

A Feminist Analysis of the Live-action Disney Film *Mulan*

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Abstract: *Hua Mulan, the heroine, originated from the Chinese Yuefu poem, “The Ballad of Mulan”, which eulogizes a heroine who joins the army for her father and fights bravely, demonstrating the value of loyalty, filial piety and integrity. Mulan has been adapted into films several times because her heroic deeds prove that women are not inferior to men. The Disney action movie Mulan in 2020 emphasizes feminist power and enriches Mulan’s image. The film focuses on women’s loyalty, courage, and truth, revealing female awareness. It demonstrates a contrast among three groups of women: namely, there are Mulan’s image that is completely different from most women at that time, who are in a disadvantaged position despite their adherence to women’s morality, and portrayal of her mother and sister, who represents traditional women, as well as a witch named Xianniang, who was of superpower but still succumbed to men. With the development of the film, the audience can see the gradual development of Mulan’s awareness of her own gender identity and the transformation of Xianniang’s perception of women after being inspired by Mulan. The reshaping and enrichment of Mulan’s image is, on the one hand, a reinterpretation of traditional culture in China. On the other hand, it is also a display of current cultural trends. Research on the image of Hua Mulan will help us understand the development of Chinese and American cultures. Mulan in 2020 is precisely for another promotion of feminist discourse, and shows that females and males are not binary oppositions, but can coexist harmoniously, promote each other, and develop together.*

Keywords: *Mulan, Feminism, value on love and marriage*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Motivation of the Study

With less physical requirements of the labor force, the spread of personal education and the rising consciousness of self-esteem and self-worth, more and more women are aware of the oppression and discrimination that women suffer from male chauvinism, such as the inability for men and women to receive equal pay for equal work, the non-acceptance of women in some professions, and even in some traditions. We are accustomed to adding the word “female” in front of some words, such as female police officers, female doctors, and females plus other occupations. But we seldom say: male police officers, male plus other professions. Is this habit correct? The author attempts to analyze Mulan, who has been implanted with more feminist discourse in the West. Even though Mulan was in such a male chauvinism era, she still managed to fight against her own world with her efforts, so as to inspire contemporary women to fight for their own power bravely, faithfully and truly.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The film *Mulan* (2020) reveals a legend of Mulan in the ancient Chinese patriarchal discourse system. The film creatively constructs the scene of “Oriental Utopia”, and processes the image of Mulan without violating the logic of the times. Finally the film succeeds in shaping a spokesperson for feminist claims and makes efforts to tell the ancient oriental stories well and fit them in with contemporary era and universal sense.

It is instructive for us to tell Chinese stories in English, and we need to question how to make the ancient stories glow with new vitality: how to interpret traditional culture without violating logic and the nature of human ethics? In addition, traditional culture can be reborn reasonably, and at the same time can it be attractive and empathetic to people of other cultural backgrounds.

The analysis of Mulan's characterization in the thesis has enlightening significance for the feminist movement in reality; in particular, the study can inspire women's self-cognition, self-identification and self-discovery.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feminism Overview

2.1.1 Feminist Literature Overview

Since the birth of feminism, it has undergone a century of laundering. Several generations of feminists have worked hard to promote its development. "Julia Cristina said that the development of Western feminism had mainly experienced three major stages, and each stage of feminism had its own reality significance at the time" (Zuo 68). The first generation of feminism coincides with the European Industrial Revolution. "In the first stage, it mainly attacked male sexism and revealed the misrepresentation and degradation of women in literary works. Women's demands are education, legislation, and economic equality" (Zhu 71-72). At this time, the practical activities have not yet risen to the theoretical basis, but they have provided a theoretical basis for the development of the second stage. The second stage of radical feminism pursues sexual liberation, with a certain postmodern feminist color. "The second stage focused on the study of female writers and their works, analyzing the plot structure of women and making women's literature a special field of exploration" (Ma 32). If the first two stages emphasize practice, then the third stage is a philosophical reflection on feminism. "The third stage: theoretical construction stage. The development of women's literature is divided into three stages: imitation of mainstream literature, rebellion against traditional literary standards and self-establishment for their own power and value" (Zhang 22). Only in the three stages of struggle can there be a third stage of development. The three stages influenced each other and laid the foundation stone and development foundation for later feminism and feminist literature.

2.1.2 Overview of Feminist Critical Theory

"Feminist criticism in the West emerged with women's literature during the social movement for women's rights in the 1980s" (Pan 2). As an expression of the struggle for equal rights, women's literature emerged from the feminist movement, and literary criticism made active theoretical exploration for women's writing, and then gradually formed its own theoretical system and became a kind of knowledge production of feminist scholars. This process of formation of feminist criticism shows that a clear gender consciousness is the basis of its theoretical construction.

The gender position and gender consciousness that feminist criticism relies on have had a significant impact on literary research, especially on contemporary literary research. On the one hand, researchers have used gender as an entry point to re-clean literary history, bringing many women writers who have contributed to Chinese literature and re-evaluating the gender stance of women writers who have long been established in literary history, becoming an active attempt to "rewrite literary history". On the other hand, critics intervened in literary criticism with gender awareness, affirming the authority of women's experience, analyzing the themes, structures and creative psychology of women's texts, and summarizing the characteristics and laws of women's writing, which became an effort to construct women's culture or women's aesthetics. However, along with the gradual development of these two academic works, the problems and limitations brought about by the emphasis on "gender" have also emerged in the contemporary Chinese context. This is reflected not only in the obscuring of the richness and complexity of women's writing by "gender", but also in the different perceptions of "gender" between women's writing and feminist criticism, as well as in the different perceptions of "gender" in feminist criticism. It is also reflected in the different perceptions of "gender" between women's writing and feminist criticism, as well as the limitation of "gender" to the development of feminist critical theory itself. (Guo 107)

"'Feminist literary criticism' is a kind of criticism that takes women as the main body, takes women's literature as the object, and criticizes and analyzes from the standpoint of women"(Zhang 50).

"The difference between 'feminist literary criticism' and 'women's literary criticism' lies in the fact that women's criticism related to 'ism' should be a kind of criticism with a purpose, banner, and purpose based on theoretical self-awareness"(Lin 95).

2.2 Current Research on the Feminist Perspective of Mulan Film Series

2.2.1 Domestic Research Results

There is a considerable amount of research on Mulan's previous literary and media works based on Mulan's image in "The Ballad of Mulan". According to Lin Danya and Zhang Chun, "Mulan really changed the entire gender system and discourse environment through one person's war in Disney's adaptation, which is a fusion of Western individualistic values and the feminist discourse constructed by the 'Disney princess series'" (160).

According to Wan Xianmei, "a new image of a woman emerges, with the American spirit of individual heroism and feminist ideas, as well as the relentless pursuit of freedom and the perseverance of self, all of which make her a woman more and more fleshed out" (115).

According to Wei Wei, "In a sense, behind the large number of women dressed as men is a search for women's self-worth and the awakening of their sense of subjectivity" (96).

The current research on previous literary and film works of Mulan are rich in analysis from the perspective of feminist criticism, heroic history and cultural differences between China and the United States.

2.2.2 Foreign Research Results

Li Jing thinks that "Mulan's extraordinary deeds in a conventionally defined male space are more of a consolidation of conventional gender and moral order than a celebration of her gendered self-fulfillment" (369).

Some studies explore how the story of Mulan was abstracted from its "Chinese cultural context and then injected into a Western frame" (Yin 53).

"The universal ideal that Disney's Mulan accented is the theme of individual freedom. In the movie, it is true that Mulan went to war out of consideration for her aged father" (Yin 59).

"Undoubtedly, the director's focus is on Mulan's seeking of personal value, bravery, and wisdom, all of which reflect individualism as well as 'a new kind of treatment of feminism in popular culture'" (Yin 54).

Mulan is still an image qualifying feminism and that always keeps searching for herself.

"Instead of pushing feminism to an extreme by overturning the relation between female and male or to highlight female power by absencing or belittling the male on purpose, the Mulan image has been transformed into a modern understanding of female and human value" (Yang 55).

3. Analysis of the Female Images in Mulan

3.1 Mulan's Mother and Sister's Image

3.1.1 Mulan's Sister - a Curious but Timid Girl

As the film begins, the audience get to know two sisters with distinct personalities, both in their early youth. Compared with Mulan who is so brave, Mulan's younger sister Xiu is a curious but timid girl.

When Mulan brushed her sister's hair that night, she mentioned the scene of catching chickens during the day. Mulan's sister said "it was like you were a bird", which showed that her sister was curious but afraid to try. When talking about spiders, her sister said she was afraid of spiders, while Mulan's reaction was that she would squash it.

3.1.2 Mulan's Mother - a Typical Traditional Mother and Woman in Ancient China

In the film, Mulan's mother is a typical traditional mother, and she believes women should stick to their virtue. She, thus, was full of anxiety and worried for Mulan, her competent and rebellious daughter, who was obviously not "well-behaved" according to "the three obedience and four virtues". In ancient China a woman was required to obey her father before marriage, and her husband during married life and her sons in widowhood and four virtues (fidelity, physical charm, propriety in speech and efficiency in needle work).

She argued with her father over something and even said: "a daughter brought honor through

marriage.” The greatest prejudice against women comes from women. Mulan’s mother was so upset that Mulan would be in trouble again and told Mulan to control herself, and Mulan even flew up and down the walls of a Tulou building to catch a chicken, which no other girl should think about. When her father fell over, Mulan tried to help him, but her mother said: “You would only humiliate him further.”

3.2 *Xianniang’s Image - The Cowardly Fighter*

The original Xianniang, who served the Rourans, charmed men and took property. Serving for Bori Khan, the leader of Rourans, was also a desperate act. When she was found, she was exiled because she had a powerful chi, and she needed a place to prove herself. Xianniang wanted to prove herself, to prove female power, to prove that she was useful, and she needed a place where her power would not be stigmatized, even if she was called a bereaved woman. She would not allow others to call her a witch; instead, she would like to be a warrior, and the life of Xianniang in Rouran was not a pleasant one. Rourans said, “We don’t need witches.” Even if it was because of Xianniang that they dare to challenge the reign of the emperor.

Xianniang was still called a witch who was not worthy of the stage. They thought that witches were cunning, and Xianniang could only work as their slave, and Xianniang gave in. Despite the fact that Xianniang was a tragic woman, she was undoubtedly an inspiring female figure who guided Mulan’s journey of gender awareness and self-discovery.

She was powerful and helped Rourans to fight successfully, but she was submissive in thought, when she was ostracized and treated unjustly, she hated but did not know how to resist. Her superpower had become a humiliating thing. She needed only a place to stay, even if she was called a slave by Rourans, even if there was no country or family. She has similarities with Mulan in strength, intelligence, strong Chi, and most importantly, they are both females. But they chose different paths. Xianniang was cowardly brave, because she chose to serve Khan Bori despite the repeated disrespect and humiliation she received from Khan. She dared not resist because of her inner fear that a female was doomed to be inferior and submissive in the patriarchal discourse no matter how talented or competent she was.

Mulan’s talent and gender aroused both intense sympathy and empathy from Xianniang. As the film developed, she turned from the female antagonist to Mulan’s companion and shield in the end. She was eager to have companionship, eager to be understood, so she blocked that fatal arrow for her confidant Mulan.

Hua Mulan came to report to the emperor while she did not know that sitting across the table was Xianniang. Xianniang also did not believe that Hua Mulan actually led a man’s army. Although Xianniang was also a woman with a strong chi, after being rejected, she compromised. Although she was deeply hurt by it, she did not want to resist, and even became the victim of other women’s aggravation. After suffering from oppression, she willingly resigned herself to her fate, and this was where she differed from Mulan. In the communication between them, Xianniang found the difference between them. She thought that Mulan was recognized by the people, but she was not. Mulan proved to herself that she was wrong to think that women. If women had great power, they could fight for themselves to gain recognition and a foothold from others. She said that it was too late with tears. Mulan was brave, she was brave to fight, to die and live, and Xianniang lacked these, so she could only live in the shadow of men and couldn’t turn around.

Xianniang liked Mulan, who represented the ideal “self-image” for Xianniang. Both as female, Mulan achieved something Xianniang appreciated so much but did not manage to do herself. According to Xianniang’s words, Mulan was “a woman who leads the army. And she is no scorned dog”.

Khan shot an arrow at Mulan, and Xianniang died to save Mulan. At this moment Xianniang was different from before and she was redeeming herself. She saw that Mulan had fought for herself, while she was remorseful for her own cowardice. She envied Mulan. She knew that she no longer had the fighting spirit of a woman, and she was no longer a warrior, but she knew that she had to protect Mulan. At this time, she was not only protecting Mulan, but also protecting thousands of women behind Mulan, protecting the awakening of female consciousness. The film has been mentioned about Mulan’s “place” several times. Mulan’s father let her learn her place. And her mother was also worried that Mulan had no knowledge of her right “place” as a woman. Finally, Xianniang said “take your place before death, and do what you want to do”. This is a woman’s protection of other women, and this is the sympathy between women. This is Xianniang’s sacrifice for the development of female power.

3.3 *Mulan's Image*

3.3.1 *Loyal*

Mulan is not the same. She is a warrior. Even if she was abandoned, Mulan could still remember her mission and her position. She did not compromise with fate, while she was still fighting for herself, just like a phoenix. In order to save the country and the king, even though General Dong had said that he would kill her if he saw Mulan once again, Mulan still returned to the army, telling the General the news of Rourans' conspiracy. The General did not believe in Hua Mulan, a girl, but the soldiers who spent time with Mulan were willing to believe that despite of her female identity. Finally General Dong said: "although she told lies about her gender, her loyalty and bravery are true." The General believed her and even let her be the commander-in-chief. After reaching the Imperial City and being surrounded, General Dong did not choose to protect the Emperor himself, but to let the soldiers open the way for Mulan.

3.3.2 *Brave*

The first shot in the movie showed the difference between Mulan and other girls, as she chased a chicken in a Tulou, making the whole people in Tulou unsettled, and her sister could only look at her with curiosity but did not dare to join her.

When entering the barracks, Mulan knocked into a man who was teasing her. Mulan put her sword on the man's neck, being brave enough to fight against the man.

The night before the war, no soldier in the fourth battle survived, which sent every soldier in fifth battle into fear. Mulan was as scared as they were. But even with her hands trembling, she was inspiring others. She said that she would protect them. And she would fight for them, while the soldiers in the male body, demoralized, did not have this courage.

On the battlefield, Mulan's squad members were all dead, and only Mulan was left alone. She did not flee from the battlefield, but persisted fighting on her own.

In order to rescue her trapped comrades, Hua Mulan caused an avalanche by herself.

3.3.3 *True*

Even her weapons were knocked off, she did not yield to the male. She made more efforts to find ways to win them. She painstakingly hid her chi, but she couldn't hide her own heart as a warrior. She never took training lightly, did not slack off, and lifted barrels of water to the top of the hill without pouring out a bit of water.

The plots about the disguised female identity is different this time. Mulan successfully concealed her true gender during the whole process in "the Ballad of Mulan" in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, and Mulan's real gender was discovered by colleagues in the military in the animation. However, in *Mulan 2020*, when General Dong led the soldiers to practice, he mentioned loyalty, bravery and truthfulness. When it came to the truth, Mulan hesitated. She hoped to become a soldier, but she felt guilty for not being true. Later, General Dong discovered the strong chi on Mulan and questioned why she was hiding it. At this time, Mulan was more eager to show her true self. The movie step by step intensified Mulan's desire for truth. Then, under the enlightenment of Xianniang, Mulan realized that the choices that she was hiding her gender and seeking recognition of her value from the patriarchal system were wrong. This expedient measure actually violated her true heart and was the result of her cowardice and fear. Therefore, in the 2020 movie, Mulan finally chose to accept her female identity and proactively exposed her female identity by herself. And, in the end, it was because Mulan had achieved loyalty, bravery and truthfulness, and then she got the powerful chi. She used her true female identity to complete cooperation with her soldiers in arms, and even rescued her male soldiers in arms and the emperor. In the end, she not only realized her own success and value, but also formed a reconciliation with the patriarchy.

3.3.4 *Filial Piety*

Mulan is worried about her father, even if it is perhaps to lose her life, but she is also determined to join the army for his father.

In the end, even though she had the opportunity to achieve more in fame and status, Mulan chose to return to her hometown to be filial to her parents and make up for her debt to them.

3.3.5 The Pursuit of Free Love with New Ideas

When discussing with other soldiers about the ideal woman in their mind, Mulan immediately said, “My idea woman is courageous, funny and smart.” She believed that a person’s inner heart was more important.

4. Interaction of Male Characters with Mulan

4.1 The Image of Hua’s Father

4.1.1 A Kind Father

Mulan’s father loved Mulan and provided a better environment for Mulan to grow up, prompting her to become a warrior. Mulan was somehow lucky compared with other girls. Her father did not feel displeased when he saw Mulan chasing the chicken, and even smiled.

But he couldn’t get rid of his deep patriarchal ideology and wanted Mulan to be like ordinary women. He discovered the chi in Mulan when she was young. He taught her kongfu and did not reprimand her for being a girl to carry chi (in those days only men could carry chi, women didn’t have the opportunity to carry chi. Women carrying chi was disgraced and would be exiled), but protected Mulan so that she could have a happy childhood. In a patriarchal society, women were in a subordinate position. They did not have their own voice and the right to make decisions. Women were subordinate to men.

When her father talked to Mulan, Mulan was repairing the phoenix at the entrance of the ancestral hall, which she had broken, and he said, “Chi is for warriors, not for daughters.” In order to bring glory to the family, Mulan put on a fancy dress that was not suitable for her to “matchmake”. After Mulan was dressed up, her father, Hua Zhou, said: I’m truly blessed to be in the presence of such enchanting woman. Obviously, despite the fact that he knew his daughter Mulan was an extraordinary woman with powerful “chi”, he still tried to frame her in the traditional female role.

4.1.2 A Traditional Timid Man

He cared about others’ opinions and was bound by others’ words and thoughts.

The matchmaker’s negative remark on Mulan spread among the neighbors after their meeting. They gossiped about the Hua family and even came out to see Mulan as a joke. The father showed his displeasure. At this time, the imperial order came down. Each family should send one male to the battlefield, but the Hua family only had two daughters. The father lost one of his legs because of the war. When receiving the order, he put down his crutches, but fell down. At this time, Mulan wanted to help her father, but the mother said: You will only humiliate him further. The father was helped up by the soldiers. The father brought glory to the family by going to battle and killing the enemy in the past, but the daughter could not follow suit now, only because she was a girl, not a son. Father Hua told Mulan: “LEARN YOUR PLACE.”

When Mulan left home secretly, the father at this point believed that Mulan had made a big mistake. Father Hua blamed himself for not teaching her to abide by her place earlier. He thought Mulan had done something against her place, but he was more worried that Mulan had to face the battlefield and fight against men. He prayed for Mulan.

Finally, he was proud of his daughter when Mulan came back, and he regretted making her hide chi, realizing and eventually admitting Mulan’s unusual strength and talent despite her female identity and inferior social status in a male-dominated society.

4.2 The Emperor’s Image

4.2.1 Good Emperor

In the fight, the sword Mulan inherited from her father fell into the fire. Mulan was upset for a long time, but then the emperor said to Mulan: “rise up. You are a mighty warrior. Rise up like a phoenix. Fight for the kingdom and its people.” With her powerful chi, Mulan defeated Khan, and while Mulan was untying the emperor’s rope, Khan shot at the emperor, who held the arrow and Khan died when the arrow was shot back to Khan. Here foreshadows the inevitability of the triumph of feminism. People with the belief in the power of women will survive with the times, and those who still treat women as objects or slaves will surely pay the price and be eliminated by the times. The emperor believed in Mulan.

He thought Mulan was a warrior, and he conformed to the times and became a generation of wise ruler, while Khan, whether facing Xianniang or Mulan, only thought women as tools. It is impossible to get the country, and Khan's final end can only be lost to Mulan, who lost to male power. The emperor always called Mulan a warrior. In rewarding Mulan, the emperor said: "I invite you to take your place with our greatest decorated warriors as an officer in the Emperor's Guard." Mulan refused, causing the crowd to debate, and the woman in fancy dress even suspected she was ungrateful. The women in the courtroom who were there to contrast with Mulan. The emperor was not annoyed by Mulan's refusal. The enlightened policy gave Mulan more space to show her ability and helped Mulan realize her self-worth.

4.2.2 Khan—spokesman of Foolishness, Complacency, Conceit and Male supremacy

Not being able to recognize that he owed his achievements to Xianniang, he believed that he saved Xianniang and gave her a place in the world when she had nowhere else to go. He was so common yet so confident. When Xianniang reported to Khan, she told Khan that a girl from an ordinary family was coming to save the emperor. Khan laughed contemptuously: for him, there was no chance for a girl to cause his whole plan to fail. He has no knowledge of female power and potential and chooses to remain ignorant.

4.3 The Image of the Army Companion

4.3.1 General Dong

In the conversation with Dong, Dong asked Mulan why she hid her chi. Mulan hesitated. At this time Mulan was no longer just the filial daughter who endured for her father. Her self-awareness gradually awakened. With her father's teaching, Mulan thought she should hide her chi. However, in the army, it seemed that Mulan saw her value more clearly and discovered herself as a warrior. After realizing the power of her chi, Mulan practiced night and day and gradually surpassed others. On the eve of the battle, the General expected everyone to achieve three qualities: be loyal, brave and true, so they could be invincible. When he said true, Mulan hesitated. She did not achieve truth. At this time, she felt guilty rather than being afraid of being discovered, because she was not true. At this moment, she is more concerned about her own character and morals. Mulan thought twice about telling the truth, but hesitated because of the General's appreciation. She did not want to lose any chance to prove herself, and she wanted to seize the opportunity to prove that even if she was a woman, she could also go into battle and kill the enemy like a man, and even do better. General Dong's encouragement promoted Mulan's awakening of personal consciousness and stimulated her self-realization.

4.3.2 Honghui

He seemed to know that Mulan was a female. Here he was obviously different from other males. If he knew Mulan was female, he still did not reveal her true gender, which can prove that Hong Hui was very equal-minded. He did not expose Mulan and did not look down on Mulan. Unconsciously, he was also a feminist fighter. He was also slightly less patriarchal in his thinking.

He said that Hua Mulan was braver than all the boys among them and that she was the best of them. When Mulan came to save the emperor, Honghui told Mulan to close the door and bolt the door before leaving (in order to give Mulan more time to prevent the Rourans from catching up with Mulan), where the soldiers were protecting each other, not only protecting the emperor but also Mulan.

5. Analysis of Feminist Themes and Values in *Mulan*

5.1 Comparison between Post-modern American View of Marriage and Traditional Chinese View of Marriage

The concept of marriage is a person's perception and understanding of love and marriage. The difference between Chinese and American women's criteria for choosing a spouse actually reflects the difference between Chinese and American ideology, culture and social status.

"Americans choose their spouses from the starting point of 'self', while Chinese people are more susceptible to the influence of secular ideas and outside eyes" (Wang 290).

In the modern American society, the marriage model is based on reason and centered on man, not on God. In the United States, couples are equal in their relationship. Their union is free, and their parents do not dare to interfere. It is their individual right. At the same time, they believe that marriage is a legal act,

regulated by law.

“In China, the spirit of collectivism has penetrated into people’s emotional life, so much so that many people believe that couples and friends should share everything in each other’s lives” (Gui 343).

According to the rules, Mulan’s marriage should be decided by her parents, which is in line with the rules of traditional Chinese feudal society. Mulan was out of place at the time. Her nature prevented her from accepting the arrangement of her parents like traditional women. She is unwilling to accept the matchmaker’s order. When she was forced to meet the matchmaker, although Hua Mulan dressed up like an ordinary woman, her character could not be hidden. While Hua Mulan was pouring tea, a bug scared her younger sister, but her younger sister did not dare to show the fear. But Hua Mulan was different. Even in front of the matchmaker, she wanted to be herself. She caught the bug and picked up the teapot, regardless of her image. Even if she provoked the matchmaker’s anger and lost her marriage, she didn’t feel depressed. She had never felt that the realization of her life value depended on men and marriage. What she really wanted to do was to achieve herself.

In the barracks, Hua Mulan and other soldiers discussed what a good wife should be. The other soldiers hoped that their arranged wife would be virtuous, behave dignified and beautiful as a flower. Only Mulan believed that a person’s inner life was more important, and the object of marriage should be humorous and interesting. She did not regard the customary marriage conditions as the conditions of her marriage, but knew exactly what kind of person she wanted to love. Her love was free and was not restricted by ethics. At the same time, she also expressed that women should not restrict themselves through the excellent female qualities in the mouth of matchmakers, and that women’s value should not just be graceful. They should be colorful.

Professor Hu Wenzhong pointed out that “it is impossible to understand American behavior without understanding American individualism”.

Individualism as an ideology has penetrated every aspect of American society today. It is expressed in the values of independence in marriage, regardless of gender; respect for people, including respect for one’s own inner feelings and respect for the wishes of the other person; And a sense of responsibility, responsibility for friends, family and children. (Sun 88)

Of course, the American concept of marriage mentioned in this thesis is only reflected in the play, and we should have a correct and comprehensive understanding of the American concept of marriage in reality.

5.2 The Confrontation and Reconciliation between Male Power and Feminist Discourse

Although men are somehow the perpetrators of female victimization, at the same time, they are also the victims of it. The general context of society is such that perhaps for some men, they are just marching along the path that has been set for them. Stereotypes of the male are commonplace and powerful. When men are in the system of male authority, they do not know how to communicate with women, and they are afraid that women do not like them. Sometimes it is not impossible to reconcile men and women. In the film, although the soldiers who get along with Mulan have the same prejudice against women, they know what Mulan is like, they even believe in Mulan, a woman. If Mulan does not come to the army to show her strength, how could the male soldiers realize the importance of women? If Mulan believes that she is not so good as men, then how can she convince men? Sometimes, the oppressed themselves accept the victimization of the perpetrators, which, reversely, justifies the oppression to the perpetrators. The perpetrator’s position is different. It is difficult for him to appreciate the feelings of women, unless they realize that women are being treated unjustly, and efforts to resist is to save themselves, to save their compatriots.

In fact, the liberation of women is also the liberation of men. Men no longer need to bear excessive responsibility for the dignity of themselves. In the man-centered social system, men also have to bear the burden of earning a salary outside to support the family. Men have to bear that they can’t cry because they are men when they are boys. Respecting for women makes women realize their own value, to a certain extent, and makes the liberation of men bound by stereotypes and conventions.

“Feminism emphasizes gender stance and gender consciousness, which is not a problem in itself” (Guo 106).

But too much emphasis on gender consciousness will cause other parts of the art to be weakened. For example, although the father of Mulan is fettered by male power, his love for Mulan should not be denied.

When conducting feminist criticism, how to coordinate the relationship with other parties is also very important.

In the film, the male characters' attitude towards Mulan is also crucial. Even as males, under the rule of feudal thought, can still exude the brilliance of feminism. The soldiers' trust in female Mulan, the emperor's appreciation for Mulan, and his father's affection for Mulan are all proof of it. These changes are the brilliance of feminism and the reconciliation of male power and feminist discourse.

6. Conclusion

That Mulan could become a heroine is inseparable from the time she lived in. If her experience is put into the present, it does not have such influence. Mulan, as a woman, forcibly cut a gap in the world where men were in charge, when the word feminism did not yet appear. What she represents is the exploration of the concept of gender equality hundreds of years ago, and this image can still be studied and discussed today, not only because of her original vitality influence, people implanted in the content they want to express, and now Mulan, in this film, is a feminist warrior. She is making her own efforts to let the world see the power of women. But she is also more than a feminist warrior. What she represents is a more inclusive feminism.

As a feminist warrior, she does not succumb to the oppression of that time, nor did she abandon men because of other men's bad remarks about women. Even in a patriarchal society, she was still kind and gentle when she struck the traditional thoughts. This is a truly kind warrior. She not only fights for herself, but also for women. At the same time, she even fights to rescue men trapped in the framework of patriarchy, which is a new force bursting out of the reconciliation of men and women.

With the enrichment and development of the culture of China and America, more possibilities of Mulan are waiting for us to discover.

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