



Feminism in *Gone with the Wind*

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ABSTRACT

As one of Margaret Mitchell's most representative works, *Gone with the Wind* has been paid much attention to and studied by scholars at home and abroad from different perspectives since its publication. As for me, I'd like to study on Feminism in *Gone with the Wind* to give an analysis of Feminist thought in this work from two aspects: narrative perspective and characterization. It will be of great benefit to promote our understanding of the novel from this angle, thus bringing us much enlightenment and practical significance.

KEYWORDS: *Gone with the Wind*, Feminism, Scarlett

Feminism, also known as female liberation and feminist movement, refers to the social theory and political movement set up and launched for the sake of putting an end to sexism, sexual exploitation, sexual discrimination and sexual oppression and facilitating equality of sexual class. In addition to the criticism on social relations, the emphasis of Feminism is also put on the analysis of gender inequality.

There are a multitude of things in the theory of Feminism, however, it is one brief sentence in the final analysis: to realize equality of men and women in the universe. And there are always some distinctions between feminist theory, some of them are fierce as fire, others are calm as water; some advocate fighting resolutely and desperately, while others give in and compromise. Nevertheless, all of them have a basic premise that women are oppressed and discriminated against all over the world.

Scholars have explored and studied *Gone with the Wind* from various perspectives which include the process of growth, teleology, multimodal analysis, the differences between Chinese and Western cultural values, Feminism and so on since it was published, among which the angle most frequently adopted is Feminism.

As far as I am concerned, Feminist thought in this work could be explored and analyzed from two aspects: narrative perspective and characterization.

Firstly, narrative perspective. It is known to us that different perspectives own its own unique advantages in literary works, and the third-person point of view is used particularly frequently. The third person point of view succeeds in getting rid of the limitation of time and space and can reflect the

objective content freely and flexibly, owning a wide range of the action of characters, which is totally different from the first-person point of view. As we all know, women have been greatly oppressed and restricted, the third-person technique just exactly provides women with the freedom that they have been pursuing and advocating, which is one of the main thoughts of Feminism. As a consequence, it is obvious that the author's application of this unique point of view has her special goal. It is not difficult to find out that the females mostly represented by Scarlett in this work have been endowed with a relatively wide range of freedom both in thought and action by the application of this kind of narrative perspective.

Secondly, characterization. Taking the characterization of the protagonist Scarlett as an example, which mainly embodies in three aspects.

Brave and rebellious image. Scarlett has been educated to be a lady in a strict sense since she was a child. She has always been taught that as a girl, she should be gentle and quiet, especially in front of men. However, it is not difficult to find out from this novel that Scarlett is extremely disgusted with this kind of standard of "lady" and has great courage to resist it. She is neither kind nor gentle but personality-independent and dare to love and hate. All of these are contrary to the image of "lady" in a traditional sense, fully reflecting Feminism that the author would like to express. Take two segments in the novel as an example, "Why don't you say it, you coward? You're afraid to marry me. You'd rather live with that silly little fool who can't open her mouth except to say 'yes', 'no', and raise a houseful of mealy-mouthed brats just like her!" (Mitchell 125). "You did, it's true, you did!" Scarlett



became so irritated. She slapped him, 'I'll hate you till I die! I can't think of anything bad enough to call you...' Without any more discussion, Ashley stiffly walked from the room. In frustration, she threw a vase against the fireplace mantle." (Mitchell 146). In her conversation with Ashley, Scarlett not only didn't whisper softly, but slapped Ashley and threw a vase angrily, which embodies her unique image vividly.

The attitude towards love and marriage. In the novel, there is a set of etiquette that widows have to observe: widows cannot wear jewelry or flowers, the black crepe on the hat must be pulled to the knees and can only be shrunk to shoulder length after three years of widowhood. And Widows can't laugh loudly, engage in chitchat, express their love to men or accept the confessions of men. In addition, it is a potential rule that widows can only be married to older men when they remarry. Nonetheless, Scarlett's performance is the opposite. For instance, "'Oh, I don't care! I don't care what they say!' She whispered, as a sweet madness swept over her. She tossed her head and sped out of the booth, tapping her heels like castanets, snapping open her black silk fan to its widest. For a fleeting instant She saw Melanie's incredulous face, the look on the chaperons' faces, the petulant girls, the enthusiastic approval of the soldiers." (Mitchell 164). "Then she was on the floor and Rhett Butler was advancing toward her through the aisle of the crowd, that nasty mocking smile on his face. But she didn't care-didn't care if he were Abe Lincoln himself! She was going to dance again. She was going to lead the reel. She swept him a low curtsy and a dazzling smile and he bowed, one hand on his frilled bosom." (Mitchell 178). In this ball, although as a widow, Scarlett didn't care about the so-called "widow" etiquette at all. What she cared about was whether she could dance happily again. After being invited by Rhett, Scarlett overtly took off her mourning clothes and danced with Rhett in public, boldly flirting with him, regardless of the comments of her relatives and friends. All of these adequately reflected Scarlett's anti-"widow" etiquette. It is proved and claimed that women are independent individuals rather than the appendages of men and that women can live rather colorful and meaningful even though without men.

Strong and independent consciousness."Becoming hard and defiant, and matured by the surrounding desolation, Scarlett vowed to save the plantation and become 'the head of the house. 'Starving, exhausted, and hungry, she wandered through Tara's ravaged, barren plantation fields at sunrise. After digging up and trying to eat a radish root, she vomited, fell to the ground and wept. Then, standing alone on a rise in the field, suffering the deprivations of war, an indomitable Scarlett slowly rose and with clenched fists raised toward heaven, resiliently and defiantly vowed that she was unbroken by her tribulations:' As god is my witness, as god is my witness, they're not going to lick me! I'm going to live through this, and when it's all over, I'll never be hungry again-

no, nor any of my folks! If I have to lie, steal, cheat, or kill! As god is my witness, I'll never be hungry again.'" (Mitchell 196). It can be found out from this paragraph that Scarlett's sense of being strong and independent was becoming increasingly intense when her rich manor had been mercilessly burned down by the war. Under the painstaking management, she finally achieved economic independence. What's more, after marrying Rhett, Scarlett continued to run her own independent business. Feminism are reflected adequately and vividly by means of these portraits.

It is worthwhile to note that *Gone with the Wind* exactly reveals the growth of female consciousness from childishness to maturity.

The novel arouses plenty of feeling and thought in my heart from the perspective of Feminism. I can't help thinking of numerous leading female TV series that has become increasingly popular in recent years, including *Biography of Zhen Huan*, *Biography of Mi Yue*, *Biography of Chu Qiao*, *Fu Yao* and so forth. The heroines have totally changed the old images of female in TV series. They are smart, brave and strong instead of weak or being white lotus. Even though without any background, they all rely on their own efforts rather male and finally realize their self-worth. What impresses me most is *Biography of Chu Qiao*, which tells of the story of Chu Qiao, an independent female slave, about the protection, betrayal, faith and love in the process of helping to establish a new regime in the turbulent times of Western Wei Dynasty. With a humble identity and having encountered numerous difficulty and setbacks constantly, Chu Qiao never gave up her faith and realized her dream step by step, which is exactly a powerful reflection of Feminism.

Connecting with today's society, there are still some problems worthwhile to reflect on, among which two ones leaves the deepest impression on my mind. For one thing, it is still a prevalent phenomenon that boys are preferred to girls. With the development of times, the concept of the preference of boys over girls has been weakened gradually, however, it is still deeply rooted in the hearts of so many people, especially in some rural areas. The unequal treatment that many women have suffered since childhood has inevitably led to some defects in their character. There are countless examples like this around us. Inferiority complex is the most obvious feature I feel deeply from them. Other features are selfishness, irritability and so on. It often cause such a phenomenon that the difficulties they meet in life, work and study tend to be more and harder to resolve independently than ordinary persons. And it is likely to lead to a series of social problems. Certainly, there are many women who can be stronger, more brave and excellent even in such a bad environment, which are absolutely good examples that are supposed to be learned from. I hold the view that the issue of preferring boys to girls should be attached great importance

to immediately. For another, women tend to be discriminated against in the process of applying for a job. Nowadays, there is still such a hidden rule that many post give priority to males even do not provided for females although the conditions of both sides are equally excellent and even the condition of women are better than that of men, which is undoubtedly a great disrespect for women. It is urgent to call for equality between men and women. There is no denying that the same rights and treatment ought to be provided for male and female in our society.

Study on Feminism in *Gone with the Wind* is beneficial for us not only to promote our understanding of the novel from this angle but also to bring us much practical significance. It is a long and hard process to spread and carry forward Feminism. Nevertheless, we should always hold a positive attitude towards it and believe that the equality of men and women will come true in humankind one day.

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