

## Abettors of Sexism, Slaughterers towards Feminism: Case Analyzing from *Cat in the Rain*

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### Abstract

Over past decades, there were many scholars analyzed the short novel *Cat in the Rain* thoroughly, but seldom of them realized the importance of the character-maid and her implication. For the whole novel pays close attention on female status, researchers often associate *Cat in the Rain* with feminism. In order to mature the study on *Cat in the Rain*, further study in this research is required. This research focus on the neglected character-maid and her relationship with feminism under the theoretic instruction of *The Second Sex* finding that there is a group of ladies just like the maid in our society impeding the way of feminism by their privilege. This group of women are abettors of sexism, they are not only admit the sex discrimination, but persuade other females to yield to patriarchy. However, no matter how uneven the road is, women should recognize themselves clearly for better social status and human rights.

### Keywords

Feminism; Sexism; *Cat In The Rain*; Female Social Status.

### 1. Introduction

Recently, some interesting comments about the incident that a man was assaulted by a woman on a crowded bus attached with a picture have attracted people's close attention. The comments went like these "Look at that guy! He was dressing in a bold T-shirt without sleeves! No wonder it was him assaulted; there is no smoke without fire, he must give an obscure sign to that woman, if not why the woman didn't molest other people? What on the earth gives he the courage to complain about an shameful affair in public?". Actually, this kind of critics named "slut-shaming", most of the time, were what the public (especially a group of women) picked on women or girls when the sexual assault happened.

To be honest, it seems that a lot of girls are disturbed by sexism from very early age. Especially when they are stubborn young girls who are unwilling to follow the instructions by experienced elders: 1. Always say yes to a gentle man; 2. Do not argue with boys; 3. Dress in graceful clothes (never expose much skin) 4. Obey your father before marriage then your husband; 5. It is your duty to give birth and devote yourself into chores etc. The confusions and rebellions were accumulated with ages. Fortunately, with the increased knowledge and reading, girls came to understand the main idea of feminism and has been addicted to study it.

The eager to get a better understanding of various perspectives on feminism renders woman impetus to read more literary works. One of the most attractive short stories named *Cat in the Rain* written by Ernest Hemingway reveals a comprehensive female world under the male dominant society on the basis of "iceberg theory" and its portrait about the maid excites me (one educated woman who is addicted to feminism) to be curious of where did those harsh critics come from and how did women exert influence on women. Dissected the short story attentively we can find that Hemingway known as a tough man, still pays a sensitive attention on female situation and states a social phenomenon which will be fully demonstrated in following paragraphs. Many scholars have already studied on the main characters and their symbolic meanings of this short story, but there are few researches

centering on the plot between the maid and the American wife. Hence, the status of the maid, her symbolic meaning and social image will be discussed as an uncultivated land.

Also, thanks to the excellent works by Simone de Beauvoir and other respectable predecessors, we were bestowed with concrete materials on the process of demonstration. Because Simone did splendid job on feminism in *The Second Sex*, this research basically under the theoretic instruction from *The Second Sex* to develop a brand new thought on *Cat in the Rain*.

## 2. Brief Introduction of Sexism and Feminism

Sexism or gender discrimination is prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. Sexism can affect any gender, but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls.[1] It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles,[2,3]and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another.[4]

Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social rights for women that are equal to those of men.[5, 6]This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

Simone de Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex* that males and females are two types of individuals which are differentiated within a species for the function of reproduction; they can be defined only correlatively.[7]However, the arrogance of males exerts profound influence on the society from generation to generation. They believe that only men are the creatures from gods, women are subordinate for Eve was created from Adam's rib in order to ease the loneliness of Adam. St. Thomas proclaims woman an "incidental" being, which is a way of suggesting-from the male point of view-the accidental or contingent nature of sexuality. [7]

Where there is oppression there is resistance. Women have been fought for equality from 1837 in French to nowadays all over the world. The heaviest obstacle, whereas, is not the oppression from male but the restriction and persuasion from those female obedience ones under sexism. We can see this clearly from the iceberg beneath the water in *Cat in the rain*.

## 3. Brief Summary and Introduction of Cat in the Rain

"Cat in the Rain" is a story about an American couple on vacation in Italy. Throughout the story it rains, leaving the couple trapped within their hotel room. As the American wife watches the rain, she sees a cat crouched under one of the dripping green tables. Feeling sorrow for the cat that was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on," the American wife decides to rescue that kitty.

On her way downstairs, the American wife encounters the innkeeper, with whom she has a short conversation. When the American wife tries to catch the cat by going along under the eaves she is prevented by the maid. Their conversation goes like this:

'You must not get wet,' she smiled, speaking Italian. Of course, the hotel-keeper had sent her.

With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed. The maid looked up at her.

'Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora?' 'There was a cat,' said the American girl. 'A cat?'

'Si, il gatto.'

'A cat?' the maid laughed. 'A cat in the rain?'

'Yea,' she said, 'under the table.' Then, 'Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty.'

When she talked English the maid's face tightened.

'Come, Signora,' she said. "We must get back inside. You will be wet.'

'I suppose so,' said the American girl.

They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella.[8]

When the American wife finally arrives outside that cat is gone, and, slightly crestfallen, she returns to the room alone. The story ends when the maid arrives with a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body, which she gives to the American wife.

This ending is both abrupt and ambiguous, and hinges on the mystery of the tortoise-shell cat's identity. We do not know whether it is the kitty the wife spotted outside and so do not know whether she will be pleased to get it.

"Cat" in English is regarded as "evil-minded, intangible and sensitive women", so the cat in this novel can be seen as the woman, meanwhile, the cat itself is adorable, and needs to be protected. Therefore the cat in the rain just like the women live in the shadow of male-dominated society. The cat symbolically reveals the psychological state and emotional desires of the American wife. On other words it is a metaphor for the woman. She identifies herself to it. Consequently, the American wife want to rescue the cat or say herself from the controlling by man. What's more, scholars have offered another symbolism of cat that the cat is a physical manifestation of the wife's desire for a child: "The cat stands for her need of a child." [9]No matter in which opinion, the cat represents the dearest desire from a woman which is dominant by man. Thus the American wife represents a beginning awakened one.

#### **4. Analyzing the Symbol of the Maid**

From most of the papers have been researched, researchers are fond of analyzing the main characters and their symbolism so as to introduce the mainstream of literature meanings and the conflicts are clearer to deconstruction, while when we go into details on minor roles we may realize that their integral existence are more thought provoking just like the maid displayed in the brief but meaningful plot.

##### **4.1 What role does the maid play in the story?**

It is accessible to figure out the maid's characteristic for her subordinate, persuasion and obedience. First, it is her status: She is a maid who has been working for the innkeeper indicates that she is used to follow the hotel owner's instruction. She is not an independence person on both material and mind. Then, it is her persuasive words to the American wife also imply her attitude:

"You must not get wet", "We must get back inside. You will be wet." It is interesting that she uses the word "must" in the short conversation. It is clear that this word means be obliged to do something, the maid as a servant using her mandatory tone to her female customer is offensive to some extent. However, the American wife doesn't show unsatisfied when hearing these sentences but is willing to listen to maid's suggestion, so if we dig further, we can ponder that the maid was sent by the Mister hotel keeper: a man with authority. She spares no efforts on lobbying the American wife listen to her "meritorious" requirement in order to fulfill the assignment. Finally, the maid accompanies the American wife back to hotel with smile. After consideration, we can figure out that the maid symbolizes the biggest obstacle on the wife's way to rescue the cat in the rain(herself) because woman's opinions always exerts most effective influence on women for they share some common on physical structure and emotional concerns.

##### **4.2 What can be inferred from the conversation?**

As for a deeper insight of the story, we can analyze the words choice. Through the word "laughed", we can notice that the maid's attitude towards the action of rescuing the cat in the rain. She thinks it is ridiculous that the American wife wants to save a cat in the rain despite of the heavy rain. It is unbelievable for her to understand the American wife's outrageous behavior because she has been educated with obedience most of her life. Therefore, her "kindness" is to teach the lady what she had been taught in case that the American wife can't be a good wife under the doctrine of public's viewpoints.

## 5. The Extension of the “Maid” and its Social Images

### 5.1 Popular minor figures like the maid in literature

Actually, if we take more literature masterpieces into consideration, we will find that the figures like the maid share similar features existing in many novels. For example, the group of “good wives” in *The Scarlet Letter* also have something in common with the maid that is persuasive (in an extreme way), they congregate together criticizing Hester Prynne’s affair, extolling the merciful gentlemen and reaching a consensus on female status. No matter the comments from those minor characters are malicious or kind, they are still strongest fetters of sexism.

### 5.2 Popular figures like the maid in society

With the development of ideological emancipation, more and more educated women are keen on struggle for female rights. Those who would like to struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the women in public are conductors, those who get an initial cognition of feminism are awakened ones, while those who behave like the “maid” are dearest slaughterers obliterating the desire and spirit of freedom from women by gossip or reasonable “suggestion”. The “maids” are willing to materialized themselves for entertain their master: man, such as a famous person on the Internet in China whose nick name is ayawawa. Her well-known statements are: 1.Father rape his daughter because mother’s high paternity uncertainty.2.Women perform better than men during their twenties because they fully used female advantages (appearance) without depending on any professional abilities.3. The husband has affair with other women because the wife are too inferior to marry that man. These theories were criticized by most of adults. Whereas, what an absurd thing is that her theories are highly accepted by most of housewives suffering in their marriage. They become more and more considerate, bearing up the affliction, being totally tamed wives only to maintain the fragile and unfortunate marriage. They feel happier for their husbands treat them better when they lower their status down to a domestic creatures. They spread the toxic thoughts of being obedience making the path to liberty more uneven than ever.

### 5.3 The serious consequence that a “maid” bring to the society

These maids serve for patriarchy, killing the desires of freedom and equality, even bounding the “truthful” tradition thoughts tightly to each person (supporting man’s arrogance, fettering woman’s human rights). Their intentional or unconscious words and attitude bring severe outcomes to the feminism.

#### 5.4.1 Education

Sex discrimination on education is supported by some housewives for they don’t want their daughters become the targets of critics, their sons become jobless. There is an old word in ancient China: “It is a real virtue for woman to be ignorance” and it still exists in modern society. For example:

(1).An article published on official Internet of Fujian education examine center mentions that according to the research data on education of the Normal Students in University, among 27 Chinese Normal Universities, the proportion of female students reach to65.3% while the proportion of male students is 34.7%. Therefore, Fujian province sets up a project about Free Education for Male Teachers which reduces the competitive power from girls on education.

#### 5.4.2 Employment

According to a research studied by Development Department of the All-China Women's Federation, 57% of female graduate students feel that girls share less opportunity in the process of applying a job. For example:

(1). People persuade girls do not tend to apply the jobs requiring lots of business trips. They list several reasons: girls are easier exposed under dangers, girls do not have enough energy on practicing, girls are not fierce enough during business discussion etc. Some vicious housewives even tight female’s achievement with their sexual attraction not the working ability. These stereotypes limited the future of girls are delivered from mother to mother.

### 5.4.3 Sexual Assaults

As mentioned, “slut-shaming” always happened on female. Many housewives have more free time so they are the main part of the public voice. It is really disappointing to hear so many rebukes to a girl who was assaulted while the offender still escapes from the law. Those women use mean words stabbing victims making them afraid of standing out accusing the offenders. Take some victims as examples, they tend not to report a case to the security authorities for they know there will be a group judging on their dressing, behaviors, appearance or even educational level if the incidents were exposed. Few people may stand by them, pathetic but actual.

### 5.4.4 Natality

The expert of population predicts that gender imbalance problem will be severer. On the basis of latest data from China National Bureau of Statistics, the birth ratio between male and female is 115.88. There are 30 million male was born than female during 34 years. Especially in some poverty areas of China, people support pregnant woman to have an abortion if they figure out it is a baby girl. The more frightening thing is that adults may abandon or kill a baby girl just for her wrong sex.

## 6. Conclusion

Admittedly, there are differences between male and female both on mind and body but these differences are not the excuse for sex discrimination. Feminism should be understood by public especially by the abettors without prejudice. Only having a consensus cognition, can women get more equality. It is fortunate to see the progresses on feminism in today’s world, more and more ladies can play a significant role in society. Nevertheless, the existence of abettors still drag the pace down. We have to admit the reasonableness of abettors’ thoughts, the thing we can do is to keep in mind that we are liberal from born, we have the human rights regardless of our sex when we confront with the abuse persuade or sarcasm from abettors. Nothing can stop the steps from chasing liberty.

## Acknowledgements

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