

Study on Sichuan Opera Elements in “Ji Chun Tai”

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How to cite this paper: Li, R.X. and Tian, L. (2018) Study on Sichuan Opera Elements in “Ji Chun Tai”. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 6, 244-255.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2018.65018>

Received: May 5, 2018

Accepted: May 26, 2018

Published: May 29, 2018

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Abstract

“Ji Chun Tai” is a collection of Huaben novels written by dissatisfied literati in Zhongjiang of Sichuan Province during the Guangxu Period of the Qing dynasty. It contains a large number of Sichuan Opera elements, which are mainly reflected in its structure and language. The structure of the 40 Huaben novels in “Ji Chun Tai” is divided into five parts, namely, the title, the beginning poem, the forewords, the main body and the ending, which is similar to the structure of the Sichuan Opera—opening words, the spoken parts, the libretto and the exit poetry. The language of “Ji Chun Tai” has many features of Sichuan Opera such as the use of Sichuan dialects, the singing of rhyme and libretto and the popularization of language.

Keywords

“Ji Chun Tai”, Sichuan Opera, Structure, Language, Elements

1. Introduction

Sichuan Opera, a shining pearl in Chinese drama, is an important intangible cultural heritage with a long history. At present, there are a large number of studies on Sichuan Opera. For example, Mr. Feng Shudan, who has systematically studied Sichuan Opera, wrote *Sichuan Opera History* to provide a detailed introduction to Sichuan Opera. “Ji Chun Tai”, created by Liu Sanxing from Zhongjiang County, Sichuan Province, is a collection of Huaben novels composed of forty short novels. Most of its stories, widely spread at that time, are meant to advocate goodness and punish evil. “Ji Chun Tai” was defined by Hu Shiyong as the last collection of Huaben novels in China. “This book is the last collection of Huaben books”. In 1899, Lin Youren prefaced in Tongshan. To put

it in brief, “In Zhongjiang, there is a reclusive scholar named Liu Xingsan, who would rather stay at home to write a book promoting the good and punishing the evil”. This book, titled “Ji Chun Tai”, is composed of four volumes with 40 short stories. Each story is detailed in its context and written in popular language. There are also sentences written in rhymes that can be sung. The book was published by “Chengwentang” in 1914, and now is a collection of “Tan Zhengbi” ([1], p. 656, [2]). As a typical collection during the late Huaben novel period, “Ji Chun Tai” not only embodies some features of the Huaben novel, but also reflects strong regional characteristics. In the foreword of Cai Dunyong’s “Ji Chun Tai”, there is a sentence which goes like this, “Kaijiang, also named Zhongjiang, runs through Zhongjiang County in Sichuan Province.” ([3] p. 1). It can be predicted that the author is from Zhongjiang based on the frequently-used Sichuan dialects, local customs and scattered information concerning the author’s life experience in the novel. There are a total of 11 collections of short Huaben stories produced in the late Qing dynasty, but most of them are ancient books. Now only “Ji Chun Tai” is publicly published, so this Huaben novel collection is chosen to be the perspective of my current research. When the author wrote “Ji Chun Tai”, he was inevitably affected by the local culture, language, etc. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are a large number of Sichuan operas elements in his works. Studying Sichuan Opera elements in “Ji Chun Tai” not only enriches the research contents of “Ji Chun Tai” by exploring the influence of Sichuan Opera on literature, but also deepens the theoretical research on Sichuan Opera, contributing to the protection and inheriting of this intangible cultural heritage.

2. The Relationship between Sichuan Opera and Huaben Novel

The “Shuoxi” and “Zuochang” in Sichuan opera are similar to the art of speech. “Shuoxi” is also known as “Zuotaizi”. In the old days, most Sichuan Opera entertainers taught operas by giving oral instructions. Usually, teachers explain plots, lead singing, and make demonstrations. Therefore, it is called “Shuoxi” in Chinese ([4], p. 167). “Under the arrangement of the director, the actors sit around to practice a scene or a whole play, according to the established drama tune and script. With only one clapper, they read and sing according to the script. Thus, it is called ‘Zuochang’. This form can be used to examine whether the actors’ self-perception of the character is good, to check whether actors’ master of the rhythm, emotional reaction and mutual exchanges are appropriate, and to test whether the director’s artistic conception, processing and design can meet the requirements of the plots and characters, and whether the actors are properly chosen. ‘Zuochang’ was adopted in “Shuoxi” in traditional Sichuan Opera. Since the founding of the PRC, many directors have inherited and used this method.” ([4] p. 168). Although both “Shuoxi” and “Zuochang” are performing styles during the rehearsal, they are basically the same as that of sto-

ry-telling. The Huaben novels, produced in recreational venues such as “Goulan” and “Wasi” in the Song Dynasty, is the original used by the story tellers to give performances. Story-telling originated in the Tang Dynasty and prospered in the Song Dynasty [5], and Huaben, as the original of story-telling, has possessed theatrical elements. In “Ji Chun Tai”, Huaben novels are written in prose and rhyme, with prose told and rhyme sung, and the combination of the two is also a drama element. Some famous Huaben novels are adapted into Sichuan Operas, which are then moved onto the stage. For example, Sichuan Opera “Lady Du Angrily Sinks her Treasure-Chest” is adapted by Huang Ji’an according to the Huaben novel “Lady Du Angrily Sinks her Treasure-Chest”, the 32nd story of “Stories to Caution the World” [6] [7]. Sichuan Opera “The Oil Vendor and the Courtesan” has similar theme and plot with Huaben novel “The Oil Vendor and the Courtesan” [8] [9]. “Correcting Evils Building”, a Gao-qiang, is from Li Yu’s Huaben novel “Twelve Towers” [10]. In addition, some of the Sichuan Operas are similar to the stories of some Huaben novels in “Ji Chun Tai”. For instance, the plots of the famous Sichuan Opera “He Zhu Pei” are similar or almost the same as those in Huaben novel “Two Gold Bracelets in Ji Chun Tai”. The specific discussion can be found in the published article “A Preliminary Research on Sichuan Opera Elements in the Plots of ‘Ji Chun Tai’”. Therefore, it can be seen from the above that the Huaben novel is inextricably linked to the Sichuan Opera. By studying “Ji Chun Tai”, we can found that it has obvious Sichuan Opera elements in its novel structure and language expression. In summary, the relationship between Sichuan Opera and “Ji Chun Tai” is not only reflected in the content, but also the nature of the stage performance. That is, story-telling and singing is the main form of performance for both of them. The relationship between Sichuan Opera and “Ji Chun Tai” just reflects the relationship between Sichuan Opera and Huaben novels. Besides, they also have similarities in script structure and language.

3. Sichuan Opera Elements in the Structure of “Ji Chun Tai”

The structure of the Sichuan Opera includes “the opening words, the exit poetry, the spoken parts and libretto as well as the ten-word and seven-word rhymes” [11]. The Huaben novel can be divided into six parts, namely “the title, the beginning part, the forewords, the initial story, the main body and the ending” ([1], p. 134). As a representative work of the late period of the Huaben novels, “Ji Chun Tai” basically follows the traditional structure of Huaben novels, including the title, the beginning poem, the forewords, the main body and the ending. In each novel of “Ji Chun Tai”, the forewords and the beginning poem are combined, functioning as the opening words in Sichuan Opera. Poems are also used to be the ending, just like the exit poetry in Sichuan Opera. The main part is composed of the spoken part and the rhymes, which is rhyming and poetic just like the Sichuan Opera. Taking the tenth novel “Suffering Losses” of volume two “Heng Ji” in “Ji Chun Tai” as an example, the beginning poem is used as the fo-

rewords, which goes “One had better be patient and suffer losses in life. By doing this, he’ll be blessed by ghosts and spirits out of disasters. By doing this, he may return hometown with resplendent clothes” ([3], p. 277). The above poem just persuades people to be patient and suffer, functioning as the opening words in Sichuan Opera. Its main part consists of the prose and the verse. The prose tells the story’s main plot and is applicable to the fast-paced story-telling, which serves similar function as the spoken part in Sichuan Opera. The verse in “Suffering Losses” is composed of seven-character sentences and ten-character sentences. For example, “na ri che shui yu er pi, xing xiong ba dao ba ren qi. da lan che zi bu sui yi, hai jiang gu gong da po pi” is composed of seven-character sentences, meaning “That day, we met a hideous local ruffian who broke our car and even hurt the hired worker” ([3], p. 279). Another example is “di yi ai da hai shou qi, di er zuo ka shou can qi, san shi yin qian bai tian di, si pao er nv yu diu qi” ([3], p. 279), meaning “firstly, he was beaten and bullied. Secondly, he was imprisoned and miserable. Thirdly, he lost his money and land. Fourthly, he had to abandon his wife and daughter”. There are also ten-character verses. For instance, “zun yi sheng bei shi gui ting wo bin gao, zai wo jia jiu ju zhu hen ba jia lao. nong de wo zhe ji nian bei shi dao zao, fan bai shi bu shun sui hao sis hui xiao” ([3], p. 284). It generally means “The Unlucky Ghost, please listen to me. You’ve been living in my house for so long that everything does not go well”. This is a rhyming verse for individuals. There are also verses in dialogues in “Ji Chun Tai”, such as the dialogue between the mother and the daughter in “Xinzhongren (Person in Heart)”, the 2nd novel in Volume 3 “Li Ji”. For example, “nv: qian ri you ren ba fu qing, qi: qing fu kan bing ba mai zhen. nv: zhi shuo qian qu shou xie jing, qi: shei zhi jin cheng yu zai xing” ([3], p. 307). It means “Daughter: Someone asked for dad the day before yesterday. Wife: Your dad was asked to see a patient. Daughter: The person only invited dad to express their gratitude. Wife: Never imagine that he came into a disaster. Daughter: Dad, why are you imprisoned? Wife: May it be due to inappropriate medicine practice?” There are also rhymes for three people, such as “nv: fu mu en de ru shan ling, fen shen nan bao ban hao fen. Fu: jie yin wei fu zou mei yun, mu: zhi shi er qu fu shi ren” ([3], p. 311). It can be put into English as follows, “Daughter: It’s extremely difficult for me to repay your benevolences. Father: Just because of my bad luck, Mother: you have to serve others”. These verses, mainly seven-word and ten-word sentences, not only have the same number of words with the librettos in Sichuan Operas, but also are as poetic and rhyming as them.

4. Sichuan Opera Elements in the Language of “Ji Chun Tai”

The language of “Ji Chun Tai” not only features a large number of Sichuan dialects but also highlights verses with some even accounting for one third of the entire story. This is very similar to the language of Sichuan Opera, and thus it has obvious Sichuan Opera elements.

4.1. The Frequent Use of Sichuan Dialects

Dialect, the carrier of the culture, is the manifestation of regional culture in language. Sichuan dialects are frequently used in both singing parts and the spoken parts. In fact, the use of local dialects is the feature of all local operas. “Sichuan Opera is so termed, not only because authentic Sichuan dialects are used in the spoken part, but also the pronunciation and rhyming of the tune is also based on Sichuan dialects ([12], pp. 98-99). “Ji Chun Tai” and Sichuan Opera have both preserved the pronunciation of Sichuan dialects. The difference is that one preserves it by works and the other preserves it by performance. There are many Sichuan dialect characters and substitutions of homonyms in “Ji Chun Tai”, through which the phonetic characteristics of Sichuan dialects in the late Qing dynasty can be summarized, such as “flattened tongue”. The phonetic features of Sichuan dialects preserved in the Sichuan Opera are more directly sensed, but the variability is so large that it is not as stable as the written ones. The frequent use of Sichuan dialects in “Ji Chun Tai” not only distinguishes itself from other Huaben novels, but also shows its influence from the Sichuan Opera. All these 40 Huaben novels, without exception, have used a large number of Sichuan dialects, Mandarin dialect in particular, including local vocabulary, grammar and syntax, etc., and the dialects used in Sichuan Opera are also mostly Mandarin dialect ([13], p. 1). The use of Sichuan dialects vocabulary is the largest in number and the highest in frequency. For example, in “Chidekui (Suffering Losses)”, the tenth novel of “Heng Ji”, there is “hu menwai er pizi damaerlai, lian xianren dou jue le (Suddenly, Erpizi shouted outside the door, even cursing ancestors)” ([3], p. 277). In “Dongguanv (Melon Girl)”, the third novel of “Yuan Ji”, there is “meiren pa datuo xieqian, jiang he jue ma (The matchmaker was afraid of not getting her reward, so she scolded He)” ([3], p. 39). In the above two cases, “jue” means “scold” and “curse”. In “Qiaobaoying (Coincidence Retribution)”, the 10th novel in “Li Ji”, there is “weiyouni beishi ren shuoxie beishi hua, shijian beishi shi” (Only you such unlucky person say some ominous words and come across some unlucky things) ([3], p. 422), and “weiyouni zhe beishi laohan (Only you such an unlucky man)” ([3], p. 423). Here, “beishi” means “bad luck”. In “Dongguanv”, there is “ni cai moxiang, ni na choufu, beiren yichuanqian ye bu chu lei, zenme deibu jinbu, wo buyao le” (You are really boring. Others don’t give it a penny. How dare you ask for more money? I don’t want it) ([3], p. 39). “moxiang”, also called “modexiang” in Sichuan dialect, means boring and uninteresting. In “Yihuci (Moral Tiger Temple)”, the 5th novel in “Yuan Ji”, there is “hu tinged duishan ren chaonao, da de da hao de you zai hao. ting shengyin zhi shi lei laobiao, yu tiansheng erren ba qi tao” (Suddenly, I heard people across the mountain dinning, some fighting and some screaming. From the voice, I can predict that Lei is playing with Tian and Sheng) ([3], p. 72). “laobiao” in the Sichuan dialect has many layers of meaning, sometimes referring to relatives, sometimes referring to general people for intimacy. This kind of Sichuan dialect vocabulary can be frequently found in “Ji Chun Tai”. In addition to the dialect

vocabulary, there are also many Sichuan dialect lexicons in “Ji Chun Tai”, such as “laobiao” mentioned above in “Yihuci”. Here is another example in “Fengshenyuan (Extensive Bees)”, the 8th novel in “Li Ji”, “zhuan mian lai ma lao shan shi sha yuangu, que ranhe sha wo qi yimingwuhu” (I turned around and asked Shan why he killed my wife) ([3], p. 536). In Sichuan dialects, “lao” is used not necessarily to refer to those people at old age, but to indicate closeness and intimacy when added before the surname. Such words serving as adverbs also include “bang”, “jiao”, “xi” and “jing”, etc., which are not further illustrated here ([13], p. 22). Because the Sichuan dialect is a northern language, the syntax is not much different from that of Putonghua. Therefore, there are not many Sichuan dialect syntax appearing in “Ji Chun Tai”. For example, in “Qiaobaoying (Coincidence Retribution)”, there is “zheng feng guandaxing zoulai, he yue: ‘ni zai zuo sha? pa mo wangfa le, kuai xie huiqu! (At this moment, Guan Daxing came and shouted ‘what are you doing? Aren’t there rules or regulations? Go back, hurry.’)” ([3], p. 423). In “Nanxiangjing (Hometown Well)”, the 6th novel in “Li Ji”, there is “qi yue: ‘zhe yinzi shi zheng jiefu tuo ni fen ta mai defang de, he de huyanluanyu, pabupa chuoguai ma. (This is the money that Brother-in-law Zheng gave you to buy a place. Don’t be silly. Aren’t you afraid that the money might go wrong.)”’. Here, “pa” serves as an adverb of tone, not indicating “afraid” but suggesting the rhetorical mood and the sentence pattern of “pa + V”. Such Sichuan dialect syntax also includes “mo + V + de hao”, “mandian + V”, “shi sha + V + dou”, “xiang shi + V + yang”, “V + de kuai” and so on. Please refer to Wang Yiyu’s master’s thesis “Ji Chun Tai” for detailed information, which will not be extended here ([13], pp. 35-37). The contribution of “Ji Chun Tai” and Sichuan Opera to the Sichuan dialect is more reflected in its contents, such as the folk customs, ethical culture and aesthetic cultural of Sichuan. Sichuan Operas are performed in Sichuan dialects. If “Ji Chun Tai” is also read in Sichuan dialects, the same effects can be achieved. This is also one of the manifestations of the Sichuan Opera elements in “Ji Chun Tai”.

4.2. The Singing Character of the Verses and Rhymes

The roles of high-pitched tune in Sichuan Opera are divided into male role, female roles, painted-face roles, clownish roles and comic roles. Although there is no such detailed role division in “Ji Chun Tai”, its verses and antiphonal singing are influenced by the Sichuan Opera. “Sichuan dialect, a distinctive form of cultural expression, features more speaking and less singing, rich regional and life atmosphere and humors, etc., which are also the language highlights of Sichuan Opera.” ([13], pp. 99-100). “More speaking and less singing” is also a major language feature of “Ji Chun Tai”. One of its novel “Guorenfeng (Intermittent psychosis)” has the most singing lyrics, accounting for no more than one-third of the content ([3], pp. 49-64). “Compared with other local dramas, Sichuan Opera has more speaking and less singing.” ([12], p. 100). There is a saying, “Speaking is much weightier than singing”, which shows the significance of the

spoken part of drama. Lin Youren wrote in the “New Preface to the ‘Ji Chun Tai’”, “Forty Huaben novels have been written, giving detailed information in vulgar words, rhymes and lyrics included. There are four volumes of novels altogether.” ([3], p. 566) This comment just summarizes the linguistic features of “Ji Chun Tai” accurately. “Rhymes and lyrics included” indicates that these rhymes can be read or even sung. “Since the mid of the Qing dynasty, the Huaben novels gradually declined while the folk chants developed rapidly and were popular among people. The author Liu Xingsan may be very familiar with this form of speaking and singing art and apply it into his novel writing of ‘Ji Chun Tai’”. In the novel, there are a lot of verses and rhymes. Except for the author’s narration, the narration of characters is almost all in rhyme, so are the dialogues.” [14]. The rhyme sentences in “Ji Chun Tai” are all rhyming, which is very similar to Sichuan Opera lyrics. “A lot of novels in ‘Ji Chun Tai’ have rhymes and lyrics, some even accounting for one-third of the entire novel. Besides, many dialect characters and typos that have the same or similar sounds are also used.” ([13], p. 3). Rhyme takes up a large proportion in “Ji Chun Tai”, which is rarely seen in the existing Huaben novels. Every short novel in this collection contains rhymes, including one-man, two-men and three-men antiphonal singing. The spoken parts are echoing with the libretto in some novels while they conflict with each other in some other novels. As for one-man antiphonal singing, there are many such cases in “Yanpei (Dumb Woman’s Marriage)”, the 10th novel in “Yuan Ji”. For example, “zhe zhen hai de hun piaomiao, shang xia zuo you wu lu tao. zhi de guidi lai aigao, hai wang shehu ba ming rao...nashi roufei biaoying le, ren ni naqu kao da lao. (I was so scared that the soul just came out of my body. I had no way to flee but to kneel down and beg them to spare my life. How about eating me when I am fat enough?)” ([3], p. 143). “shi cai yinsi zou yi zhuan, bujue laidao guimenguan...tangruo zai ba gutai xian, si duo diyu shen nan fan. (Just now, I walked around the Hell. If I still behave as always, I will be stuck in the Hell forever.)” ([3], p. 144) “wei niang jianer chu yuanmen, bujue liangyan lei chang qing...danyuan shen tian jia biyin, zaozao guijia huan menting” (As a mother, I cannot help bursting into tears when seeing my child off. Hopefully, God bless him to come home early and change another job.) ([3], p. 149). Two-men antiphonal singing can be seen in “Shixinlang (The Dead Groom)”, the 7th novel in “Yuan Ji”. For instance, “fu: zheyizhen qide renzhu lei changtang, congwei jian zhe qishi shi le xinlang. qi: wen xinren ye buzhi fu xiang he wang, mobushi hui er nai pa jian poniang...fu: shi zheyang wu xingying dingyou yuanwang, padeshi you jianren zuo le guochang. qi: hai xu yao dao cheng zhong shenci gaozhuang, jiang cishi wen daye ziyoushuzhang. (Husband: I have never come across such weird thing that the groom disappeared, the thought of which will make one feel angry and sorrowful. Wife: The bride when asked also said that she had no idea where he was. Was he afraid of seeing the wife? Husband: the groom may be wrongly accused for his missing. It might be due to the deeds of another evil man. Wife: We need to go to the urban area to claim a complaint and let the judge to settle the suit)” ([3], pp. 98-99). Another exam-

ple in “Liuzhitou (Six Fingers)”, the 4th novel in “Heng Ji”, “fu: jiaoer si bu you fu ganchangtongduan, mu: bu you niang xin er li haosi jianchuan...fu: ni linghun zai yinsi qiemo sanluan, mu: xun zhao le sharenzei hao ba ming tian. (Father: Poor Jiao’r, you are dead. I was heart-broken. Mother: I am in extreme grief as if ten thousand arrows have pierced my heart. Father: Do keep you soul complete in the afterworld. Mother: We’ll try our best to find the killer and make him punished and pay with his life)” ([3], p. 202). There are three-men antiphonal singing in “Xinzhongren (Person in Heart)”, the 2nd novel in “Li Ji”. For instance, “fu: weifu songer chu menting, mu: weiniang songer geng shangqing. nv: danyuan shen tian an huyin, zaozao fanshao shu er shen. (Father: I just see you off. Mother: I cannot help bursting into tears. Daughter: Just because you are imprisoned, the official asked a hundred golds to release you. Father: I was sorrowful to see you off. Mother: It was even heart-broken for me to see you off. Daughter: Hopefully, God bless that it won’t be long before I can get my freedom.)” ([3], pp. 311-312). The echoing of the spoken parts and the libretto can be seen in “Jieshoufang (Chastity and Longevity Archway)”, the 8th novel in “Yuan Ji”. For example, “zhu ke shuo: ‘ji wu housi, he bu fu zi?’ xingxiang fu zhi cheng zongzhao, nai wu hao de wang tulao... ‘cishi bu da hao cong, jiushi taoqin, wo nuoda de nianji, nali haiyou zi lie. cishi wo jue bucong’ (People said: “since you don’t have your own children, why not adopt one? Adopting a child is to inherit the surname, but what if the child is not a good and faithful one? ... ‘Even if I marry, it’s not easy for me to give birth to a baby because of old age. So I will never agree.’)” ([3], pp. 122-123). As for the conflict between the spoken parts and the libretto, examples can be seen in “Mainiwan (Sell Mud Pill)”, the 9th novel in “Yuan Ji”, such as “dianseng yue: ‘wo xiao ni, youxie dian, shifeng muqin tai feiqian. Rensheng tanruo bi fanpian, xu jiang xiao zi diu yibian.’ wangcheng yue: ‘chanshi shuodao nali qu le, you dao shi: qin en shen si hai, ren zi zui ru shan. Toufa shu de jin, qin en bao bu wan’”. (The monk said: “I laughed because of your perseverance. It’s so money-costing to take care of your mother. If you would like an easy life, it is destined to abandon ‘xiao (be good to the elders)’, one of the Chinese moral values.” Wang Cheng said: “I cannot agree with you. Parents’ benevolence is as deep as the ocean, and children’s sin is as high as the mountain. We can count clear the hair but can never repay parents’ love.)” ([3], pp. 132-134). In “Ji Chun Tai”, there are five-character rhymes, seven-character rhymes, eight-character rhymes, ten-character rhymes and even miscellaneous rhymes ([3], p. 55) of which seven-character and ten-character rhymes are the most. Each verse is rhyming, and large numbers of Sichuan dialects are used. “Ji Chun Tai” has more proses than rhymes, which is similar to the Sichuan Opera’s “more speaking and less singing”. It also shows the influence of Sichuan Opera on “Ji Chun Tai”.

4.3. Language Popularization

The language of Sichuan Opera features popularization. “What worth mentioning is that the language of Sichuan Opera is also a highlight of its culture. More

speaking less singing, rich regional and life atmosphere and humor are all highlights of Sichuan Opera.” ([12], pp. 99-100). For example, the line of Xu Gongzi in “Zuowenzhang (Write Articles)” is that “chuan lai bushi dushu tian, xiari yanyan zheng hao mian; qiu you wen chong dong you leng, shoushi shuxiang hao guonian. (Spring is not the ideal time for reading. Summer’s scorching heat earns him an excuse to sleep. In Autumn, there are mosquitoes and in Winter, it’s cold and there is not enough time for reading due to the spring festival.)” ([12], p. 100). Another line in “Bashanxiucai” is that “meiren tu yi pao koushui, ye yao ba ni jig e yansi! (You will be drowned even if one person just spits once.)” “shaonian fuqi laolaiban, yishi bujian jing jiaohuan. (When young couple turn old, they will accompany each other. Even only one-hour disappear will make him or her feel uneasy)” ([12], pp. 99-100). Such colloquial words are numerous in Sichuan Opera. The catchy rhythmical parts are rare and the colloquial spoken language is the prevailing in Sichuan Opera. However, the boundary between them is so delicate that it is almost impossible to define. (This is quite different from the clear division between the spoken part and the rhythmical parts in Peking Opera). In this way, there is a very favorable condition for expressing the character’s thoughts and feelings.” ([15], p. 342). The popular language can exert better effects than the written language when describing psychological traits, actions and emotions. Tortuous plots and touching emotions are the main ways to impress the readers or viewers in “Ji Chun Tai” and most Sichuan Operas. Written words are not so powerful and accurate to express feelings, but the delicate, vivid, varied and powerful popular language can make the novel and Sichuan Operas closer to the life and much more natural. This makes it easier for readers or viewers to echo with the story by forgetting that they are reading novels or watching dramas. Besides, popular language can create a more relaxed and humorous atmosphere. The target readers of “Ji Chun Tai” and viewers of Sichuan Opera are mostly general public, so it is indispensable to create a relaxed and humorous atmosphere, which can be easily achieved by adopting popular language. Popular language is also more humane in both fiction and drama. Such humane popular words are frequently used in “Ji Chun Tai” with many in above-mentioned examples. There are also popular and humane language in Sichuan Opera. For instance, in “Dajinzhi (Beating the Princess)”, when Emperor of the Tang dynasty ordered to untie Guo Ai who had beaten his princess wife, he allowed Guo Ai to “punch and kick”. And then he sang gently, “but you need to be gentle” [16]. On the stage, Guo Ai and his father both laughed and the audience smiled relaxingly. Such dignified and humane image of the emperor can touch the heart of the audience and thus satisfy their expectations. The humanized popular language in “Ji Chun Tai” can also achieve the same effect. The language of ancient Chinese novels has always distinguished itself from that of the other genres such as prose and poetry, and its characteristics are popularization, colloquialization, generalization and vulgarization. The language used in “Ji Chun Tai” tends to be popular and even vulgar, which is re-

lated to the level of education received by the recipients. “Ji Chun Tai” targeted the general public as its potential readers who were mostly illiterate at that time, and therefore, preferred to use vulgar language which can be easily accepted. Most of the proses in “Ji Chun Tai” are vulgar and popular expressions. For example, in “Shinianji (A Ten-year-old Cock)”, the 2nd novel in “Yuan Ji”, Mi Rongxing’s remarried wife said, “our family is not very rich. Your brother doesn’t work and we also have to pay fees for him to go to school. Why not calling him back to feed the cow instead of hiring a person to do that? This will save us a lot of money.” ([3], p. 22). “I’ll leave you out there to die. If you dare to come back, I’ll beaten you to death.” ([3], p. 23). “You dickhead, stay far away from me and die outside. Why are you here to disgust me?” ([3], p. 24). The above daily-used vulgar expressions portray a mean image of female who treats her husband’s younger brother badly. Most of such expressions are spoken by illiterate and lower-class figures. For example, in “Baiyushan (White Jade Fan)”, the 3rd novel in “Heng Ji”, Xie Dade has become an orphan since young. One day, he came across one of his father’s friends, who asked, “Who raise you now?” He answered, “My fourth Uncle.” The friend asked, “Are they good to you?” He answered, “My uncle treats me well, but my aunt is always obstructive. She doesn’t give me decent clothes to wear. She doesn’t allow me to eat more food. Every day, I have to collect manure. If the amount cannot satisfy her, she will scold and beat me.” ([3], p. 186). A few simple dialogues just vividly portrait the miserable life a five-year-old child. The rhymes in “Ji Chun Tai” also feature popularization, such as the rhymes in “Guorenfeng”, the 4th novel in “Yuan Ji”. Hu Lanying, whose husband’s family broke off their marriage for her ugly appearance, sang the rhythm, “Even before speaking, I am already heart-broken with tears falling down and wetting my clothes... At around seven when the moon just rises, I think of my miserable life... At around nine when the moon hangs obliquely, I cannot help crying when thinking of the past... At around three in the morning the next day when the moon starts to fall, I think of my husband Li and am heart-broken.” ([3], p. 57). Pushing forward with the time, the above concise and popularized rhythms have vividly depicted the emotional state of mind and haggard faces of a young woman whose marriage is broken off and who is influenced by chastity. Another example is in “Shenchailang (Adjudge a Wolf)”, the fifth novel in “Heng Ji”. The doctor Qiao Jingxing unexpectedly saved a wolf, who rewarded him with a found jewelry which brought him a lawsuit. When the official ordered him to find the wolf to testify, he sang, “Oh, Heaven! Looking for the wolf! I have unspeakable bitterness. Oh, Heaven. I should have lived a peaceful and sound life this year. I should have bought more lands. Mr. Wolf! Please have pity on me.” ([3], pp. 217-218). Although Dr. Qiao had a superb medical skill, he was also a citizen of lower class in the late Qing dynasty. Therefore, his language is easy to understand and his lyrics are close to life. The simple and concise language has perfectly depicted his grief and desperation of being wrongly accused. The popular and colloquial proses and verses

are frequently used in “Ji Chun Tai”, which will not be further illustrated here.

5. Conclusion

“Sichuan Opera has hundreds of complex tunes, and it is undeniable that it has closer ties with ‘yiqiang’. Sichuan Opera is a much more mature local opera, which has a certain scale in terms of singing, speaking and so on. Besides, it is still dynamic and vigorous today, and remains very close to the general public.” ([15], p. 341). Similarly, “Ji Chun Tai”, as a Huaben novel collection, has many limitations in terms of literary value, and its values on linguistics, culturology and folklore are to be further excavated. That is, the research on “Ji Chun Tai” should be as dynamic and fresh as Sichuan Operas.

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