

Study on the Limitations of Female Images in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror"

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Abstract: The novel creations in Ming and Qing Dynasties is very abundant. The "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" is a full-length work mainly describing women after "A Dream of Red Mansions". This novel originated in the male-dominated social era, so it is rare to be able to describe the female images in large length. The novel breaks the contempt for women. The female image created in the novel is independent and self-reliant, and advocating wit and learning, and has a obscure consciousness of modernization, which is the unique feature of the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror". This article takes the analysis on the female images in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" as the starting point to analyze the limitations of the female images in "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror".

1. Introduction

Hundreds of female images in Li Ruzhen's "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" can be said to be lifelike, fully demonstrating women's desire for freedom and human emancipation. And women's subjective consciousness is strong. However, from an objective point of view, although most of the novel describe the fate and images of women, the influence and penetration of male discourse rights are everywhere. The prominence of female images is still male-centered, and the value of their life needs to be reflected by men.

2. An analysis on the female images in the Novels "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" in Ming and Qing Dynasties

The author Li Ruzhen has created more than a hundred female images in the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", including the emperor, prime minister, the daughters of the loyal and upright people, the girls from respectable families, servant girls and maids in an imperial palace, etc. These images have their own characteristics, some are proficient in medical skills, some are proficient in mathematics, some are excellent in literature and art, and some are female heroines. In a word, the female images are vividly expressed in this novel, which shows the female images with different characteristics. The female images in the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" in Ming and Qing Dynasties can be roughly analyzed from three aspects:

First, the image of a knowledgeable woman. There are quite a lot of women who is knowledgeable in the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror". For example, Tang Xiaoshan is a talented woman who has unique ideas and insights. When talking about her understanding of female imperial examination, she once described that she do not study to be an official, but currently it is a feminist society, there should be female prime minister and female Xiucai to assist the female emperor. If only male prime minister or other official positions are use, then what is the use of my study[2]. In addition, when she talks with Lu Zixuan about literature, whether it is ancient and modern literature or literature history, she has her own unique insights. Especially the understanding and explanation of the three rituals is very insightful. There are many talented women like Tang Xiaoshan in the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", and they are no longer narrated one by one.

Second, the images of women who are independent and self-reliant. The talented women in this novel have different identities, and there are many talented women, such as Lin Wanru, Yin

Qiaowen and Yin Ruohua. Most of these talented women are from old and well-known families. When they encounter unpredictable accidents or bad luck, they do not yield, but strive to survive with their own strong will. They not only created their own opportunities for self-rescue, but also developed their own skills to earn a living and benefit the local people through their own abilities[2]. In addition, their purpose of studying is very simple, aiming at solving various social needs. They have greatly changed the status of women at that time by study, taking examinations, and handling government affairs, fully demonstrating the charm of women. Through some efforts, women can not only be independent and self-reliant, but also make achievements in politics.

Third, the charming and progressive images of women. The women in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" have certain demands for equal participation in politics and equality between marriage and love. First, during the feudal society, the ruling class was basically monopolized by men, most women did not have the right and opportunity to receive education. However, the women in the novel are very natural in the examination of the imperial examination. They think that there are male imperial examinations for men, and there should also be female imperial examinations for women. Women should have the same educational and political rights as men, which fully reflects women's strong resistance to the feudal system. Secondly, the female characters in the novel put forward the appeal that women should have the same status as men in view of the problem of marriage, especially the resistance to unequal acts such as concubines is more sensitive. The female characters in the novel not only boldly pointed out the marital crux in the feudal society, but also shaped the vivid female image with certain appeals.

3. The limitations of female images and ideological emancipation in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror"

There are certain limitations in the images of women and the ideological emancipation in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror". The reason is that the era in which "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" is in belongs to the patriarchal society. The male-centered consciousness is the mainstream consciousness of the society at that time. The "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" can be said to be the author Li Ruzhen's view and emotional expression, which is the author's ideal construction and inner image. In this patriarchal society, putting up a pageantry in the advocacy of women's independence and freedom is limited by many factors. In the process of ideological struggle, women were often relegated to subordinate status. The author tries to help women's subordinate status through the literary works with strong female image color, establishes a new perspective of women, and tries to change the male-centered situation[1]. The author always intentionally or unconsciously portrays some lively and lovely female images in the description of the novel. However, the novel is not a reality after all. The female image in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" is quite different from the situation of women in reality. The embodiment of women's values still depends on men. It is basically impossible to fully demonstrate the strength and independence of a woman as well as her noble thoughts. This is the limitation of the female images in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror".

In addition, the twelve edicts proclaiming an imperial act of grace drafted by Wu Zetian also have certain limitations on the shaping of the female images and the changing of thinking in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror". The first three articles of the twelve edicts proclaiming an imperial act of grace are the requirements for women's filial piety, disobedience and chastity, while the last two are re-emphasizing women's filial piety and chastity. Although the edicts on female imperial examination affirmed the women's right to education and women's talents, women still cannot participate in various social activities as much as men. The degree of liberation of women is limited to the qualifications for taking the imperial examination. The poor thing is that women have been studying hard for decades, and they have just won the nominal title after passing the examination. Although they have an encyclopedic mind, they are still men's subsidiaries[1]. Even this level of treatment can only be enjoyed by women in the upper and middle-class. The edicts made a clear provision that people of humble origin should not be admitted to the examination. The limitations of female images in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" are

obvious. In the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", hundreds of flower fairies have only a virtual title after they have passed the examination, and they have no actual rights. It is still mainly male-assisted, indicating that it is very difficult for the thoughts elaborated by the author to cross the feudal system dominated by patriarchy, revealing that equality between men and women can only be presented in an ideal society.

4. Limitations of the filial piety of feudal rituals in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror"

In the field of literature in Ming and Qing Dynasties, it can be said that there are all men's footprints. The male-centered social need is the fundamental reason for the limitation of the shaping of female images in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror". In the wilderness of literature focusing on spiritual pursuits, men's thoughts and aspirations are everywhere. Men can be sculptors, writers, creators, and subjects. The role-playing is more casual than that of women. While, women are objects that are defined, shaped, and classified[3]. In fact, from a deeper level, the text subconsciousness compiled by the author Li Ruzhen is mainly male-centered. But this male-centered consciousness is wrapped up by more than a hundred women in the novel. The women described in the novel can be said to be the result of the characters filtered and refined by the male consciousness.

From the perspective of the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", the novel has never left the traditional feudal ethical filial piety with men as the center in the process of compiling, and still has a very clear boundary between men and women. Although it advocates that women can study and female imperial examination are opened up, the ultimate goal of these measures is to provide better services for men. The feudal moralists at that time fully highlighted the constraints on women. In the debate over the issue that a woman without talent is a virtuous woman, the author Li Ruzhen vividly interprets the role and benefits of women's study using the experience of a character. For example, only when a woman has talents, can she abide by the rules and regulations, obey the rules of etiquette and ethics, safeguard the principles of human relations. And women's study of literature can effectively cultivate their gentle and gracious virtues. The author Li Ruzhen advocates female examinations in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", and the words between the lines reveal the desire for the female emperor to hire female ministers, that is, the female emperor should naturally be accompanied by a female female emperor and a female Xiucai, and it should not be mix men with women. This violates the rules that women should obey and fully clarifies the central idea of the author's view on women[4]. In the "edicts on female imperial examination", it was suggested that if the woman gets a good grade, then the woman's husband's family can be excused from the servitude, the woman's husband, parents and parents in law can be promoted to a higher office if they have an official position. Also, they can be given an official position if they have no one. Women can study and take exams, which seems to be a kind of emancipation of women's mind, but in fact, it is another kind of ladder for men to become officials. Men are the ultimate beneficiaries, both in the spiritual and physical spheres.

Literature is human science, which is an objective exposition of the real world. The women's kingdom constructed in the novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" can be said to use a kind of virtual inequality to compete with the inequality in the real society. It is also a true portrayal of women's subordinate status in the family and the oppression by their husbands in the feudal society at that time. And it is not a direct explanation of the sorrow of women, but a negative reflection of women's position at that time. At the same time, it is also implied that women in the feudal society cannot exist without men. This reflects to some extent that the author Li Ruzhen's subconscious is still male-centered. In the description of "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", the author has repeatedly emphasized the chastity that devastates a great on women. The author has compiled a lot of women's frustrating fate with the concept of chastity[5]. For example, in Chapter 24 of the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", the description of Situ Fuer who comes from the state of Shushi. Situ Fuer is a beautiful, intelligent and brave female image. She is a model of chastity the author's deliberately shaped in the novel. She married a foreign fugitive, Yu Chengzhi, because of

the words of the words of a match-maker. According to the truth, they had never met before and had no emotional foundation, and he sold her ruthlessly, but Situ Fier was willing to endure his beatings and even being sold. This kind of steadfastness is not love for him, but loyalty to the author's ideal concept of chastity, which is for the sake of maintaining men's status and interests[3]. In the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror", different people adopt different ways in different places but deduce the same content, that is, the traditional feudal male-centered real society.

The novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" ended with "suttee" fully highlights the harmfulness of feudal outlines to the intellectuals at that time and the indifference in human nature. The compilation of the story of the suttee seems to lack the subjective sympathy of the author, but in reality it is an interpretation of reality. Whether it is chastity or filial piety, it is male-centered and serves men. Even though women have acquired superficial academic freedom, they have not really got rid of their original state and they do not realize the true self-pursuit. They can only realize and refract their value from the male value whether in the family or in the study examination to find their own life color and glory from the projection of male value. Their destiny cannot be considered and decided by themselves, and they cannot choose their own life trajectory according to their own ideas and wishes. It is impossible for them to strive for the right to achieve self-existence worthy equally with men.

5. Conclusion

The novel "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" praises women's intelligence and personality independence through the compilation of the fate of different female images. The overtone of the novel reveals the importance attached to women's education, and also criticizes the reality of the unequal status of men and women in traditional feudal society. But thinking deeper, in fact, there is a certain contradiction in the outlook on women the author Li Ruzhen advocated in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror". This reflects to a great extent the author's own ideological limitations in the feudal era. Although the female image and the arrangement of fate in the novel have made certain progress in thinking, the ultimate fate and value of the woman still cannot be freed from the shackles of feudal society and feudal thought. The limitations of the female images and the outlook on women in the "Marriage of Flowers in the Mirror" are obvious.

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