

The Impact of Feminism and the Outlook for Its Development: A Case Study of the Film Titanic

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Abstract: In the framework of a love story, the film *Titanic* portrays the behaviour and psychology of multiple characters with distinct personalities, shaping many unique female and male images. While telling the story, it expresses profound feminist ideas, illustrates the conflict between two genders, and leads people to think deeply about gender relations. In this paper, the author analyzes some representative characters in the film and examines the impact of feminism on literature, film, economy, and politics, emphasizing the importance and potential of women in various fields. It is found that feminism encourages women to start and participate in a business, and it promotes the success of women in the fields of technology and business. Finally, this paper discusses the development and challenges of feminism in contemporary society. Feminism not only provides important support for the cause of gender equality but also inspires more people to pay attention to gender equality issues and strive to build a more just and inclusive society. The influence of feminism will continue to drive social development and change.

Keywords: Titanic, feminism, feminist thought, conflict

1. Introduction

Titanic has won multiple Academy Awards, becoming a box office myth in the United States. Undoubtedly, this is a film that combines commercial and artistic elements. While telling the story, the profound feminist ideas are also one of the key points of expression in the film. This paper analyzes several characters in the film, including the female protagonist Rose, who shows women's conflicts and resistance to patriarchal society through self-awareness awakening, Rose's mother, the epitome of capitalist patriarchy, and Carl, Rose's fiancé, the male chauvinist who suppresses Rose. Additionally, feminism's impact on literature, film, economics, and politics, as well as its role in promoting social understanding and gender equality is explored. Feminism encourages women to participate in various fields, change traditional gender stereotypes, and promote gender equality changes in literature, film, economics, and politics. Finally, the development and challenges of feminism in contemporary society and how to solve the problem of sexism are discussed. Feminism is a complex and diverse movement that has made progress and also faced challenges. There is a need to delve into the application of feminism in different social and cultural contexts and explore how to promote gender equality. By interpreting the feminism in the film *Titanic*, this paper reflects the change in the mainstream value of society and helps further understand the development of feminism and its influence on society and literary creation.

2. Exploration of the Western Feminist Thought in the Film *Titanic*

2.1. Analysis of Rose's Mother

In the film *Titanic*, Rose's mother represents a considerable portion of women in society at that time who held a slavish mentality towards women, such as being "weak and saved". At that time, women were required to speak elegantly and behave appropriately. When Rose is smoking at the table where she is pretending to talk, her mother stops her and scolds her while she is discussing "male size" at the table. She disdains Jack because he is penniless. She attempts to marry Cal under the name of Rose's deceased father, "It will ensure our survival." She believes that women must rely on men to survive, and she persuades Rose to wear a corset chest herself, which undoubtedly means that she has tightened her grip on Rose. She sees women as goods bought and sold by men, and she thinks the purpose of women going to college is to catch a wealthy husband. She brutally sacrifices Rose's dignity and happiness for the sake of her family's reputation and her own enjoyment. Rose, or the female group, is forced by social ethics to remain silent, not only losing the right to choose a life she wants to live but also building layers of barriers between the world and the heart. Rose confesses in the movie, "I feel like I'm standing on the edge of a cliff, no one pays attention to me, no one cares about me," and then the idea of suicide arises spontaneously [1]. However, as a perpetrator, she also plays the role of a victim. When it comes to self-worth, women take "dedicating everything to their families" as their first responsibility, suppressing various demands of themselves. During her conversation with her mother, Rose is brutally suppressed by her mother's statement that "only by marrying Carl can we have a good life". This kind of thinking and behaviour is passed down from generation to generation, fundamentally belonging to ethical solidification at the cultural level [1].

2.2. Analysis of Rose's Fiancé

Rose's fiancé, Carl, represents a portion of male dominance, using economy and power to dominate women. At the beginning of the film, as soon as Rose enters the room, she hangs paintings that are out of place with the dull room style. This seems to indicate a little resistance from Rose in the oppressive environment, and Carl is constantly suppressing Rose. "God not that finger painting again, they were ceremoniously there a waste of money." As the film progresses, Carl continues to control Rose by taking her cigarette at the dining table, making decisions for her, and sending someone to track her. In his perception, women have no self and are dependent on men. When people talk about Rose, they always say that Carl Hawkey's fiancé. Without Carl, Rose would lose her value in this patriarchal society. However, Carl's rough control and rule easily ignite Rose's resistance, rebellious spirit, and "demonstration" emotions. Not only that, the mainstream social circle represented by the wealthy and aristocrats on board is also dominated by men. Men hold the initiative in discourse, and whether they are boatmen or interlocutors, they are standard members of a patriarchal society. The entire ship is a symbol of the male world [2]. On such a ship, women do not have freedom, and many ethical and moral norms regulate them. If they go beyond it, they will be attacked by a group. The oppression of women by men is combined with the oppression of the social class, and the dominant position of men over women is also related to their economic status and purchasing power. So, when Rose points out the unfairness between men and women, and women can only suppress themselves and accept the patriarchal order, the film immediately switches to Jack going to the upperclass cabin to find Rose, but is warned, "You're taking a third class ticket, it's not appropriate to come here." The order that women belong to is not only the one in which men oppress women with financial strength but also the one in which the bourgeoisie oppresses the proletariat with financial strength [1].

2.3. Analysis of the Behaviour Change of Rose

Rose's growth in the film is very evident. At first, Rose pulls off the attire that bound her after the banquet, but she cannot undo her bra. She tries to jump into the sea. This means that she cannot save herself through her self-awareness, or that she has not yet fully formed self-awareness. Rose is undoubtedly successful in her later life. As a survivor of the Titanic, her existence itself is a symbol of success in the female world. When Carl and Jack disappear as Rose's dependent objects in the male world, Rose finds herself and becomes an independent individual without having to rely on anyone [2]. Jack is a very important part of the formation of Rose's self-awareness. If Carl represents the constraint on Rose, then it is Jack who helps Rose find freedom. The first time they meet is when Jack saves Rose. Afterwards, he dances with Rose in the bottom cabin and teaches her to spit, which was considered inappropriate and vulgar in mainstream society at that time. Rose takes off her clothes and asks Jack to paint nude pictures for her, indicating that she has gained herself and is promoting her feminine self. This is actually a big step towards her journey of freedom [3]. At the same time, when Rose constantly experiences an "unconventional" life, she carries a rebellious spirit, hoping to break free from the constraints of ethics and the oppression of male power. It is worth noting that Jack's superiority in rationality, courage, and other aspects also demonstrates the superiority of men over women in male power. As Rose's self-awareness becomes stronger, she jumps out of the boat and Jack stops her. She finally bursts into her own inner roar, "Don't tell me what I should do!" After the Titanic hits an iceberg, Rose's self-awareness reaches its peak. She gives up the opportunity to board the ship and relentlessly pursues it, risking herself for love [1].

2.4. Analysis of Other Characters in the Film

Molly is another representative character in *Titanic*. Unlike other nobles on the ship, Molly is an upright and kind person. She is clearly unwelcome on the ship. She helps Rose speak at the dining table and responds to the humiliation from the nobility on behalf of Jack at the banquet. These simple, straightforward, and kind qualities are ignored due to her "rude behaviour", to the point of being despised and isolated. However, Molly is undoubtedly brave. After the sinking of the ship, she advocates for rescue rather than just protecting herself like others. Molly uses this series of actions to fiercely strike back at the patriarchal society, calling for female compatriots to pursue their own goals and be brave enough to ignore societal biases [1].

In the drama, a man says, "When a woman encounters a machine, or when the noblemen on board the ship do not allow women to participate in their conversations, it is a great disaster." In men's subconscious, and even in the opinion of other women on board the ship, women lack knowledge and are weak at hands-on skills with no ability to make money. However, Rose deliberately argues with Mr. Isme, the designer of the cruise ship, about the "volume" of the Titanic, and she presents Freud's theory to persuade him. The most ridiculous thing is that Mr. Isme does not know who Freud is, which further demonstrates Rose's pursuit of independence and unique personality as a woman [4].

3. The Impact of Feminism on Literature, Film, Economics, and Politics

Feminism has had a profound impact in the fields of literature, film, economy, and politics, promoting social understanding and transformation of gender equality. Here are some detailed examples of the impact of feminism in these fields:

In terms of literature, feminism's impact on literature is evident through the works of many female authors who focus on women's experiences. For instance, Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* is famous for its innovative portrayal of women's social interactions and inner experiences.

Such literary works help amplify women's voices and experiences and explore the issues within their lives.

In terms of films and television, feminism has influenced the film and television industry to focus on gender discrimination issues. For example, *The Hidden Figures* tells the true story of three African-American women mathematicians who played crucial roles at NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program. And it helps alter gender stereotypes in literature by emphasizing women's unique characteristics and potential.

In terms of economics, feminism encourages women to participate in business and entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurs such as Angela Ahrendts from Apple and Ruth Chang who founded EQuota Energy are increasingly achieving success in the fields of technology and business. Their achievements encourage more women to pursue innovation and business opportunities.

In terms of politics, feminism promotes women's greater participation in politics. Many countries have elected female presidents, prime ministers, and legislators, such as Angela Merkel of Germany and Jessinda Adne of New Zealand. These female leaders have brought new perspectives and policies to society. The feminist movement has influenced the formulation and implementation of gender equality policies at the government level. These policies include anti-gender discrimination laws and increasing women's representation in government. They help ensure that the government can better represent the interests of women.

In short, feminism plays an important role in literature, film, economy, politics, and other fields, providing important support for achieving gender equality and eliminating gender stereotypes. Changes in these fields highlight the power and potential of women, inspire more people to pay attention to gender equality issues, and strive to build a more just and inclusive society. The influence of feminism will continue to drive development and change in society.

4. The Outlook of Feminism

Feminism is a complex and diverse movement that has made progress in society and also faces challenges. For example, in some societies, feminism faces repulsive resistance. Some people are dissatisfied with the demands of feminism, believing that it will have a negative impact on traditional values and lead to resistance to gender equality efforts. For example, the traditional gender division of labour excludes women from social productive labour, resulting in women becoming domestic slaves and losing their personal freedom and independent economic status. The loss of women's independent economic status leads to the complete loss of their legitimate social status, as well as their rights to education, political participation, inheritance, and other aspects [5]. Meanwhile, in patriarchal societies, men's thinking about gender has become "patterned" and "stereotyped". It can be said that men always wear coloured glasses when looking at women. Men's views on women are binary. Arbitrarily distinguish between yin and yang, hardness and softness, intelligence and emotion, spiritual and flesh, good and evil, etc. Men evaluate women with a "straight line view" and subjectively believe that history has predetermined the position of men in linear development. Changing the existing order will disrupt the evolutionary process and lead to social imbalance [6]. Therefore, in order to alleviate or curb gender discrimination, it is necessary to find various practical, reasonable, and feasible methods to solve the problem of gender discrimination in the field of mass media. Among them, viewpoints related to postmodern feminist audience criticism such as "actively resisting, using barbarians to control barbarians, learning from gender discrimination to resist gender discrimination" are worth pondering and attempting [7].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper analyzes the female images and feminist ideas in the film *Titanic* and explores the conflicts and resistance of women in patriarchal society, as well as the importance of self-awareness. In the film, Rose's mother represents many women in society at that time who believed that women should be "weak and in need of redemption". Rose's fiancé Carl represents the dominant position of men and controls women through wealth and power. Meanwhile, Rose's personality development in the film is also observed. She breaks free from her initial oppression and gradually becomes more confident and autonomous.

Based on the above analysis, the impact of feminism on literature, film, economy, and politics is also discussed. Feminism in literature encourages female writers to pay attention to women's experiences, explore issues in women's lives, and amplify women's voices and expressions. In films and television, feminism encourages people to pay attention to gender discrimination

Finally, it is mentioned that feminism, as a complex and diverse movement, faces challenges while advancing society. Some societies resist the demands of feminism, believing that it may have a negative impact on traditional values and hinder efforts towards gender equality. To alleviate or curb gender discrimination, it is necessary to find various practical, reasonable, and feasible methods to solve the problem of gender discrimination in the field of mass media.

In short, feminism has been deeply and subtly expressed in the film *Titanic*, inspiring people to deeply contemplate gender relations. Feminism has had a profound impact in the fields of literature, film, economy, and politics, providing important support for social understanding and transformation of gender equality. The emergence of women in various fields has sparked more attention to gender equality issues. During this period, women have been exploring and defining themselves, striving to remove any labels placed on women by society, achieving complete equality with men in social life, and making efforts to build a more just and inclusive society [8].

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