

Case Analysis of Cross-cultural Communication Film

The Origin of Female Personality in "The Color Purple"*

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Abstract—"The Color Purple" is an African-American black culture film that expresses the theme of the growth of African-American women who were unique in the early 20th century. This paper attempts to study the process and motivation of the formation of black female personality in the film from the perspective of intercultural psychology. That is, the dual motivations of the environment and the individual make it a personality trait of reliance and enforcement. With Celie's economic independence, the transformation of the family model, and the spiritual journey of roots in African culture, her personality eventually developed into autonomous-relational self-interpretation of personality. Finally, she found culture attachment in cross-cultural conflicts, and achieved the independence of personality and spirit.

Keywords—*personality; cross-cultural psychology; collectivism; family model; self-interpretation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" is recognized as a classic work of black feminism. The film of the same name "The Color Purple" uses the power of the mass media to make the audiences of African countries understand the unique collectivist culture of African-Americans and to feel the growth of a black girl in the collision between her own culture and American mainstream culture.

Walker once described the black women in the southern United States: "They lived blindly and stumbled: life was abused, the body was damaged, the pain made them confused. ... They did not have the integrity of the faith as people because their bodies were shrinking. : Their hearts have become a temple suitable for worship." [1] Generations of spiritual travelers under the pressure of cultural conflicts, at the expense of personality, earned us the capital of talking multiculturalism today. This paper tries to explain the characteristics of African-American collectivism culture depicted in "The Color Purple" from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology, and analyzes the cultural origin and characteristics of female personality dominated by the protagonist Celie.

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II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY FORMATION AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE FAMILY MODEL

Cultural psychologist Karen Heni said: "Our emotions and attitudes are largely shaped by the environment in which we live. This environment has both a cultural environment and an individual environment. They work together and complement each other." [2] "The Color Purple" is the unique environment in which culture and individual emotions are intertwined. The film opened in a deep manner: in the sea of purple flowers, the sisters of Celie got into the audience's vision, running and laughing, and the sudden appearance of the stepfather broke the atmosphere of joy. Then the camera turned, in a cold winter night, in a dilapidated wooden house, Celie gave birth to a baby girl. At that time, the baby was cruelly snatched by her stepfather, and threatened: "No one is allowed to tell anyone, otherwise I will kill your mother." The purple flower sea symbolizes the desire of the Sisters desire for joy and freedom in the heart, and also sets out the sincere affection between the sisters, while the stepfather is the representative of all the cruel reality of society and family.

The inner monologue that was suppressed during the funeral of the mother introduced Celie's family: soon after birth, the father died of white lynching and the mother remarried. Celie took heavy physical labor from her urination, and her stepfather deprived her of her right to education. She also raped her into a pregnancy and even sold a pair of children of Celie. Celie's family is the epitome of African-American families in the South: poor; slavery makes men lose their social status outside, so they rely on male fertility to control their own women, and women lack the most basic human care. Childhood life in the insecure family atmosphere makes the unconsciousness of fear and helplessness run through the life of Celie.

Later, the stepfather, like a seller, married Celie to the cowardly man, Albert, which did not change the situation of Celie. There was no marriage ceremony, and she was greeted by a big stone that had been hit by her step-son Habo. Celie was bleeding, but there was still a glimmer of fantasy, which was to rescue her sister, Natty from her stepfather, and let Natty live with her. But she stupidly pinned her hopes on Albert, who had the same nature as her stepfather. When he

had the possession of Natty, and the hard-working Netty was driven out of the house. The helpless Celie squeezed the only resistance to the unconscious level. Celie mechanically exercised the obligation to be a wife and stepmother. She was enslaved and tortured. As long as she reached the most basic survival requirement of human beings — "living", she would have nothing to ask for.

In the two families where Celie lived, the bond between husband and wife, parents and children was not a relationship but a strong dependence. The practical value of the wife and children was very obvious. This is the dependent family model. The interpersonal relationship of the Celie family is cold and cruel. She was always with her family, whether when she was doing farm work, gathering, or worshipping, but the film did not show her effective communication with her family. Celie was always working silently, being reprimanded by others, and even being beaten.

"In all kinds of environmental factors that affect the formation of personality, family factors are the earliest and lasting forever." [3] Therefore, the dependent family model led to the formation of dependent personality. In the collectivist Afro-culture, women are often forced to adopt a personality-dependent strategy in order not to deviate from the cultural model, because culture has less tolerance and more sanctions on "anti-social qualities. The personality traits of separating individuals from the collective are also the least tolerated." [4] 175 Celie constantly denies autonomy and produces a self-interpretation of "his control". Forcing and obedience become the masters of Celie consciousness and suppress hostility, turning her into a wood without feelings. But she never gave up her longing for a happy family. The thoughts of the discrete sister Natty are the best evidence. As long as she can reunite with her sister, Celie's independent personality will be awakened.

III. WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE PERSONALITY DIRECTED BY THE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

African-American culture also plays a decisive role in the personality development of other female images in the film. Although they have different personalities, each person's personality formation process reflects the shaping role of culture. When the individual's personality tends to be the same, the collective personality is born. At this time, the individual is not a passive cultural transmitter, and has become the creator of culture. The collective personality expressing strong appeal will surely form a new cultural orientation.

Serge is the only person in the film that reflects the cultural color of American urban individualism. She has a confident smile that reveals all the teeth, a sensual, straightforward self-expression, and a decisive style of doing things. Sick Serge can ruthlessly blame Albert: "I don't need a weak boy, I need a man!" She has a "strong desire to express herself, and to shape image by showing her 'unique feelings and intuition'." [5] The distinctive personality stems from her cultural experience: she was not able to marry Albert because of patriarchal intervention, which did not make her depressed. Relying on her singing talent to make a

living in a big city, she gained economic independence. Freed from the shackles of rural collective culture, urban culture strengthened her independent personality. During the illness of Albert's family, Celie's meticulous care made her feel the long-lost family warmth. After she recovered, she passed on her independent self-consciousness to Celie. However, her maverick is contrary to the traditional culture of African-Americans. She was often criticized because of independence of conduct, so that even her own father could not tolerate. Finally, the father broke off the relationship with her. Although Serge is the forerunner of the evolution of culture and personality, but as an African-American woman, she was still eager for her family's affection greatly.

Sofia is the daughter-in-law of Celie, a representative of a group of African-American women with rebellious personality. At Sofia's wedding, her female relatives and friends united together to overwhelm Albert in a threatening body language, helping Sophia establish an equal status in the family. "Two and a half centuries of male and female slaves have created the character of these African-American women. They deeply hate men's sexual compensation behavior..." [6]²⁷¹ But they have no employment opportunities, and they can only comfort each other, and resist the male power oppression in the family, as Sofia said: "in my life, I have been fighting." She still resisted strongly after marriage, and finally left Habo with three children because could not bear to be abused. This proves that if the Afro-cultural family model does not change the way of communication between men and women, it is impossible to establish a harmonious family by relying solely on female violence. The female personality in a tense relationship must also be extreme and unsound.

Natty and Celie are biological sisters, but they have completely different personality tendencies. Natty never gave up learning and encouraged Celie: "You must fight." After being expelled from the house by Albert, Natty was taken in by the priest Samuel. Coincidentally, they also adopted a pair of kids of Celie. In her letter to Celie, Natty wrote with deep affection: "I will irrigate my full love for you to them, and I will grow up with Olivia and Adam as a family..." The journey to Africa culture enabled Natty to re-recognize herself and became more mature. Although there are not many pens and inks for the pastor's family, the audience can feel the family atmosphere of the husband and wife featured by the kindness of the parents, and the healthy growth of the children, which points the direction for the development of African-American families.

Serge is the forerunner of the individualistic culture; Sofia represents the collective resistance of African-American women; the healthy personality of Natty comes from the shaping of family love. These brave and optimistic images of positive emotions express the desire for a happy family and reveal the direction of the development of the collective personality of African-American women: autonomous-relational self-interpretation of personality.

IV. THE PROCESS OF AUTONOMOUS-RELATIONAL SELF-INTERPRETATION OF PERSONALITY FORMATION

For African-American rural women, Serge's urban life is too far away, and Sofia's rebellious spirit is too extreme. The vacillation of Celie between dependence and independence represents a difficult choice for most women. The core content of the film is not only the awakening of one or two women, but the choice of a family life model for African-American women: a psychologically dependent family, and at the same time demonstrating the formation process of autonomous self-interpreting personality with cultural characteristics.

When she was a child, although she seemed to be numb, Celie was keenly aware of the injustice of culture. In the face of the powerful threat from the outside, she gradually formed a strategy of evading and compelling personality. In life, Celie often compromised on the male hegemonic culture, but when Habo asked her how to make Sophia listen to him, Celie subconsciously said two words "hit her." This move conveyed a cultural model: "anti-social characteristics will be particularly resistant in societies with high rights, because they hope to challenge the established relationships, such as the difference of the young and the old among family members, as well as authority figures and ordinary people." [4]175 Celie wanted Sofia to succumb to power like her, in order to be safe.

When she was young, Celie also had the idea of self-reliance. She prepared her luggage to go to the city with Serge. But her heart was contradictory. In the face of Serge's cruel reality of being rejected by her biological father and Sofia's rebellion against the white mayor's imprisonment, Celie in hesitation still adopted an avoidant personality strategy. In the intimidation of Albert, Celie looked at the back of the Serge's car, desperately fainted to the ground, and then returned to the original life. Celie forced herself to do other things to transfer anxiety, and the heavy physical labor paralyzed her thoughts and best protected her.

A few years later, the newly married Serge broke into the life of Celie once again and helped her find a thick letter of Natty, which was detained by Albert. When she reached middle age, Celie finally got news of her sister, and she was happy to know that her sister and her children lived happily in Africa. Here, the film uses a set of "sound and picture" treatments. With the rhythmic African sound, Celie was immersed in the joy of reading letters, no Albert's scream, no people's praying in the church. Eventually, her life has consciousness, feelings and hopes; her thoughts are flying in distant Africa, reunited with her children, being happy and anger with Natty. Celie's personality was released from family imprisonment. Although the body was still engaged in daily work, the mind has gone to Africa to find the root.

Some scholars believe that it is Serge who leads Celie to become independent in personality. In fact, this is only a prerequisite. Celie lived in the city with the help of Serge, but she realizes economic independence and maintains his independent self-esteem. Communication with Natty's letters is the key to transforming Celie's personality. The confusion of Celie's life comes from the confusion of culture. The

collectivist culture of Africa is awakened to Celie. She begins to resist, publicly denounces Albert, and resolutely gets rid of the shackles of her family and lives a life of dual independence of economy and personality eventually. But the film does not show the life of Celie in the big city. Her trousers company just flashes before she returns to the family. Because Celie is not going to devote herself to a completely unfamiliar mainstream culture - American individualistic culture: "follow yourself. Self is considered to be a self-sufficient unity independent of the surrounding interpersonal environment, and personal goals take precedence over group goals." [7] It is necessary to look for a collectivist culture that is equal to men and women and is caring for the people. Celie's consciousness is maturing and her family is growing, so the family model has changed. Albert and Habo recognize themselves, being gentle and kind, and people live together again because of love. The original dependent family model has been transformed into a psychologically dependent family model, so Celie's personality has also completed the butterfly metamorphosis: from dependent personality to autonomous-relational self-interpretation personality. At this point, Celie has defined her position in the family and found a proper personality.

V. CONCLUSION

The film creates a happy reunion: Celie gets a new life; Serge gets his father's understanding; Habo and Sophia regain their reconciliation; Albert repents and helps the Natty family return to the United States from Africa. People form a big family full of love and lived a happy life. Everyone seems to have turned a big circle and returned. In fact, everyone has been reborn in the cultural changes and life experience. This is the deep meaning of the film: in a rapidly changing world, in a multicultural conflict, people must have a sensitive heart to feel the culture, not only using a cross-cultural perspective to discover the difference in culture, but also having inclusive mentality to understand the cultural differences, in order to finally find a cultural attachment that suits you, and use a reasonable psychological strategy to adapt to the new cultural model. There is an interactive relationship between cultural environment and individual environment. Culture is developing, and people's change gives new meaning to culture.

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