



逢甲大學學生報告 ePaper

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Chauvinism in the West and in the East

*The Color Purple V.S Raise the Red Lantern*

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*The Color Purple* V.S *Raise the Red Lantern*

Outline

I. Introduction: Chauvinism once exists around the world. *The Color Purple* is a western bestseller written by Alice Walker; *Raise the Red Lantern* is an award-winning Chinese film directed by Zhang Yimou. However, both of two works intelligently interpret the torments of women who have already suffered Chauvinism from ages ago. We can also observe the similarity of them.

II. Women never live for themselves.

A. Celie: living for “alive,” was driven by her violent husband.

B. Women in the *Red Lantern*: living for “love of their husband.” They schemed against each other, are imprisoned by men’s power.

III. The male protagonist didn’t have name.

A. *The Color Purple*: Mr.\_\_\_\_\_

B. *The Red Lantern*: didn’t mention the name to audience.

C. The fear to males.

IV. Different final results after women tried to escape from Chauvinism.

A. Celie: living for herself, restarted another bright world.

B. The third and forth wife in the *Red Lantern*: one was murdered and another turned into an insane.

V. Conclusion: Chauvinism, a backward thought once exist in our modern world, should be eliminated since woman should be treated equally.

Chauvinism in the West and in the East:

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Either in the early ages or the recent centuries, Chauvinism has existed and oppressed female right lastly. The whole world seems co having the same problem, so it's understandable that so many scholars would rather publish their criticism to attack this drawback, which stains our marvelous culture. *The Color Purple* is a quintessential novel in which the narrator has suffered chauvinism in her puberty even after marrying her husband; she lived in the shade of her husband who was used to fist her. The author Alice Walker successfully interpreted how disadvantaged women were under Chauvinism. By the understatement technique, she uncovered this immoral and unreasonable thought which men treated women by inhuman way and the mistreatment is so unbelievable: men used to beat women to satisfy their majesty. However, not only in western exists this kind of phenomena, in east, women experienced Chauvinism as well. In a famous award-winning film: *Raise the Red Lantern*, it made a clear description of the miserable Chinese traditional women whose destiny is totally controlled by their husband. In the deep, silent courtyard, there lived four wives who married the same man. The courtyard is resembled a cage, in which they lost freedom and respect, the only thing they were required to do is be a loyal wife to their husband. Generally, all the people living in the house followed the same rule: always listen to their male master without betraying. In fact, these two works have some similarities. First, Women usually can't live for themselves, but obey and live for their husband; second, readers and watchers can observe that in those two works, the male protagonists didn't have a name, did it symbolize something? Moreover, what would happen if women try to loosen the bind and head to their liberty road? The following are the similarities and the differences between these two works.

To begin with, the obvious similarity of these two works is that women never live for themselves and the living goals were always swirling around men. In *The Color Purple*, Celie, who was the survivor in the Chauvinism, merely lived for being “alive.” She was only an “additional object” whose rank was so low that even her husband got married with her on the purpose of owning her cow. What made me feel sorrowful for this character most is that she just wanted to exist in the cruel world and never had the courage to fight for self. In the darkness of Chauvinism, she was willing to be like a servant who had to bear the sudden thrashing from her husband and obeyed the command anytime. A little bit resistance was not allowed in her world. She completely lost her freedom; however, I think she should at least try to jump out the melancholy circle for her life as Sophia did. Without striking back, her exist could be significant no longer and she was just like a flesh with a dead will. I believe in the meanwhile most of women preferred to lead a life like Celie. Once they got used to the torturous life, it’s really hard for them to transfer the current condition. They might be afraid to vary it since there was not a justice gleam to support those victims. Therefore, the weakness is actually could be tolerated. Reading *The Color Purple* can be regarded as seeing through women’s hardship under the Chauvinism from a magnifier. Women lacked freedom and living goals because of the unreasonable philosophy stipulated by males.

On the other hand, Chauvinism overspreads to orient China as well. In the film *Raise the Red Lantern*, it also expounds women’s miserable lives in the shade of Chauvinism. The man got married with four women, and the whole big family lived in a traditional palatial house with a deep and silent courtyard. The husband hold the entire rights, he was the center of everything. Including the slavers, nobody dared to betray their only master. As the watchers can expect, wives living together schemed to each other for wanting to be spoiled by their co-lover. The fourth wife, a new comer

or an invader for others, was forced to step in the snare of treacherousness. I think it resulted from that men were never content: More wives around, more pleasures they get. Oppositely, women were required to be definitely loyal and devoted to one man. In addition, most of them imputed to someone were not out of their will. The moment they got married, it also implied that their life would be imprisoned by the constraint of their husband. In this film, the satire upon the Chinese conventional society and Chauvinism can be actually recognized easily. The director arranged on purpose to have audience can't see the clear face of the husband; we weren't aware that how the master looks like. We can associate this man with a person who can't be seen easily by people: the monarch. That is, man is as honorable as a king. The vague face signified men are so respectable that the general public can't approach. For wives, the deep silent courtyard is like a jail imprisoned their body and freedom. Also, we can regard the deep courtyard as a box, and wives were the master's puppets. He controlled their will and deeds, and they can't help but move around without will. In short, no matter in West or Orient, when women were oppressed under Chauvinism, freedom and living goals seem a far-away luxury for them.

Next, I want to talk about a strange phenomena emerged in both of two works. Neither in the novel nor the film can we know the male protagonist's name. In *The Color Purple*, Celie always called her husband Mr.\_\_\_\_\_ even though finally she revealed her husband's name to readers. In the *Raise the Red Lantern*, also, the actors never mentioned the master's name; they just called him "sir". Once in the film-appreciation class, the teacher concluded this phenomenon from *Raise the Red Lantern*: it symbolized that "all the men owned the same Chauvinism characteristics at that time, thus they don't need a name to distinguish individuals." I think it definitely makes sense. Since at the Chauvinistic time, males reveal the same characteristic—they owned everlasting power to control women, and it seems it is

naturally to happen. Based on this concept, most of the men are the same because they all treated women unfairly, and autocratic. Therefore, the male protagonists in both works lacked name can be interpreted, since the blank Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ can fit in any man's name, and we don't need to distinguish specific person. We can also consider this phenomenon is the reflection of women's fear toward men. Women were regarded to be in the lower rank in their social structure, and they have been living under the fear of being punished if they tried to do any resistance to fight against their owner. Gradually, they were afraid of men. Thus, we may view Celie "dare not" called her husband's name, and so in *Red Lantern*. The above-mentioned conditions can explain the vanishing of male protagonists' name.

Eventually, let's assume what will happen to women if they tried to put into act to struggle and strike back to Chauvinism. Both the women in *The Color Purple* and in *Red Lantern* want to strive against men for their freedom and rights; however, the ends are different. In *The Color Purple*, I saw the growing confidence on Celie, and she also gradually realized that her life should not being ruined by anyone. With her sister and Shugu's help, she walked out the shade of her husband's abuse and restarted her newborn life. It's a positive end for the narrator and readers because Celie's courage triumphed over the long-years mistreatment on her. Oppositely, let's see the end in *Red Lantern*. The third wife is the only woman who dared to adventure for her love under Chauvinism. She had a love affair with a doctor, which could be viewed as a challenge to the stubborn traditional society. Unfortunately, her honorable courage like the gleam in dark soon died out. While the master found out she made such an intolerant mistake, he commanded his slaves to kill her. Finally, she was hanged in a small room secretly. I felt sorrowful for this end because she still couldn't survive in the giant traditional power oppressed on her. The forth wife who witnessed this murder was finally claimed to be an insane because the master said: "you didn't see

anything; you are just out of your mind.” Finally, the fourth wife became a real insane because the murder stimuli. She is another victim under Chauvinism. It’s a tragedy and a negative end to us. This movie is a real satire to attack our traditional Chauvinistic society, also, the shameful historical record.

Chauvinism, once a backward thought once invaded our society doesn’t completely vanish in the world yet. Under this mistreatment, women suffered a lot of unnamed pains for a long time. In my point: where the Chauvinism exists, where the unwise people are. We should eliminate this stain which is the main cause stinking our world. For women and our peace land, Chauvinism should not appear any more.

