

A Study of Female Images in British and American Literature from Classic Films

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Abstract: Classics resonate with everyone in every era. The unique living environment of Britain and America has created many literary works, and many classic British and American movies, are based on British and American literature for adaptation. Translating words into images on the screen is a change that allows the audience to better understand the characters in the original works. As an important part of literature, female characters are a constant topic in the literary world. In many British and American literary works, the portrayal of female characters changes with time and social context. Using some classic British and American films, this paper provides a comparative analysis of the female characters in these British and American literary works, including the elements of obsession with love, pursuit of self-worth, tragic colors, and independence.

Keywords: British and American films; British and American literature; Female image

1. Introduction

Female characters, a vital element in literature, are a constant topic of literary topic-making. In many English and American literary works, the female characters change in different colors with the change of times and social background. Starting from Shakespeare's time until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, taking the literary works of British, French and American authors as examples, the female characters in English and American literary works began to show a different degree of activity, especially with the rise of the film industry, the adaptation of literary works into films was more conducive to the profound display of female images in the original works. In this regard, British and American films, represented by Hollywood films, have interpreted the new characteristics of female characters from a cinematic perspective in a richer form, in which the performance of feminist images is extremely prominent.

2. Women's obsession with love

Love is a tone that has continued in English and American literature. Whether it is a glorious epic masterpiece, or the portrayal of small social characters, which all have the theme of love. In the face of love, the film, or the original work of these female characters, dare to love for the sake of defying tradition, against that seemingly indestructible world. The love between Francesca and Robert in the film adaptation of the American author Robert's novel *The Bridge of Madison County* breaks through the prohibitions of family and marriage, and their love was a scorned act at the time, a betrayal of marriage and a challenge to ethics and morality.

In the movie, Francesca grew up in Italy, married and came to America with her husband. Francesca's life in the American countryside was boring to the extreme, due to the romance of Italy, and in her love with Robert, her own romantic style was overflowing, a love that broke through the shackles of the world. Francesca's love brings the audience to tears because she does not give up her family because of love. She still remembers her responsibility as a mother but wishes to be with Robert after her death for love.

In the original, the role of Francesca, the description of her love more text, while in the film, people through the actress frown between that thought, very direct understanding of her obsessive love for Robert and the sense of responsibility for the home. The question of love and women seems to be a bridge inevitably reserved in literature. The main theme of love in British and American films adapted from English and American literature is not only a tribute to these literary works but also more in line with the requirements of films under the trend.

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane Eyre's love for Rochester is pure love, without any other mixed emotions. When Jane Eyre rejects St. John's proposal, although Rochester's mansion has been burned down by his lunatic wife, Rochester is blinded as a result, but Jane Eyre, according to her heart's obsession with love, thinks that Rochester is still her favorite. Jane Eyre became Rochester's angel because of her love, and the rest of Rochester's life was wonderful because of Jane Eyre.

In the movie *Pride and Prejudice*, the love between Elizabeth and Darcy, the characters in the novel, has been talked about while respecting the original book by the English woman writer Austen. In Elizabeth's view of love, there is no money or wealth, no status gap, there is an understanding of each other and a mutual love between the two. Through the movie, Darcy's arrogance and Elizabeth's desire for equality, it is not difficult for the audience to understand the original Elizabeth who is very persistent in love. Although in love with Darcy, Elizabeth's love is based on equality, without the need for a boring high profile and cool attitude.

Elizabeth has such a view of love, but also the original author Austen's view of love. When we watch these British and American films, we have a more intuitive understanding of the image of women on the screen, and love, a unique expression of emotion on the screen, it is easier for us to understand the world of love in the original women through the film, that is an obsessive view of feelings.

But such love in English and American literature, it is difficult to have a perfect ending, women's obsessive view of love, is often brought about by the tragedy of love. In the movie *The Lady of the Camellias*, Margaret is also stubborn about love, even if she is misunderstood by her lover, Armand, she still silently bears the harm brought about by love. No matter what the outcome of love, for love, these women are still so stubborn and sure.

3. Feminism's quest for self-worth

The idea of rebellion against male power in the original, i.e., strong feminism, is well reproduced in numerous British and American films. Feminism in English and American literary works is the most prominent expression point of feminism. At present, most of the British and American films adapted are based on the British and American literary works of the early 20th century, which began to elaborate on feminism and oppose male power. This phenomenon is not unique to the literature of this period. In the social context of the time, many women actually began to step out of their homes and into a competitive society. These women were the representatives of the resistance to male power, and they were less romantic but more professional. They are more concerned about social, political and other topics, these female characters, the pursuit of self-worth and social value, as many of the British and American films are reflected.

For example, in the novel *Gone with the Wind* by American author Mitchell, the female character Scarlett is such a woman. In the movie *Gone with the Wind*, the audience has a deep impression of Scarlett, a rich lady. The film is set against the backdrop of the Civil War, which took away everything from Scarlett's family, and Scarlett grew from a young lady indifferent to national affairs to a wise modern woman against all odds. Scarlett, a female figure in the original, is a realistic character, and Mitchell does not have a clear-cut description of the character, but rather a realistic narrative. In the film, the feeling is a little more intuitive, Scarlett seems to be a woman in pursuit of self-worth. In so many works of English and American literature, women are no longer an independent and vulnerable group, the director and author are emphasizing the social status and social value of female characters, they have self-worth.

These female figures, while pursuing self-worth, are also a kind of rebellion against male power, and feminist ideas are undisguised in the films or novels.

In the movie *The Lady of the Camellias*, Marguerite is a famous prostitute in Paris, but she falls in love with Armand and lives with him in the countryside. Armand's father believes that Marguerite is responsible for his son's death and coerces Marguerite to fall in love with him, but Armand believes this and, in his anger, humiliates Marguerite in public. Marguerite eventually dies of her illness, and Armand is remorseful when he learns the reason afterwards. Marguerite's death is a tragic expression of love, but also a silent rebellion against the world of male power.

Similarly, in the movie *Pride and Prejudice*, the love between Elizabeth and Darcy, at the beginning, Elizabeth does not accept Darcy's confession because of his arrogance. We go through the movie and look for the love between Elizabeth and Darcy in the original, we will find that Austen spent a lot of ink to describe the wonderful love of Elizabeth and Darcy. It was not until Darcy had changed his "bad habits" that Elizabeth truly accepted Darcy. Although Elizabeth loves Darcy, she is disgusted by Darcy's machismo and deliberately indifferent to Darcy, which is also a kind of rebellion against male power.

4. Female figures with a strong sense of tragedy

In English and American literature, female tragedy is an important part of the story, especially after the film adaptation, this female tragedy is more real. For example, in *The Bridge of Madison County*, Francesca's love is a tragedy, she has her own family, but falls in love with Robert.

Such love is a tragedy. Under the moral bondage and ethical dispensation, Francesca's love can only end in tragedy, and the four days of love that penetrates the marrow of her bones torments Francesca for the rest of her life, and such a tragedy makes the audience more heartbroken.

Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, the heroine, Catherine, is also a representative of a female tragic figure. Catherine's desire for love is extremely contradictory. She hopes that her love is pure love free from worldly influences, but also expects to find a Prince Charming who is well-born and well-off. The love between Catherine and Heathcliff is pure, and for this reason, she does not hesitate to break the moral chains of society, while Catherine still cannot let go of the desire for wealth, she married a man she did not know and became the mistress of the mountain. This is the world's "good" marriage, but her ambivalence about love, so she could not let go of love, and finally paid for it with her life.

5. The image of independent and autonomous women

Whether it is the obsession with love, the pursuit of self-worth or tragic overtones, through the expression of female characters in films, we can see an image of independent and autonomous women in English and American literature, which is also the catharsis of feminism in words and the outbreak of feminism on the silver screen. In the 19th century, a large number of female writers such as Jane Austen and Brontë went to the heights of English and American literature, they opposed male power and promoted feminism. For example, in Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the heroine Jane Eyre is an independent female figure who is active and conquers the hero Rochester with her intelligence.

In *Jane Eyre*'s love affair with Rochester, Jane Eyre keeps her restraint and sobriety, she laughs at the ridiculous powerful people, and she aspires to equality. Jane Eyre is an independent and autonomous female character, and Jane Eyre has remained independent in her pursuit of love. After she learns that Rochester has a wife, she is unwilling to devalue her status and chooses to leave. And when she realizes her feelings for Rochester, she still returns to Rochester despite his blindness and lack of possessions. Jane Eyre's appearance may not be outstanding, but she has a noble soul, she pursues independence and autonomy, and she has a more attractive male self-cultivation and spiritual pursuit, especially Jane Eyre's awareness of financial independence. This is all a manifestation of the image of an independent and autonomous woman. Whether in the movie or in the original, Jane Eyre makes us sigh with wonder, what a great woman this is!

Conclusion:

Whether in terms of love or self-worth, or tragic color and independence, the female character, which plays a significant role in English and American literature, has an appealing quality. The female characters in novels seem to come to life on screen thanks to movies. Analyzing the representation of women in literature and films is more engaging and more acceptable to the general audience. You can review these British and American classics in the theater in your spare time.

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