



CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

Volume: 03 Issue: 04 April 2022

Interpretation of the Image of Woman in English Enlightenment Literature

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Received 18th Feb 2022, Accepted 16th Mar 2022, Online 15th Apr 2022

Abstract:

This article highlights the role and dignity of women in the society in the Western European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The issues such as the suffering of European women, their class stratification and social inequality in society were reflected in the literature. The coverage of the world of women, their spiritual experiences was clearly reflected in the works of enlightened representatives of the literature of the national revival period Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding.

Keywords: the role and dignity of women, Enlightenment period, English literature, social inequality, social class stratification, enlightened representatives of the literature.

Introduction

In the literature of the Western European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, views on the role and dignity of women in society were expressed. It is known that in European society, the birth of a girl in a family is considered as an accident. The reason for this was that the girl could not be the heir of the family's fame and prestige, the heir to her wealth, the successor of the dynasty. When a boy grew up in a family, it was inevitable that he would benefit more materially than the girl. Probably for this reason, in the eighteenth century, the role of English women in society was very low. This was also due to the fact that after the Norman invasion, women were treated as a commodity and were unable to make decisions without the consent of their husbands. By this time, the social status of women in society in England was classified as follows:

- 1) representatives of the lower class;
- 2) representatives of the middle class;
- 3) representatives of the upper class.

In England, the upper class understood the importance of being enlightened. Parents, realizing the importance of education in the future development of their sons, have paid special attention to the education of the first child in the family. However, such attention was only in the interests of men. In British society, there was a perception that women were created for housework and did not need education.

By the first half of the 19th century, girls were sent to international schools just like boys. They learned sewing, music, art and dance skills in international schools.

In 1780, for the first time in England, Anna Ferrier began teaching English grammar, French, Italian, calligraphy, and geography to girls in schools. Elizabeth Carter, a middle-class woman known in England during this period as a patron of literary ability and fine arts, published her own collections of poetry and translated several foreign works into English, even though she was the daughter of an ordinary priest. Elizabeth Carter was one of the enlighteners of Oxford who founded Queens College, schools and institutes.

Girls belonging to the upper class were given in early marriage under the guidance of their parents. Parents often married girls to people they did not want for material gain. The interests of the girls were protected by marriage. Because when the girls got married, they were entitled to a pension from their husband's material wealth once a year. It was easier to get married in England during this period than to get divorced. Divorce was only possible under a special parliamentary law. This caused serious material damage to the men. Husbands treated their wives as an item in the family. Often wives did not see each other for a long time, even while living with their spouse, because of their commitment and self-interest. They were mainly able to see the ball, various events and nights.

Materials and Methods

The long struggles for women's equality in Europe in the early seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought women happiness, freedom, unhappiness instead of family peace, deprivation of maternal happiness, humiliation, and discrimination. While Western democrats have long lamented the "tragic fate" and "tragic lives" of Eastern women, the plight of women in Europe has not been commendable.

In the 18th century, the concept of feminism was first reformed in England by the English woman writer Mary Walton craft. Mary Walton craft said, "Now is the time to revolutionize women's lifestyles. It is too late to lay the groundwork for women to regain their lost dignity and contribute to world culture as part of humanity." [2] Indeed, under the notion of feminism, a misconceived notion emerges in the eyes of many. In fact, feminism is a movement that fights for women's rights, for their education, for their right to vote, for good working conditions, for child care, for social assistance, for the protection of motherhood.

Feminism did not mean that "women should rule the world", but that "women should not be looked down upon, they should also find their place in society" [3]. The goal of feminist leaders such as Mary Walton craft and Simon de Beauvoir was to ensure that women, regardless of race or religion, were heard in society and that their rights were not violated.

In the eighteenth century the social life in London was not so good. There was a housing shortage in the country, and British law restricted housing construction. Even then, the country's wealthy aristocratic ladies were anxious not knowing what to do to spend their time, while the middle class was preoccupied with finding a suitable groom, dressing and knitting. The lower class was worried about where to find food for tomorrow. Thus, issues such as the suffering of European women, their class stratification and social inequality in society were also reflected in the literature of this period. The coverage of the world of women, their spiritual experiences, was clearly reflected in the works of enlightened representatives of the literature of the national revival period Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding. D. Defoe's pamphlet "An essay upon project" of the early Enlightenment put forward the idea of enlightening women: "I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country." , that we deny the advantages of learning to women. One would wonder indeed how it should happen that

women are convertible at all, since they are only beholden to natural parts for all their knowledge. Their youth is spent to teach them to stitch and sew, or make baubles. They are taught to read indeed, and perhaps to write their names, or so, and that is the height of a woman's education "[4]. - I thought that our country is one of the most civilized and developed Christian countries in the world. But we have denied that women are enlightened. Nevertheless, from an early age, they aspired to sewing, reading, and literacy to the point of writing their name. (Translated by us - U.S.)

Through these ideas, Defoe acknowledged that women's intelligence, abilities, are no less than men's, that women are also a part of society, and that they too have the right to education. Defoe opposes the ignorance of women: "Women, what prevents girls from becoming educated? Why weren't women allowed to be educated?" raises questions such as. "The capacities of women are supposed to be greater and their senses are quicker than those of the men; and what they might be capable of being bred to is plain from some instances of female wit which this age is not without, which upbraids us with injustice, and looks as if we denied women the advantages of education for fear they should vie with the men in their improvements. To remove this objection, and that women might have at least a needful opportunity of education in all sorts of useful learning, I propose the draft of an academy for that purpose". - Women have more opportunities than men and they are emotionally rich. Men were afraid to argue with women and rejected the benefits of education for women. [5]

With this, Defoe challenged those who hold the narrow view that "if women are educated, if they are educated, they will ignore men and women will dominate society." According to the author, women's education is important not only for themselves, but also in the upbringing of their families, nationalities and children. If a woman is a *fozila*, the future of the children will be stable. The role of enlightened mothers in the education of the child, in his development into a perfect person in society is invaluable. Defoe also describes knowledgeable and well-behaved women as follows: "A woman well-bred and well-taught, furnished with the additional accomplishments of knowledge and behavior, is a creature without comparison; her society is the emblem of sublime enjoyments; her person is angelic, and her conversation heavenly; she is all softness and sweetness, peace, love, wit, and delight; she is every way suitable to the sublimes wish, and the man that has such a one to his portion has nothing to do but to rejoice in her, and be thankful". - A well-educated and enlightened woman is a unique creature. He is a part of society. An enlightened woman is a symbol of love, intelligence and all good wishes. He who attains such enlightenment should be content with his life and be thankful. [6]

While defending the rights of women, Defoe acknowledges that the owners of this delicate creation deserve high respect.

An expression of Daniel Defoe's views on the Enlightenment can also be seen in his work, *Moll Flanders*, which praises women. Defoe's protagonist, Moll Flanders, was born in Newgate Prison. She is the epitome of a woman who was a housewife for 12 years, married 5 times, stole 12 times, was exiled to Virginia for 8 years, but in the last years of her life she repented and chose the right path.

In the eyes of the reader, in the process of getting acquainted with the events of the work, in the eyes of the reader, the ways of life, successes and failures of Moll are revealed. Because of his unhappy family background, Moll suffers many blows of fate. This was because he was the child of an immoral mother and the environment in which he lived was unhealthy. Although Moll realizes how low the society in which he lives is, he cannot oppose it, and he himself becomes a member of this spiritually poor society.

The twentieth-century Russian writer M. Gorky describes the image of Moll Flenders as follows: While M. Gorky condemns the society in which Moll Flenders lived, he regrets that during this period the social rights of women, their honor, dignity and respect were discredited.

Literary critic I.M. Erlichson comprehensively substantiated the role of eighteenth-century English women in society, their social psyche. He noted that Moll Flenders would be raised in the hands of an enlightened, pure-hearted, poor woman in a church charity until the age of 14. Her appearance in the eyes of prominent local celebrities has a positive effect on Moll's life. The reason for this was that Moll was very beautiful and talented. She dreamed of becoming a rich princess and did not want to do menial work. After the death of her benefactor, Moll fell into a noble family and was brought up by nobles there. Masters knowledge such as singing, dancing, playing the keyboard. Later, Moll's interest and aspiration to the life of the nobility led him to turn the pages of his life radically. In our view, although Moll Flenders comes from a poor, miserable family, the fact that he was raised in the hands of an enlightened man leads to later remorse and self-awareness. Although he has lived a life of theft, deceit, and lightness from his own generation, at the end of his life he will repent with remorse and live a good life.

Literary critic A.S. Likhodzievsky describes Defoe's image of Moll Flenders as "an image that depicts real life and has a psychological character" [9]. At the same time, A.S. Likhodzievsky argues that Moll Flenders, like Erlixson, suffered from the environment and society of the past, and that if she was not a victim of space and time, she could also be a virgin and a beloved woman.

Another example of Daniel Defoe's work glorifying the world of women is Roxana. The protagonist portrays the life path of a lonely woman striving upwards through the image of Roxana. Defoe's protagonist, Roxana, is a sly, light-hearted, broad-minded woman. She traveled throughout Europe, "flourishing" Paris during the reign of Louis XIV, and circulating in London. Roxana erases her black past and accidentally meets her abandoned daughter at a time when she is aiming to live her good days. As a result of a dispute between them, Roxana causes the death of her daughter. The means of drama and artistic psychologism in the work are described at a higher level than in the other works of the author.

Daniel Defoe is recognized as the first writer in the history of literature to shed light on his personal life encyclopedia. Lyubov Romanchuk, a literary critic who studied the author's work, agreed with A. Elistratova. A. Elistratova, who studied 18th-century English Enlightenment literature, said that "Defoe's Roxana's work ended tragically" [10], while L. Romanchuk noted that "Roxana was a victim of her own selfishness" [11]. At first glance, it seems that literary critics have expressed two different opinions, when in fact their observations are essentially close to each other.

Samuel Richardson, who entered English literature with a new epistolary novel genre, also portrayed women who suffered from the bourgeois regime. Unlike the protagonists of Daniel Defoe's "Moll Flenders" [12] and "Roxana", Moll Flenders and Roxana, he created the image of an honorable, imaginative Pamela. Pamela, the protagonist of "Pamela, or the Awarded Woman," is an image of a woman who was honored at the end of the work for her honesty and integrity, who maintained her chastity even in a bourgeois, ugly and vile society. Richardson's innovation lies in the fact that he interpreted an ordinary girl from the nation as the protagonist of the work. In the play, a simple girl from the village, Pamela Mr. B. is not afraid of persecution and does not fly to his riches and gifts. Seeing the girl's unbreakable will, Mr. B. returns from his evil intentions, becomes a generous man, and marries Pamela. It is clear that while the protagonists of Defoe's works, Moll and Roxana, are women who have suffered from society and the environment, their contemporary Pamela's image is portrayed as the original image in stark contrast to the images of Moll Flenders and Roxana.

The play does not claim that society corrupts people, but that a person with good qualities can be an example to bad people in society and encourage them to do good. S. Richardson's Pamela has not lost her identity either, as a man devoted to her chastity, modesty, and the upbringing given to her by her parents, even Mr. B. such as re-educating a person with bad intentions. Pamela's strict adherence to her parents' advice is also reflected in a letter to their daughters: "Indeed, my dear Pamela, we are beginning to be in great fear for you; for what signify all the riches in the world, with a bad conscience, and to be dishonest; We are 'tis true, very poor, and find it hard enough to live; though once, as you know, it was better with us. But we would sooner live upon the water, and if possible, the clay of the ditches contentedly dig, live better at the price of our child's ruin ". "Indeed, dear Pamela, we are worried about you." Even though we live a helpless life, honor is sacred to us. Therefore, it is better for us to go into the depths of the earth than to be trampled on by our children. [13] (Translated by us - U.S.)

Conclusion

Based on the above considerations, Pamela writes that she was offended by her parents' doubts about her true humanity, that they would never worry about her, and that she would rather die than be a shameless human being. Hence, S. Richardson describes Pamela as a possessor of noble qualities, unlike the heroes of other enlightened writers. Pamela's example proves that women should be chaste, imaginative, honorable, and enduring the hardships of life, and that one day they will be rewarded for these qualities.

Another English enlightener, Henry Fielding's "History of Tom Jones," "Amelia," depicts the social life of eighteenth-century English women. Fielding retained many of the moral aspects of Enlightenment novels in Amelia. Fielding did not name the work "Amelia" for nothing. The work was of great value to Fielding. The play illuminates the mirror of Amelia's heart. Amelia's image is full of femininity, humanity and confidence. She is the mother of three children, a successful woman with life experience. But even so, Fielding tried to portray some of the flaws in Amelia's image without exaggeration.

Although Amelia is not so high intellectually, she is of special importance with her purity of heart, intelligence, and humanity. Another notable aspect of the protagonist is that she is forgiving and a loving mother.

As A. Elistratova noted, "Amelia's beauty of heart is reflected in her family. For him, the so-called "small world" of the family consists of his wife, But, and three children. [14] It is revealed throughout the work that the image of Amelia is truly a family and passionate mother, a wife. We can also see its high points in the epigraph quoted by Fielding: "Family members have the right to be three times happier" ("Three times happy are those who will be bound by an unbreakable union"). [15] So, Fielding's heroine Amelia also has qualities that are unique to Eastern women.

In general, in English Enlightenment literature, the theme of the role of women in the family and society is conveyed mainly through the depiction of the life of the protagonist. D. Defoe's works such as "Moll Flenders", "Roxana", Henry Fielding's "History of Tom Jones Found", "Amelia" are significant in that they are dedicated to revealing the world of women.

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