

Subtle but Invulnerable: Feminists Breaking through Red Chambers and Prejudiced Pride

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Abstract:

The paper is dedicated to the analysis of differences and resemblances of feminism consciousness between Elizabeth Bennet and Lin Daiyu, the protagonists in *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Dream in Red Mansions*. The two works are considered pioneering greatly because female characters are of vital importance, breaking the narrative traditions. The paper, capturing this mutual transcendence, examines the two works through a feminism scope, and explores how social background influences feminism ideals by introducing the measurement “feminism applicability” for evaluation of Daiyu and Elizabeth’s respective feminism, and aims to argue that society determines, both shapes internally and affects exteriorly, applicability of feminism. By applying the comparative analysis method, the writer finally concludes that Ming-Qing and British Enlightenment triggers females’ recognition towards self, which contributes to their mutual emotionality; however, demand for rationality, females’ rights of speech and prevailing ideologies differentiate in two societies, thus their strength of need for self-judgement and autonomy is differed, resulting in different levels of feminism applicability.

Keywords: Feminism, Pride and Prejudice, A Dream in Red Mansions, emotionality, education, growth.

1. Introduction

When studying eastern and western literature, *A Dream in Red Mansions* and *Pride and Prejudice* are of indispensable importance. The former, as one of the four great masterpieces plus loved and interpreted by many Chinese scholars, narrated the rise and fall of the Jia family as well as the love between Jia Baoyu and Daiyu. It made an unprecedented criticism of feudal society and greatly exceeded contemporary thoughts, which was notably reflected in the meticulous depiction of many female roles and the advanced ideals given to them, mainly centering on free love. The latter, through the perspective of protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, portrays how a Victorian England family perceives love and marriage, and a pioneering soul not being in resonance with the echoes of obedience. This creation by Jane Austen courageously rebels against the conventional tide of female compliance and patriarchal commands and therefore is regarded as a milestone of early feminism. The two protagonists, Daiyu and Elizabeth, which are the main embodiment of this early feminism and often considered as early possessors of feminism consciousness in their cultures.

Examining their writing periods, they are both associated with states of undergoing turbulence. During Cao’s writ-

ing period, the renowned “Kang-Qian Flourishing Age,” a clash of feudal ethic and beliefs, and people’s arousal from uniformity occurs [1]. As to *Pride and Prejudice*, British Enlightenment, which cultivates Enlightenment Feminism and feminist thinkers such as Mary Wollstonecraft and the already formed and rooted capitalism, provide the backup for the development of feminism, boosting the emergence of many feminists such as Jane Austen herself and Charlotte Bronte [2]. Notably, the two works are created within 60 years, which could be called coetaneous. In short, in a similar period but different social context, the two protagonists possess astounding similar qualities yet still greatly diverge in terms of feminism, which makes the exploration into them and their feminism ideals intriguing and valuable, especially when associated with an analysis into their social background.

Previous studies on either works are rich but not well-rounded. The revealing of feminism elements within Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* is oriented at Elizabeth’s characteristics and her deconstruction of the male’s dominant voice, but intertwined with the denial of society as a major contributing factor and her being qualified as a feminist. As to *A Dream in Red Mansions*, though topics such as its feudal background, portrayal of females’ features, and their comparison with previous female characters are

researched, they haven't related the advent of A Dream in Red Mansion's feminism consciousness to its social background. Very few previous studies have compared the two works in terms of feminism, and there are only vague insights into the intrinsic cause of the relatedness and differentiation between Eastern and Western feminism consciousness.

This study supports and applies the New Historicism theory, stressing the influence of contextual thoughts and expectations on literary works, and aims to fill the mentioned blanks. Using the comparative analysis method, it aims to explore the similarities and differences in feminism ideals between Daiyu in *A Dream in Red Mansions* and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*, evaluate them, and then seek reasons in the social backgrounds for their divergences.

2. Key Definition

To introduce a measurement to evaluate the feminism of the two protagonists, the concept of "feminism applicability" needs to be invented.

Feminism applicability refers to the feasibility of implementing and effectuating feminist theories and ideals. The development of feminism, or any self-protectionism initiated by minorities as reflected in literary works, could be divided into three phases: The first begins with their self-awareness of their distinct existence instead of being subordinated [3], thus accelerating their entry into the second phase—their determination to resist social norms that confine them to inferiority. Then they start to struggle their way through by proposing, revising and implementing different methods. This represents progress from abstraction to specification, from vacancy to substantiality. Thus, development from each phase to the next marks an improvement in feminism applicability (vertical contrast). Additionally, in each phase, different contextual societies have different applicability towards the same theories, requiring insights into the respective backgrounds of each objective society (horizontal contrast). Hence, scholars could evaluate levels of feminism applicability in terms of which phase the contextual society is in, what methods are created, and to what extent the society is feasible to implement them.

3. Textual Analysis

3.1 Daiyu, A Dream in Red Mansions

3.1.1 Characteristic, mental sensitivity

Jiang Zhu herb, Daiyu's archetype, is reincarnated in Daiyu to reclaim the previous grace of irrigation, which explains why Daiyu is tearful and sensitive. For instance,

when Daiyu is strolling in Jia Garden, she hears rehearsals of Dream in the Deserted Garden and deeply resonates with Du Liniang who shares the same surroundings and circumstance, sensing sorrow and helplessness in the ceaseless and inevitable flow of time [4]. After linking it with her own fate — being a blossom yet already destined to wither — tears instantly spring to her eyes. This is a typical observation of Cao's mental depiction of Daiyu, reflecting her inner intricacy and complexity. This also embodies Daiyu's consciousness towards self: fearing to lose the invaluable energy and beauty of blossoming youth, which is prohibited when women were merited for obedience.

Another case showing her intrinsic complexity and intricacy could be her cry in Chapter 32 when graciousness, joy, and sorrow all rush to her at once [4]. Surprised by Bao Yu's heartfelt concern and care for her, joyful at their innocent and pure relationship, sorrowful for her helpless and disadvantaged experiences, and sighing at the passing youth and irreversible fate like flowing water. Her emotional complexity reveals the special exquisiteness and sensitivity that belong to women.

From these similar depictions, Cao expresses his view on women: he appreciates females' inherent sensibility and emotional exquisiteness. Not only does he pay full respect to females and depict them tenderly, but he also favors women over men, claiming "The daughter is made of water, the son is made of mud," which is unprecedented.

3.1.2 Views and perspectives, education

Another distinct feature within Daiyu which contributed to her feminist consciousness is her advocacy towards education. Factually, she is just an orphan girl and a lodger in Jia Mansion, having a much lower status compared to Jia Baoyu, Xue Baochai, and other landlords and ladies. However, she wins the respect from these elites by her talent in poem composition and her unworldly refinements. She is not timid to present her accomplishments before members of the Mansion, winning their hearts and sincere praises, and her unique understanding of poetic lines shows her bravery in demolishing the social stereotype that women are illiterate. An apparent example would be Daiyu casually intoning the sentence "the beauty of the day, the joy of who's home" [4], while walking into Rongguo House along with Grandma Liu. The sentence is a direct quotation from Romance of the West Chamber, which is considered forbidden. This attempt and her unbridled spirit are valuable in a world full of compliance and trembles [5]. It is worth noting that in Confucianism doctrines, a man should respect and pursue an official career by studying for imperial exams. However, Daiyu's

love, Baoyu, rejects the prospect of a bureaucratic career but chooses to stay with the women in Jia Mansion. He particularly favors Daiyu among all the women since she, unlike Xi Ren or Baochai, never urges Baoyu to take imperial exams. In fact, she is the person who opposes routinized and formalized education. When she is teaching Xiang Daiyu poems, she states first and foremost that a poem needs to be substantial instead of being formatted [4]. Baoyu's love for her educative mind foils her uniqueness in the realm of education.

3.1.3 Realization and Growth

Daiyu's courageous love pursuit distinguishes her from most other ladies in her time. It could be summarized into different phases, and she undergoes changes in her person in each phase. Though the novel is rarely labeled as Bildungsroman, Daiyu's growth is detectable. In the first phase, she makes an impressive attempt in trusting her first impression of love on Baoyu and follows her heart onwards. She voices her displeasure when seeing Baoyu with Miss Xue, and also demonstrates her poetic accomplishments, astounding Baoyu and attracting him to her. Lady Jia's favor further frees her from societal restraints, allowing her to embrace her budding love untroubled.

Just as she is immersed in the carefree atmosphere of Jia Mansion, the disaster of Lin Ruhai's death struck her. Becoming literally an orphan, she is conscious of her drop in status. Comparing to the first phase, she is much more alert and susceptible towards Shi Xiangyun and Baochai's relationships with Baoyu, even though the former is already engaged. Also, she notices her increasingly ardent love towards Jia and abidingly asks for assurances of love from Baoyu and quarrels with him, even smashing his jade and causing commotion across the entire family. During this period, she is in constant disturbance due to insecurity, hence being more delicate and sensitive to her thoughts, and is more turbulent in emotion than ever before.

Phase three begins when Daiyu and Miss Xue start to reconcile. Textually, Daiyu realizes her false impressions of Miss Xue and the latter's tolerance. Though this could be seen as Daiyu learning to tolerate, Miss Xue is a worldly woman, perfectly compliant with societal views and holds temporal views towards her own sex. This could be revealed from her teachings to Daiyu of "not to read "unofficial books" and behave properly [4]"when Daiyu accidentally mentions lines in Peony Pavilion and Romance of the West Chamber.

These teachings makes Daiyu more aware than ever that even in Jia Mansion, freedom is quite restricted, and she says to Baochai with great gratitude, "No one before has ever taught me so much". In front of Miss Xue's great for-

bearance toward women's sufferings, Daiyu feels sincere respect and fails to retain her disagreement unaffected by this respect. Therefore, Daiyu's reconciliation with Miss Xue and accepting her opinions could be seen as a form of compliance and an abandon of faith in women's freedom. Though Daiyu never totally identifies with convention, her remaining self-consciousness can only seek resurrection by renouncing this world. Hence, the last phase acts as a transition towards her tragic end; her emotions, like her poems, are burnt into ashes, withering into eternal emptiness.

In short, this growth does not boost her confidence in love pursuit or encourage her to liberate; it leads to her disavowal of her previous self, yet tragically believing this to be an improvement.

3.2 Elizabeth Bennet, Pride and Prejudice

3.2.1 Characteristic, mental sensitivity

Elizabeth is also mentally sensitive, manifested mainly through her sharpness and limited tolerance. She firmly turns down Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy's first marriage proposals, frightening and upsetting her mother's nerves, and illustrates distinctly a girl with strong will.

Her refusal towards Mr. Collins is both emotional and analytical. Her amused reaction when hearing Collins' statement that he has "gone away with his feelings" clearly demonstrates her emotionality, and her reply "You could not make me happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who could make you so" [6] shows her solicitude for happiness in marriage. She refuses to be governed by Collins even though he is the inheritor of Longbourn estate, valuing happiness much more in comparison. The contrast between her reaction and Charlotte's impassioned and ready acceptance shows Elizabeth's irrationality; However, her rationality is shown undoubtedly through her sentence "You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say" [6], which presents her strong demand for self-judgment. This demand is also evident in her rejection towards Darcy. After Darcy finishes insulting her connections and family and magnifying his sacrifices, she turns him down without any hesitation.

It is obvious that she has her current criterion for evaluating a marriage, which is happiness-centered, differing from the worldly capital-centered or familial reputation-centered standards. She pursues a marriage in which females are treated with respect and admiration, which is, in some sense, a partiality and inconsideration (later realized by herself), but this enables Elizabeth to follow her own ideals, fusing the temporal "irrationality" and her own "rationality" together and redefining rationality. Her

“impulse” and emotionality establish her as a strongly willed feminist, laying the foundation for her development of feminism applicability.

3.2.2 Views and perspectives, education

Women’s education, in Victorian England, can be described as “ornamental” - from Mr. Bingley’s and Miss Caroline’s words, it is evident that to deserve the word “accomplished”, a woman must “have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages.” Mr. Darcy adds that women need to learn something “substantial” - by broadening their eyesight through extensive reading. However, Elizabeth disagrees with both and says she has never met such a woman as a union of perfection in all mentioned aspects [6]. In her mind, women should by no means be judged so narrowly, instead they are encouraged to deconstruct the traditional sense of accomplishment and educate themselves.

It should be clarified that this doesn’t mean she is denying women’s education right. Later, when she is discussing education with Lady Catherine, Elizabeth bravely confronts her by confessing she never had a governess and she has little knowledge of how to sing or dance, plus returns Lady Catherine’s sarcasm saying “We were always encouraged to read, and had all the masters that were necessary.”[6] From this, it could be seen that she is the one who reads for her own sake, instead of reading just to comply with the conventional concept of a well-bred girl. She prefers to be self-defined rather than be evaluated by others’ criteria.

Also, she doesn’t think her education should be harnessed as tool for showing off. She turns down Darcy’s proposal of talking about books when dancing with him at the ball, unlike Caroline, who reads just to satisfy Darcy and says reading is “a pleasant way to spend an evening”[6]. For Elizabeth, education is not mechanical but following the will to learn from the masters in books and engaging in social activities to obtain knowledge from experiences. While this is seen as ill behavior in Lady Catherine’s mind, it is the substantial form of education which involves experimental and untrammelled reflection, thus they learn for themselves and their pleasure instead of cramming in order to meet rigid standards of being “accomplished”.

Therefore, Elizabeth’s statement of never encountering an accomplished woman at the beginning could be interpreted. Elizabeth is denying such women who met all the mentioned standards exist, since it is uncanny for women to gain cognition of self and guard their “education sovereignty” while still being an echo of temporal views. She supports that education should not be judged so dogmatically, and every woman should read and experience to be

empowered to break and alter these social norms, just like herself.

3.2.3 Realization and growth

Though *Pride and Prejudice*, too, is seldom categorized as bildungsroman (initiation novels), Elizabeth’s character and self-judgement is forming and altering throughout the book, and finally she reached maturity.

As consulted before in 3.2.1, Elizabeth is emotionally sensitive. This trait can be detected throughout the whole text, but “irrationality”, which is often consulted in relation to sensitivity, can not. Her prejudice on Darcy, which is the most obvious trait, is climbing, peaking and then diminishing, in resonance with her and also the author’s tentative steps in balancing love and wealth, indicating that her rationality is gradually overtaking her impulse and irrationality, until she exclaims, “till this moment, I never knew myself.”

At the beginning, though she is conscious about wealth, affected by the atmosphere, she despises those purely economically aimed marriages. Prioritization of happiness in marriages is one rare and special trait of Elizabeth. She dislikes Darcy at the first sight due to his arrogance and impudence even though he is rich, and this irrational sensation from their “first glance” entangled her and infected her mind when Darcy first proposes to her. Darcy is not expecting to be turned down in such an undesirable and embarrassing way, but due to Elizabeth’s priority on happiness and mutual respect not wealth or materialistic richness, and also her positive first impression and credulousness towards Mr. Wickham, she firmly rejects him.

When analyzing her mental experiences, initially, her two first impressions are both misleading. This is directly caused by her irrationality, judging a man by his cover. Lydia is the second sacrifice, flushed away by her irrationality and dive ruthlessly into an elopement with Wickham, unaware that Wickham simply marries her because if so, Darcy will pay for this marriage and his debts. This clearly demonstrates the author’s opinion, similar to the phrase “impulsion is devil”, partly complying with Mary Wollstonecraft, whose opinion includes women learning to be rational instead of emotional and irrational, but transcends her original by preserving women’s inherent sensitivity to avoid the name “feminist with misogyny”.

As the plot proceeds, readers find Elizabeth growing little by little, her view on marriage transforming from only a conception that she needs a descent marriage and another separated one of happiness and love pursuit, to tilting towards affection and irrationality, liking Wickham and refusing Collins’s marriage proposal in pursuit of love in marriage -- the early stage of rationality formation -- and entering a period of turbulence: she changes her opinion

towards money and material wealth when seeing her friend Charlotte living better-off with Mr. Collins. She starts to reconsider money in marriage might not be such a despicable thing, since it is a necessity- it can contribute to some couple's happiness. After that, Darcy's tolerance and admiration towards her is shown evident through his generous assistance, and after the misunderstandings between them are cleared, she realizes her wrongness and irrationality, thus dedicated more to understanding Darcy's personality instead of criticizing it. Also, Darcy's monetary devotion and his magnificent garden acts as a booster effect, helping Elizabeth to decide and balance, and finally a perfect union is formed.

Before, love pursuits may just be a vacant and theoretical talk; but after witnessing financial-oriented marriages and happiness onwards, she realizes the vacancy of love theories can be filled by wealth, hereby pointing out a feasible mindset of implementing feminism and free love to both materialistically and spiritually enrich a marriage.

Elizabeth's development of rationality is one clue buried in the text, while her impact on Darcy is another. Darcy appears to us through Elizabeth's lens as arrogant and asocial, unwilling to bend his noble knees to ask for her hand in a ball. Elizabeth, sensing this disrespect and pride, counterattacks him in many occasions, and this marks the advent of irrationality (first impressions and credulousness). Darcy's first proposal is a disaster, due to his condescending attitude towards Elizabeth and her status. He believes with his wealth and superior social status, he can demand for an expectant acceptance regardless of Elizabeth's reluctance, hence astonished when hearing "Why...you chose to tell me that you liked me against your will, against your reason, and even against your character" as a reply [6].

A greatest transition is seen in Darcy's garden during Elizabeth's visit. Darcy appears unexpectedly and greets her with utmost civility, making her realize it is her own impact on him that motivates him to change and it would be an asset for both if they marry. Only when Darcy respects her and alters his initial snobbishness like this will he obtain the possibility of being requited in love.

Hence, Elizabeth's influence on Darcy and her conditional love -- shaping Darcy into her ideal consort instead of being shaped -- is an arousal for her feminism power and discovery of her capability: she is able to change those unsatisfying elements, to break the bonds constraining women in "inferiority" and "obedience", and to be a decider, changer and leader among conventional followers.

4. Comparison

4.1 Similarities and Differences

4.1.1 Emotionality

From the analysis above, initially, both Daiyu and Elizabeth have a high level of mental sensitivity, but they differentiate in terms of rationality. In fact, it is unlikely that Daiyu would be complimented for possessing any "rationality" by the authors, since rationality in *a Dream in Red Mansions* refers to the acceptance of women's subordination, worship to bureaucracy and in short, surrender to reality. Daiyu, though struck by coils and snares, manages to maintain her irrationality to the last second, with mutters of love said at her deathbed, dying to embrace the eternal emptiness where her love and emotions (her irrationality) could be preserved.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, however, Elizabeth's rationality is essential and stressed. Among her emotionality, her development is shown hugely by her changing concept of rationality, from talks of theory during seconds of irrationality to actual practices, then generating a practical concept: rationality is a balance between love and money [7], keeping in mind that a marriage should attain mutual understanding and respect, not blinded by money yet not ignoring it.

4.1.2 Education

Aside from emotionality, their ideals on education are greatly divergent regarding systematicity. Daiyu, though well educated herself, could not prove herself as an advocate of female education, since she receives conventional education herself and behaves accordingly. When let slip of words from unauthorized readings, she instantly apologizes when pointed out, showing few attempt for breaking social norms. Even before Baochai's interference, Daiyu cares about authenticity of Confucianism at the beginning: when reading Peony Pavilion with Baoyu, both of them decides to sneak away -- Confucianism has seeped into their subconsciousness.

As for *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth successfully develops a systematic idea of education and applies it in real practices. She believes education should be comprised of two parts, reading and experiences, and her ideal focuses on teaching women how to develop their own critical minds instead of studying vacant and conventional trivialities. She demonstrates how to apply this ideal by showing her unique, self-defined accomplishments and articulating her beliefs before dignitaries who are supporters of conventional female education. Her approaches defines her as a strong advocate for female education and independent thinking.

4.1.3 Realization and Growth

The progression of the two also differs. For Daiyu's case, though she made limited attempt to challenge the authority, her authors still subjectively denied her possibilities of succeeding, providing her a set fate of withering. All her experiences, which lead to her greater exposure to the outer world instead of keeping her swaddled and well-protected in Jia Mansion, results in her downfall of confidence in being her own self and gives rise to her final compromise with bleakness of reality. Her emotions, love and even self have no where to be sheltered but to fade into emptiness, leaving no trace of their existence or their alteration.

Pride and Prejudice is the opposite. Elizabeth, though being harmed by the outer world and societal perspectives of women, manages to stand on her reason and rationality, hence able to preserve her strength and counterattack. She tries her best in proving others' wrongness and altering their minds in judging females, and Mr. Darcy is a solid example. He is transformed by Elizabeth from initial arrogance and severeness to respect and admiration, and Elizabeth also enhances her own understanding of feminism, understanding how to balance money and status in a loving marriage [7]. These changes are the prerequisites for Elizabeth's final acceptance of his hand. Her power to alter higher classes' minds shows the transcendence and penetration of her feminism, and the strength continues to enhance as she proceeds; instead of being bombarded by outer society, she blends realistic elements into her arguments and persists to implement them, thus continuously increasing feminism applicability.

4.2 Attributions of Similarities, Mutual Emotionality

Their mutual mental sensitivity are fruits of consciousness towards self. In feudal China this could be attributed to the continuous development of commercial economy and the rise of a new urban middle class in late Ming Dynasty. This gives rise to the emergence of Enlightenment [8].

As Enlightenment occurs, thinkers recognized the importance of self-interest for social development and observed that individuals' pursuit of self-interest, especially personal desires, leads to effectiveness. Li Zhi, an outstanding inheritor of Wang Yangming's philosophy, states that "Selfishness is the human nature. Only when the heart has selfishness can it be faithful", thus criticized Cheng Zhu Neo-Confucianism's calls for righteousness and rituals [8]. In terms of females and feminism, Li Zhi strongly refuted the biases against women in feudal ethics: "If we acknowledge that there are merits and shortcomings in human, how can we assert that men possess all the merits while women possess only shortcomings?" [8] This de-

rived emancipation of natural humanism shapes Daiyu's emotionality. This emotionality is a recognition towards self and loyalty towards femininity -- formerly defined as product of phase one feminism. It is evident that Cao Xueqin carries on Li Zhi's ideologies.

In Victorian England, Enlightenment also took place and had vast effect across Europe. Enlightenment means liberating men from the self-inflicted immaturity of this age, daring to think independently, and awakening one's intellectual powers, harboring the aim of leading to a better, more contented life for men by intellectual enhancements[2]. Apparently, men were aroused of their masculinity and devoted themselves into passionate writing, but they were not the only group awaken. According to de Beauvoir, feminism is the belief that women should not comply with traditionally defined femininity and should, like men, take pleasure in the endeavor of creating their own identities [9]. Hence, Enlightenment Feminism is the resultant rebel of women, finally discovering enlightened men's partiality on them and aiming to be self-identified plus autonomous.

Elizabeth could be seen as a solid proof. She strives for autonomy and independence by avoid giving her mother or others the opportunity to make decisions on love or marriage. Despite appearing emotional, Elizabeth's decisions are guided by reason, enhancing her sharpness and stubbornness, as she resists societal expectations and asserts her own agency.

4.3 Attributions of Differences

4.3.1 Rationality

However, their respective emotionality is slightly different regarding one of the components: rationality. Throughout *A Dream in Red Mansions*, Daiyu is praised of her obedience to natural emotions instead of reason, hence her surrender to reality acts as an expression of the writers' critique towards the feudal society. However, Elizabeth's reason shines in every aspect of the novel, from her rejection of marriage to balance of spiritualism and materialism.

Correspondingly, rationality is a profound distinction between Chinese and British Enlightenment. In British culture, Mary Wollstonecraft, the epitome of Eighteenth Century feminists, validated rationality to demand for respect towards women because they are "equally rational creatures"[10]. Wollstonecraft critique the societal constraints placed on women in bourgeois society, but instead of seeing reason as a means to tame unruly passions and maintain social norms like prior feminists, she views reason as a tool for self-improvement and human perfectibility. Wollstonecraft argues that denying women's

intellectual life and confining them to domestic trivialities dehumanizes them, emphasizing the need for women to unfold their faculties and reject societal dependency. She believes that redeeming bourgeois domesticity requires incorporating an ethic of affectionate care and duty towards others into public life.

Examining Elizabeth, elements from Wollstonecraft's rationalism shimmers. First, she is not the prettiest girl in the family, but she is not entangled by external trivialities: when Miss Bingley mentioned air and manner of walking, she slightly mocked at it being counted as an accomplishment. She is also independent and critical towards social norms and attitudes towards women: her attempt to redefine education and her claim that herself is equally worthy to deserve men's respect clearly showcases her will of liberation. Additionally, Wollstonecraft bypassed the political and economic sphere, focusing on domestic and community support and respect for women, and Elizabeth is only aiming to gain a love and marriage based on domestic respect as well, instead of aspiring a higher level of political or economic engagement. Though this might be a spare of women intellectual value, Wollstonecraft's, as well as Elizabeth's attempts are a transcendence from phase one already, not only explaining "why" but approaching "how", almost reaching the third phase of feminism development.

4.3.2 Social Expectations and Female rights of speech

While female writers like Austen were relatively encouraged by fellow feminists to develop feminism ideals and solutions, Daiyu's case is not so optimistic. Observing Li Zhi's early calls for respect towards females, though pioneering, they were hollow slogans which interrogates why but not generating a practical method. This is not Li Zhi's fault. In fact, Ming-Qing feminism in China was voiced by men like Li Zhi, and women is still overshadowed by the other gender, unlike female domination of feminism in England, leading to a lack of responsibility and faith due to the observation of feminism through the opposite party's scope. This could be attributed to gender expectation towards women at that time.

Orthodox teachings from ancient Chinese emphasized the subordinate role of women in ancient Chinese society, denying their autonomy and individual worth. Confucius expressed a disregard for women in passages such as "Talents are difficult to find among women. Nine out of ten cannot be relied upon." Neo-Confucian scholars like Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi further solidified these views by prioritizing moral principles over natural emotions like love, which led to the suppression of women's natural desires within societal expectations [8].

When Daiyu recited lines from *Peony Pavilion* and *Ro-*

mance of the Western Chamber, Baochai educated Daiyu that it was better for women not to be accomplished as it could lead them astray morally, which is described formerly in the paper. Daiyu apologizes immediately, feeling a proper woman should stick to traditional feminine pursuits like needlework rather than indulging in literature, complying with mentioned Confucianism ideals [11].

Aside from this, though Daiyu is anguished about these social norms and monstrous expectations towards women, she lets them destruct her confidence and autonomy. When knowing she could not marry Baoyu, she chose to reconcile with Baochai, even though the marriage between Baochai and Baoyu is what she dreads. She always waits for Lady Jia and other seniors to make decisions and arrange life for her, instead of steering the autonomy in her own hands.

Despite their unconventional tendencies, figures like Daiyu's submission to the weight of traditional social mores, seen through those descriptions "I am so wrong" "I dare not speak now" demonstrates the profound influence of Confucian teachings in shaping the values and behaviors of individuals back in imperial China [11].

Hence, Daiyu's attempt diverges with the social expectations towards female during that period, and with female respect still a vague concept, Daiyu's feminism could only attain a low level of applicability. In addition, women is denied of their critical thinking and unfortunately there is no opportunity to arouse this potential. Therefore they are not able to present feminism ideal on their own and still represented by males, which resulted in females still being a marginalized minority.

4.3.3 Prevailing Ideologies and Feminism Prospect

There is another reason for distinction in applicability of their feminism. Though Elizabeth's feminism is more mature and has a relatively agreeable society towards females, her center is still on her individual instead of the entire community of women as the latter acts as a foil for her[12], thus the relative easiness admittedly increases practicality. On the contrary, women in *A Dream in Red Mansions* are a group altogether, and they share tragic yet combined destiny.

This could be seen as a clash of individualism and collectivism. Individualism prevails in western societies, it is pioneering and innovative since the society relatively encourages individual novelty, however it does not solve the problem of subordination since more women who are not heard would remain represented and silenced by those activists. Hence, although Elizabeth might have a higher level of feminism applicability in the short run, it is necessary to link her approaches with her community as well, otherwise her feminism will not improve in long run to

solve females' fundamental representation problem. While for Daiyu's case, a collective group, though tough to construct, is more likely to be indestructible.

Hence, a neutralization between individualism and collectivism might generate a solution to their dilemmas. By valuing individual achievements, individualistic elements could build a solid foundation for later feminism development; for the long term, taking into consideration the entire community's needs helps the ideal to enhance and flourish.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, Elizabeth's and Daiyu's feminism has an overlap which is recognition towards self and arousal of feminine nature, which is contributed by Enlightenment in respective countries. Evident diverges also exists on the other hand, in terms of rationality, education ideals and optimism. This is caused by their different social interpretations of rationality, societal expectations implied in Enlightenment and prevailing principles.

Enlightenment aroused both females' self-awareness. Focus on self interest and realization of masculine suppression woke females up and raise consciousness of their independent existences. Daiyu's and Elizabeth's emotionality are crystallization of Enlightenment.

During Ming-Qing Enlightenment, people focus on familial interest instead of that of a particular sex, thus women were still represented by men when earliest feminism was burgeoning. The peak of feudal ethics also maximized the effect of feudal morals on women, expecting them not to be critical and insightful enough to spot the flaws of men dominance, which resulted in the vagueness, turbulence and low applicability of Daiyu's feminism. However, Enlightenment for England is inclined towards masculinity, women who realized their feminine powers could only fight their way through on their own, hence feeling more responsible and determined of their approaches. Under this circumstance, females are more encouraged to voice out their opinions compared to a monopolistic-masculine society, hence rewarding Austen and Elizabeth the opportunity to develop a practical feminism theory and enhance their feminism applicability.

Collectivism and individualism also affected both characters. Due to the low confidence and hostile societal condi-

tions, Daiyu's possession of collective thoughts resulted in her compromise, but individualism within Elizabeth can nudge her to innovate and invent under any conditions. Individualism still has short-comings, nevertheless, when observing the long-term development of feminism. Hence, a combination of both may help to improve and flourish feminism.

This study provides another measurement which takes into consideration societal thoughts and background to evaluate and feminism plus analyze its potential improvements. However, this evaluation module is still oversimplified, which needs to be further polished. Hopefully, future analysis could achieve the enhancement.

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