Chekhovian Dramatic Elements in *Horace and Pete*

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Chekhov's plays, with their unique style and deep philosophical thinking, have exerted a profound influence on the world’s literature and dramatic art. Characterized by subtext, Chekhov's works “emphasize the subtle emotions in daily life and employ a mode of dramatic expression that avoids overt conflict” [Zhang Baomin 2012: 53]. Chekhov's drama focuses on the fate of ordinary individuals, the absurdity of reality, and the interweaving of humor and tragedy, which is still of great value in contemporary film and television [Киселева 2019: 103]. The American sitcom *Horace and Pete*, with its narrative style of intertwining humor and reality, portrays a multitude of vivid characters and presents the struggles and helplessness of ordinary people in the trivialities of life. The purpose of this thesis is to explore how *Horace and Pete* embodies Chekhovian dramatic elements, and to compare and analyze the similarities between *Horace and Pete* and Chekhov's plays, especially the commonalities in characterization, plot narration and the way of dealing with dramatic conflicts. Additionally, this thesis explores the reasons for these similarities, examining whether there is a direct influence of Chekhov's drama on *Horace and Pete* or if the parallels arise from the portrayal of universal human dilemmas across different cultural contexts.

This thesis not only deepens the understanding of Chekhov's plays but also expands the study of the scope of influence of Chekhov's plays, helping to understand why Chekhov's plays are still in dialog with contemporary film and television works. It also explores how Chekhovian elements penetrate contemporary film and television drama creation. At the same time, the artistic characteristics of *Horace and Pete* provide a new perspective of interpretation, further exploring its value in literary research. Studying the Chekhovian elements in *Horace and Pete* and exploring the similarities and cultural collisions between American humor and Russian theatrical styles have a positive significance for the development of cross-cultural theater research. At present, there are more results of comparative research on Chekhov's plays and film and television works around the world, but fewer studies exploring the similarities between *Horace and Pete* and Chekhov's plays, and this study can fill in the gaps of related academic research and provide a new path for film and television works creation and cross-cultural theater research. For example, in the creation of contemporary film and television dramas, it might be more appropriate to reduce the traditional dramatic conflicts and add a more delicate portrayal of emotions to show the real texture of life, thus enhancing the artistry of the works and the audience's resonance.

Through an in-depth analysis of *Horace and Pete*, this thesis finds that the sitcom embodies Chekhovian dramatic elements on several levels. First, the characterization in the play is highly compatible with Chekhov's dramatic style, as most of the characters are in a difficult situation in their lives and are filled with loneliness and helplessness. Secondly, the dialogues in the play are full of unspoken emotions, and the most intense conflicts are not directly expressed in the play. It is the emotions of the characters that “drive the development of the plot and recount the conflicts that have occurred” [Peng Tao 2024: 105], which is the same as Chekhov's theatrical expression. In addition, *Horace and Pete* shows the alienation and disconnection between people in contemporary society through trivial daily scenes and delicate emotional portrayal, which coincides with Chekhov's deep insight into human nature in his plays. The thesis shows that *Horace and Pete* inherits the essence of Chekhov's plays, infusing them with new vitality and contemporary relevance.

Bibliography

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