

The Idea of Feminist in a Literary Way Through Chen Duansheng's Masterpiece Eternal Happiness

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Abstract. As developed rapidly in the modern world, more and more articles and books focused on women's self-awareness; however, there are some works that pay too much attention to struggling for dominance in the field of ideas and departed from the original intent of affirmative action. This will undoubtedly lead to a disconnect between works based on the female perspective and the cognitive level of the audience, to the detriment of the reader's empathy and understanding of the content of the text. In this way, many of these works are useless from a public interest point of view and can even be counterproductive to those who do not understand the relevant field of knowledge. This is something that those working for women's empowerment do not want to see. Therefore, the author of the thesis attempts to find a way to express the idea of Feminist In a literary way through Chen Duansheng's masterpiece Eternal Happiness. In the end, the author find that to make it sufficient to raise awareness of feminism among the crowd, authors have to understand the thoughts of target readers and make them not feeling to be an outcast.

Keywords: feminism; self-awareness.

1. Introduction

Tanci was quite a popular form back in the Qing dynasty, and the author at that time showed their own point of view about the moral standard. Then, there was a rising population of women fond of writing Tanci, and Chen Duansheng was one of them; it can be said that they also made great contributions to literature history [1].

Chen was born in the Qing dynasty, when men dominated society from all perspectives. As a woman at that time, she was quite advanced in presenting the idea that women could replace men in fields that used to be monopolised by men. She grew up in an Intellectual family, where her grandfather was a Qing Dynasty scholar, her father was a candidate, and her sister Changsheng was a well-known poet. Her grandfather Chen Zhaolun was an open-minded man who wrote an article and argued that it is beneficial for women to read and write. This all contributed to her intelligence.

Her talents did not all come from her father's family. An interesting point about the book is that the background of "Enteral Happiness" was settled in Yunnan, which differs from where Duansheng lived. However, this is due to her mother, who was the daughter of Wang Shangyu, Governor of Yunnan and Dali. Thus, she heard quite a lot about Yunnan and ultimately decided to set the story in Yunnan [2].

On the one hand, in Qing Dynasty, women were prohibited from publishing their pieces of articles due to the limited principle of feudal moral conduct. On the other hand, there was not a clear moral standard that could be obeyed, like laws for women, due to the complexity of the network of personal relationships. As a male-dominated society, the laws and moral standards at that time served men. However, the demand of men for women was self-contradictory. Thus, What is more, Qing was a dynasty that was ruled by a national minority called Manchu. To prevent the dynasty from being reversed, the imperial examination system was vigorously promoted and became more rigid, which developed the obedience of the people. This made a great contribution to the distorted view of the utility of the majority of Han people. The limitation of women's thoughts contributed to the emergence of the idea of female resistance, and the contradictory social standards gave the ground for the emancipation of female thought to grow.

What is more, with the development of society and the rise of the commodity economy and industrial and commercial class in the Ming and Qing dynasties, western progressive ideas and science and technology were introduced, and the progressive trend of thought developed. Consequently, the trend of women's liberation emerged and initially developed.

Nowadays, the emancipation of women's minds has been deeply rooted in people's hearts, but it is still of practical significance to promote social ideological progress through literature in today's society.

Therefore, the author will use the induction method, through the induction of the female role in the work "Eternal Happiness" by Chen Duansheng, a progressive female writer in the middle of the Qing Dynasty, to explore the way of promoting social, ideological liberation and promoting the trend of equal rights between men and women through literary dissemination.

2. Main Character Review

There are three main women characters in "Eternal Happiness", Meng Lijun, Su Yingxue and Wei Yonge. They showed three different ways for women at that time how to follow their hearts even though the whole of society was against them.

To start with, Meng Lijun was engaged to Huangfu, but Huangfu's family was wanted because his father was framed for treason, and her parents, under the pressure of the emperor's will, forced her to marry the one who framed Huangfu. Thus, she escaped from her home and disguised herself as a man. Meng was good at writing, so she decided to change her identity into a man and attend the imperial examination. Luckily, she won three in a row to the top of the list and was immediately appointed the minister of war; later, she became the teacher of her fiancé.

Ultimately, she was promoted to prime minister since she came up with an idea which prevented Yuan from being invaded by North Korea. What is more, she accepts her betrothal to the Liang family's stepdaughter and surprisingly finds that the lady of the Liang House is her former companion. Therefore, she, accompanied by Miss Liang, acted like a couple to wait for the chance to marry Huangfu. She was quite confident and good at socialising, referring to her excellent performance in calming down Miss Liang and navigating the official world. Moreover, she gradually got used to living as a powerful man and was no longer urgent to reunite with her fiancé. She even used the power in her hands to keep her former family and fiancé on the defensive. She embodied the character that was then considered to be reserved for men.

Secondly, Su Yingxue, or Miss Liang, her father was a Confucian scholar from a humble family but died early. Her mother was forced to remarry, but she firmly refused. Luckily, Meng Lijun's mother took them in and made the mother a nursemaid. Su Yingxue fell in love with Lijun's fiancé as well and wished to marry him as his concubine together.

Unfortunately, Huangfu was wanted, and Meng Lijun escaped from home, naming Su Yingxue to marry her enemy Liu Kuibi instead. This somehow reflects the multifaceted nature of Lijun's ill-considered, selfish character female. Back in Yingxue, she was not willing to marry Kuibi as well, but she had no choice but to accept her fate since the Meng family had been kind to her. However, she secretly hid a knife in her sleeves and injured Kuibi on his face during the wedding day and jumped into the river.

Miraculously, she survived and was saved by Mrs. Liang, the wife of Chancellor Liang. Then married Miss Meng. Lastly, Wei Yonge was wanted because her father was framed for treason. Therefore, she disguised herself as a man to avoid punishment and wait for a chance for revenge. On her way to escape, she bumped into a group of robbers in the mountains. However, she managed to defeat all the robbers due to her great physical strength. The robbers asked her to be the leader, so she settled down in the mountains and changed her name to a male name Wei Yongda. She used her way to break the rules made by men that only men can be the leader, though she was not able to remove her disguise as a man. She had strong leadership and led her soldiers to repel the soldiers of the government several times.

After that, she accepted the courting of the Yuan Dynasty and led her soldiers to victory. What is more, she managed to save her father from North Korea and punished the man who framed her father. Ultimately, she was recognised as a general in the Yuan Dynasty [3].

3. Progressiveness and Limitations

The book "Eternal Happiness" by Duansheng was a great advancement in women's literature of the time since women at that time were still writing under men's structure in which women were meant to marry a good man and have happily ever after and could not have their career, their personalities and ideals [4]. Even the woman who tried to continue her book was not able to escape from the frame of men [5]. While Duansheng dared to portray a female chancellor acting just like men and a female lord of a mountain fortress, a female general recognised by the imperial court.

What is more, Duansheng had advantages over men writers since she is a woman and is better at thinking in a woman's way, which made her women characters much more vivid and realistic, communicating what women think and feel to the community through the written word. She was so good at portraying female characters that when readers read the stories, they can easily substitute for female characters and thus empathise with them. This will contribute significantly to the awareness and spread of feminism throughout society.

However, due to the limitation of gender and social burden, the male characters were kind of plain and lack of self-conscious, which can also be considered to be a satire to the society that no matter men or women, they are just tools to keep the social machine running and were not allowed to have their thoughts of living [6]. For example, Huangfu Shaohua was portrayed as a man showing excessive leniency; he even wanted to spare his enemy because of the traditional Chinese culture of benevolence. Thanks to his sister Miss Huangfu, Shaohua finally decided to take his revenge by writing a letter of blood to the emperor. He exists as a mere foil to his sister's resolute atmosphere.

Another character is the servant of the Liu House. He was bound by the moral values of feudal loyalty and was obedient to his mother, which made him quite drawn out and feminine [7].

Apart from the male character, because society at the time did not allow women to go out much, she was lack of life experience. The plot of the whole book is stiff, so it is unrealistic to read. However, if one piece of work aims at raising the public's awareness of a certain thing, it is essential to cover matters within the awareness of the audience in the work, thereby placing the narrator and the reader on an equal footing. However, it was a nearly impossible thing for Duansheng to achieve at such a stage.

Duansheng stopped her work at the time Lijun discovered to the emperor that she was a woman and was forced to be a concubine of him. The reason she stopped at such a time might be because Duansheng was limited by the perceptions of the era but did not want her work to have a normal happy ending which usually means Lijun and Yingxue would marry Shaohua [8]. However, she could not come up with a good solution due to the limitation of that time, and at the same time, she suffered misfortune in her real life.

Moreover, Lijun's success was not the result of the acceptance of women in the profession but the result of women taking the initiative to fit in, dressing up as men and cheating their way to the top. Chen Duansheng could not accept the end of a political system that was still limited to male domination. Thus, she tries to find a legitimate way for women to realise themselves.

Sadly, Tuan Sheng's final work can not be seen after all, and posterity has not been able to bring her story to a successful conclusion. However, through her work, it can still be drawn on the strengths and weaknesses of Tuan Sheng's exploits to explore the direction of feminism in modern society.

4. Learn from Duansheng

Having learned about the period and the advancement of Duansheng's idea, it is essential for readers to keep open-minded to accept new ideas at first and be brave enough to raise the request to the public to get awareness and boost the revolution of social consciousness.

Meanwhile, it is also important to use a way that is acceptable to the audience. For example, Duansheng used the form Tanci, which had developed for ages, and had a complete communication system and a wide audience due to its catchy and neat format and the quality of the music that is transmitted by word of mouth [9]. Moreover, she wrote such a compelling story that people of the time were delighted with it. It was for this reason that her ideas spread subliminally through the crowd with her stories and were remembered.

Back to the background, women were not allowed to share their works with the public at that time because it was "impolite". However, Duansheng not only posted her book but also chose a form that aimed at entertaining and was well-spread, which made it much easier to spread across the dynasty. Therefore, the author should stick to the inner values, challenge the unreasonable parts of the existing moral system, put themselves down and take practical actions to realise the inner thoughts in forms that are pleasing to the audiences. Nevertheless, due to the misunderstanding caused by her lack of life experience, Duansheng was not able to raise enough awareness, and the current public judged her strictly and negatively.

To avoid work for nothing, research should be done to avoid circumstances that the audience does not understand the point the author is trying to make. If an author only drowns in her world, hoping people to understand her to stand in her shoes gradually, it would be long and tough progress to achieve the goal. For example, in recent years, extreme feminism has become increasingly prevalent in social movements and online forums, which has not had any positive effect on the spread of feminism, even stigmatising the term and turning some otherwise neutral people against feminism as a whole [10].

Ultimately, the spread of Duansheng's work can not be so quickly without the quick development of society and the introduction of progressive ideas. Moreover, with the development of social productivity, men no longer have an absolute advantage in the division of labour in society, which gave women more chances to fight back.

In modern society, with the advancement of social productivity and the further division of labour, men no longer have a clear advantage in most occupations, and thus the status of women in society has improved significantly compared to the past. Therefore, it is wiser and easier to achieve a goal by responding to social developments, seizing opportunities for change and improving oneself to gain more voice in efforts.

5. Conclusion

There is no doubt that Chen Duansheng's book "Eternal Happiness" was a masterpiece that showed the advancement of that era. However, it still has its limitation, such as some of the plots with a lack of reality, lack of experience of how men think and do, and not being able to find her way to tell the whole story outstanding the whole period.

However, readers can still find quite a lot of useful experiences to learn from her. The readers should be brave enough to challenge the improper morality of current society, get to know the target audience, use a more acceptable way to spread the ideas, and improve themselves to gain more voice.

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