguises herself as a man and mistakenly identifies a ship, which triggers a series of events.

Conceal identity (掩蓋身份).

In Xu Wei's (徐渭) «Female Mulan Joins the Army in the Substitution of Her Father (雌木蘭替父從軍)»⁷, due to the outbreak of war, the state forced each family to send a man to the front line. However, there were no boys in Mulan's family and her father was old, so Mulan disguised herself as a man and joined the army in her father's place.

“況且俺小時節，一了有些小氣力，又有些小聰明，就隨著俺的爺，也讀過書，學過些武藝。這就是俺今日該替爺的報頭了。” [11, p. 44]

In «The Story of Mingzhu (明珠記)»⁸, Liu Mingzhu's (劉明珠) family was forced to go to jail because of being accused by the prime minister. Her maid imitated Hua Mulan, disguised herself as a man and took risks to pass on the imperial edict to save her master.

In «Yuan yang meng (鴛鴦夢)»⁹, three fairies: Wenqin (文琴), Feijiu (飛玖) and Taoxiang (菑香); were sentenced to death by the Queen Mother, because they had moved their mortal hearts. The three fairies transformed into three talented men to survive the calamity in the human world.

Talent driven (展現才能).

In ancient and medieval Chinese society, everything was centered on male dominance, especially in the political arena, women were completely excluded. The only value of women reflected consisted in serving the family. There was no opportunity to display their talents and it was difficult to be recognized.

婦人有三從之義，無專用之道；故未嫁從父，既嫁從夫，夫死從子。故父者，子之天也。夫者，妻之天也 [12, p.113]

Therefore, in Xu Wei's (徐渭) «Nv zhuangyuan ci feng de huang (女狀元辭鳳得凰)»¹⁰, the heroine Huang Chonggu (黃崇嘏), due to her family's decline and the death of her parents, wants to realize her own value, so she disguises herself as

¹ Er Qiyuan: A Chuanqi play from the Ming Dynasty. Written by Xu Heng (許恒). The whole play has 38 «chu (出)».

² Jingyuan Ji: A Chuanqi play written by Wang Yuanshou (王元壽). The whole play has 38 «chu (出)».

³ Zeng shu ji: A Chuanqi play. Unknown author. The whole play has 32 «chu (出)».

⁴ Jinhua Ji: A Chuanqi play. Unknown author. The whole play has 39 «chu (出)».

⁵ Chun deng mi: Also known as «Shi ren cuo (十錯認)». A Chuanqi play. Written by Ruan Dacheng (阮大鍼) in the Ming Dynasty. The whole play has 39 «chu (出)».

⁶ Xu Wei (1521–1593) was a Chinese writer, calligrapher, painter, dramatist and military strategist in the mid-Ming Dynasty. His «Nanci Narrative» was the China's first theoretical monograph on Southern Opera.

⁷ Female Mulan Joins the Army in the Substitution of Her Father: Zaju script, also known as «Mulan Girl (木蘭女)» and «Substitute Father in the Army (代父從軍)», The whole play makes 2 «Ze» in total. The third of Xu Wei's Zaju script «Si sheng yuan (四聲猿)»

⁸ The Story of Mingzhu: A Chuanqi play. Written by Lu Cai. The whole play has 43 «chu (出)».

⁹ Yuan yang meng: Zaju script. Written by Ye Xiaowan (葉小綏). This play was written around the ninth year of Chongzhen in the Ming Dynasty (1636). The whole play makes 4 «Ze» and 1 «Xiezi» in total.

¹⁰ Nv zhuangyuan ci feng de huang: Zaju script. Written by Xu Wei of Ming Dynasty. Created during the Wanli period (1573–1620 CE). The whole play is 5 «Ze» in total.

a man and becomes the number one scholar (狀元).

“我這般才學，若肯去應舉，可管情不落空，卻不唾手就有一個官兒。” [11, p. 63]

Unfortunately, her identity as a woman is exposed. The emperor issued an imperial edict to marry her to Huang Fengyu (黃鳳羽), and the honor of being the number one scholar was transferred to her husband Huang Fengyu. Huang Chonggu resumed women's clothing and returned to the family.

“崇巖原職，便敕銓除，以卿子風羽代之。” [11, p. 101]

In the Ming Dynasty playwrights, a series of talented female characters were created in the form of «women disguising as men», highlighting women's talents and beautiful character. These drama works reflected women's talent and resourcefulness, and influenced the future dramas.

The development of those ideas were groundbreaking. In particular, Ye Xiaowan's (葉小

紈)»Yuan yang meng (鴛鴦夢)»¹ pioneered the theme of «women dressing up as men» for female playwrights. The author broke through the limitations of women trapped in love and focused on thinking about society and their own value, which means the awakening of the meaning of female writers.

The theme of «women disguising as men» in Ming Dynasty dramas reflected the changes in social and cultural development concepts at that time, but it still had certain limitations. No matter how twisted and turned the plot had been, it presupposed that the heroine had been eventually able to return to her family, having forming a fixed pattern of «female-male-female», and it had required the heroine to perform her responsibilities as a woman anyway.

¹ Ye Xiaowan (about 1613 ~ about 1657) wrote the drama of «Yuan yangmeng» (Chinese title here also) and was the first female writer in the history of Chinese opera to have her works circulated.

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