

The Misogyny in the Animal Farm

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Abstract: George Orwell is considered as the one of the most famous English writers in the last century. He and his works have become the unique culture phenomenon. Especially 1984 and Animal Farm are translated into more than 60 languages and been sold around the world. His works also have been adapted into the textbook of England primary school. However, George Orwell's works show his deep misogyny. Through the perspective of feminism, this article will analyze the misogyny in his famous work Animal Farm and the reasons of his misogyny.

Keywords: Animal Farm; misogyny, George Orwell

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1 Introduction

1.1 An Introduction of George Orwell

George Orwell (original name Eric Arthur Blair, 1903-1950) is one of the most famous English writers around the world. His works are famous for their deep criticism against English politics and totalitarianism. Two of his works 1984 and Animal Farm, have become the cultural phenomena, and the words of (Big Brother), (Thought Crime) have gained the popularity. His works are also adapted into the school textbooks. He is radical, for his works show his sharp criticism against the unequal phenomenon of society. He is also conversational; he shows his favor to the Victoria tradition and the public school of England. His radicalism in literature and conversation in life has caught attention of many critics.

1.2 An Introduction of Animal Farm

Animal Farm is deemed the most famous political allegory over the world. This work talked about the change of power between humans and animals and different animals play different roles in fighting for power. This work provides a deep description of how cruel totalitarianism is and how one can change in face of the unlimited power. Based on its sharp criticism, Animal Farm has gained huge popularity around the world and leave a great influence for the society.

1.3 Domestic and Overseas Studies

For the domestic scholars, there are tons of studies about the Animal Farm. Most of them are focused on the political issues that are described in this book. (Yang 2011) Described how Orwell uses literature as the weapon to describe the reality. (Pan 1999) There are some works which researches about the language features about the Animal Farm. (Xu and Liu 2011) For the oversea scholars, there are also clear research focuses. Such as the article focuses on the symbols and similes used in Animal Farm. (E Fadaee 2011) There are also researchers who focus on songs in the work. (P Kirschner 2004) Although this literary work has been analyzed from different perspectives, there is still a gap in this book. This article focuses on the expression of misogyny in this book and thus provides a new perspective to analyze this novel.

2 The Misogyny in the Western Literature

In the process of Western literature, the dominant part has been always the man, and women are the "other" described by men. Under men's pens, women are portrayed as two types. One is the angel who is considerable, innocent and kind; the other is the witch who is evil and foxy. The evil images of women have been shown in many western works, such as the Eve in The Bible. The siren who can sing song which can bewitch men. However, the simple two types of women images show the shallowness of men writers and their misogyny. Under their pens, women are degraded into objects, and portrayed by man based on their envision and exceptions. (Yang 143) the images of evil female characters created by men writers showed the suppression and misogyny against women.

2.1 The Misogyny in Animal Farm

Many men writers have shown their misogyny in their works and Orwell is one of them. In his famous work Animal Farm, the feminine images are portrayed as weak and foxy, which shows his misogyny against women.

2.1.1 The Inferior Images of Female characters.

In this novel, Orwell mainly focuses on the power changes between male characters; there are only a little word mentioned about female characters, yet they are portrayed as negative ones.

Female characters are portrayed as weak and incapable.

"As winter drew on, Mollie became more and more troublesome. She was late for work every morning and excused herself by saying that she had overslept, and she complained of mysterious pains, although her appetite was excellent." (Orwell 50)

Mollie as the female character in this novel, she is described as the one who are lazy and unwilling to pay contribution to the rebellion of animal against human. She constantly over slept and often come up late to the meeting; her laziness shows her irresponsibility. She complains about the pains yet her appetite is excellent, which shows her laziness. The negative images of female characters show Orwell's prejudice against female characters, and his prejudice against women. He believes that women are weak and incapable to achieve big goals.

Female characters are portrayed as weak and foxy.

"Mollie," she said, "I have something very serious to say to you. This morning I saw you looking over the hedge that divides Animal Farm from Foxwood. One of Mr. Pilkington's men was standing on the other side of the hedge. And—I was a long way away, but I am almost certain I saw this—he was talking to you and you were allowing him to stroke your nose. What does that mean, Mollie?"

"He didn't! I wasn't! It isn't true!" cried Mollie, beginning to prance about and paw the ground." (52)

After the rebellion, Mollie, as a female characters and one of the animal team, she does not show her hatred against the one who used suppresses her, instead, she shows servility to human and let them stroke her nose. Even when she has been caught up by clover, she lies in his face; Mollie's servility shows Orwell's hatred of women. In his mind, women are foxy and cannot stick on in front of troubles.

"Three days later Mollie disappeared. For some weeks nothing was known of her whereabouts, then the pigeons reported that they had seen her on the other side of Willingdon. She was between the shafts of a smart dogcart painted red and black, which was standing outside a public-house." (55)

Mollie's betrayal shows her foxiness and her servility. By depicting a negative image of a female character, Orwell shows his attitude to women. He believes that women have weakness and are incapable to solve troubles.

2.1.2 The Objectification of Female Characters in Animal Farm.

Orwell misogyny shows in his writing of females' objection.

"One Sunday morning Squealer announced that the hens, who had just come in to lay again, must surrender their eggs. Napoleon had accepted, through Whymper, a contract for four hundred eggs a week. The price of these would pay for enough grain and meal to keep the farm going till summer came on and conditions were easier.

When the hens heard this, they raised a terrible outcry" (82)

As the female characters, hens should be willing to make contributions in front of the men's supreme goal, no matter they are willing or not. By describing the hens, which are the symbols for woman, Orwell shows his attitudes to women. In his mind, women are supposed to sacrifice themselves to complete men's goals.

2.1.3 Female Characters' absence in Animal Farm.

Except few negative female images, Orwell uses the female characters' absence to show his misogyny in Animal Farm.

The absence of the female character in leadership role. The novel talks about the power change between man and animal, and how animals change in front of supreme power. However, no matter who runs the farm, there is no female leaders mentioned in this novel. The only female character mentioned in this book is Mollie, but she is portrayed as a traitor. Female characters symbolize the women in this society, and the absence of women in leadership role shows Orwell sealed prejudice against women. In his work, women are incapable to rule a group because they are unable and prone to

change their minds in face with seducements.

Moreover, except for Mollie and the hens, female characters no longer show up in the later part of the novel. By decreasing the female characters in this book, Orwell creates a male character dominated world. His writing of this world symbolizes his envision of society. In his mind, women are the inferior ones, and the world can operate without women.

As a famous political allergy, the story is used to criticize the reality in a more concealed way. Yet, the sexual issues shown in this novel cannot be denied. By portraying female characters as negative ones and decreasing female characters in this novel, Orwell shows his prejudice and suppression against women.

3The Reasons for Orwell's Misogyny

As a classic male writer, the reasons for Orwell's misogyny can be divided into different parts.

3.1 The Tradition of Western Literature

Throughout the course of western literature, there are many women characters, yet most of the female characters depicted by male writers can be divided into two types. In her book *Images of Women in Fiction*, Susan Lippmann Cornillon categorizes female images in traditional Western literature into two types: the "angelic type" and the "demonic type" (or the "femme fatale type").

The prototype of the "angelic type" is Maria in the bible. In the bible, Maria is portrayed as combination of Virgin and mother. She is beautiful, considerate, and kind. Based on Maria, Western literature has created many ideal female characters. Such as the Griselda in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. She is beautiful, and is willing to sacrifice for her husband.

While the prototype of "demonic type" is Eve from The Bible. Eve is described as the one who is seduced by Satan and misleads Adam. She makes Adam commit the original sin. The creation of Eve gives two hints. Women are unreliable, because they are easy to be seduced and commit mistakes. Moreover, women have a bad influence on men. Based on this, there are many demonic type female characters created in Western literature. Such as Rebecca Sharp in *The Vanity Fair*, who is a cruel social climber. She finally steps into the upper world by the cost of two men's lives.

The female images depicted by male writers are, in fact, men's imagination of the female and their judgments on it. The "angelic type" is the ideal woman, while the "demonic type" should face judgement and punishment of the men. For the "angelic type" of women are innocent and docile; they do not live for themselves, they would not question the man-dominated world, instead they protect this world. However, the "demonic type" of women will sabotage the male-dominated world. Male writers like to create the "angelic type" women because they would not cause any threats to men. The "angelic type" women also reflect the patriarchal ideal of men. Feminist critics Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert point out that such women, who exist solely to meet men's needs, are "living in death" because they have evaded their female self and their own free will.

Under the Western literary tradition, many modern male writers choose to follow their predecessors. Orwell is one of them. As an Englishman, he follows the traditional education of England, and most of the works he reads are male writers' works. In this way, the traditional western literature has influenced his writing career. The depiction of female characters in *Animal Farm* is an example, in this work, female characters are depicted into two types: Mollie as the "demonic type" who betrays the team, while the hens as the "angelic type" and are willing to sacrifice.

3.2 The Personal Experience

The second reason for his misogyny is Orwell's experience. In 1947, George Orwell, who was already in his forties, published *Such, Such Were the Joys*, a memoir recalling his childhood experiences at St. Cyprian's School. Throughout the text, he repeatedly emphasizes the unhappiness, coldness, and snobbery he endured at the school, expressing a strong hatred for that period of his life. Mrs. Wilkes, the wife of the school's headmaster, becomes the primary target of his criticism. There is a passage in the text that describes: the young Orwell was reprimanded for wetting the bed, and when Mrs. Wilkes threatened to punish him physically, another lady happened to be present nearby. In a flustered state, the little Orwell mistakenly thought that this lady was going to administer the corporal punishment.

"I imagined, therefore, that it was she who was to be deputed to beat me. It did not strike me as strange that this job should be turned over to a casual visitor in no way connected with the school. I merely assumed the 'Mrs Form' was a stern disciplinarian who enjoyed beating people (somehow her appearance seemed to bear this out) and I had an immediate terrifying vision of her arriving for the occasion in full riding kit and armed with a hunting-whip. To this day I can feel myself almost swooning with shame as I stood, a very small, round-faced boy in short corduroy knickers, before the two women. I could not speak. I felt that I should die if 'Mrs Form' were to beat me. But my dominant feeling was not fear or even resentment: it was simply shame because one more person, and that a woman, had been told of my disgusting offence." (Xu 12)

In this essay, Orwell stretches back to his memory, his childhood is filled with punishment and unhappiness. "Mrs Form" is one of few women that he approaches, yet she is cruel and merciless. His misery childhood forms a great influence on his later writing career. In his essay *Why I Write* George Orwell states:

"I think one cannot assess a writer's motives without knowing something of his early development. His subject matter will be determined by the age he lives in—at least this is true in tumultuous, revolutionary ages like our own—but before he ever begins to write he will have acquired an emotional attitude which he will never entirely transcend." (24)

Orwell's repulsion against women was formed when he was young and later strengthened in his teenage years.

Even after entering Eton College, Orwell remained an unpopular minority. Due to his family's financial straits, he was among the only seventy "King's Scholars" out of eleven hundred students. He was melancholy, his academic performance declined steadily, and he had never been involved in sports competitions. This frustration during his youth lingered in Orwell's mind, and even as an adult, he always doubted his sexual charm. In a letter to a friend in 1940, Orwell wrote: "I feel I am absolutely lacking in charm, because nowadays I receive many letters from readers every day, but they are all from some arrogant readers pointing out various mistakes in my works, and never has a young female reader written to say that I am an attractive male writer" (45) Orwell uses popularity among women to evaluate himself. In the patriarchal society, the lack of women's attraction means lack of masculinity. Yet, Orwell does not realize the shortness of patriarchy, but turns his repulsion against women. His personal feelings against women can be seen in his literary works.

3.3 Social Context

The social background is also one reason for Orwell's misogyny. According to the rules of a patriarchal society, a woman's place is in the home; her role is to assist her husband, educate her children, and manage household chores. All other matters closely tied to politics and society—such as achievements, careers, and ambitions—are considered the exclusive domain of men. Unfortunately, Orwell lived in the early 20th century, an era of drastic social transformation. The impacts of the Industrial Revolution and the two world wars led large numbers of women to step out of their homes and enter various spheres of social life. This prompted Orwell to sigh heavily: "It was the same during the First World War. There was a food shortage then, but money was abundant, agriculture revived, and women poured into industrial fields... Yet no real transfer of power occurred. By 1919, everything quickly returned to 'normal.' I believe it will be much harder to revert this time" (67) This "abnormal" phenomenon frustrated and angered Orwell, exacerbating his misogyny.

And his experiences as the royal police in the English colonial land fuel his misogyny. Orwell lived in a patriarchal, male-centric society, and his background as the child of colonial officials fostered a deep nostalgia for the social customs of Victorian Britain.

Orwell was involved with two girlfriends at the time: Sally and Kay. Both were relatively radical women—independent, self-reliant, and with careers of their own. They shared the same opinion of him: he only cared about himself and never truly tried to understand women; to him, women were nothing more than "a dish placed before him" (Wang 21) Due to their independent personalities, neither relationship with him lasted. Eventually, Eileen, a master's student in educational psychology, became Mrs. Orwell. She gave up her studies and career for him, devoting herself entirely to being a housewife—a role Orwell had long desired. Over the nine years they lived together, she managed the household, cared for their children, organized his manuscripts, supported his work wholeheartedly, and even followed him to the battlefields of Spain. It should be said that her influence on Orwell's work and life was enormous, though sadly, Orwell himself may never

have realized this.

Based on such unfair social background, Orwell starts his writing career and forms his nostalgia for the patriarchal world in his books.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Orwell's famous political work, *Animal Farm*, shows his misogyny by depicting female characters as negative characters and undermining them. His repulsion against women is formed by different perspectives, such as Western literary tradition, his personal experience, and his social background. By analyzing his work from a new perspective, we can gain more deeper understanding about this work.

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