

The Analysis of Feminism in Why Women Kill

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Abstract

Directed by Cherry, the American black comedy *Why Women Kill* attracts people's eyeball again in the name of women. It talks about the stories of three different couples who live in the same villa named Pasadena of Los Angeles of different eras. Every couple lives in their eras and has their own complicated relationship network and story, and the whole story is stated by the third person. *Why Women Kill* is set in 1960s-1980s and 2018 which is exactly during the second and third wave of American feminist movement. The main story is about how three women, a housewife named Beth Ann in the 1960s, a social celebrity named Simone in the 1980s and a modern lawyer named Taylor in 2018, deal with marital infidelity. It's a war between men and women. The three couples have different kinds of marital infidelity, but they all have the same end, that is the men are killed or badly hurt by women. This paper is going to analyze the images of women in *Why Women Kill* from the perspective of the diachronic development of feminism through special plots.

Keywords

Feminism; *Why Women Kill*; Marital Infidelity.

1. A Brief Introduction of American Feminism

It is generally believed that there have been three waves of feminism in the history of the United States since the feminist movement was launched in the wake of American women's political awakening. Specifically, the first wave began in the late 1840s and ended in the 1920s, the second wave started in the 1960s and ended in the late 1980s, the third wave started in the early 1990s and continues until today [1]. In the 1960s, social unrest in the United States and the failure of the Vietnam War inspired a radical counterculture movement and the rise of various civil rights movements. Under the oppression of the White Anglo-Saxon puritans (WASP), ethnic minorities spoke out for justice, against discrimination and persecution, and for their own rights [2]. At this time, the second wave of feminism emerged in American society. Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" (1949), which was introduced to the United States, was very popular with people. "The Mystery of Women" (1962), another work by American B.Frieden, was published, attacking the causes of dysfunctional family life: the passive, male-dominated role of women in sexual relations. With the deepening of the civil rights movement, thoughts of feminism have become the consensus of the intelligentsia and the public [3].

2. The Female Image and Special Plots in *Why Women Kill*

1960s was the beginning of the second wave of feminism. Beth Ann was a typical traditional American housewife whose only job was to serve and please her husband Robert. Beth Ann tried her best to make delicious food and drinks that Robert likes. They seemed very much in love, however, the truth was not like this. Their souls were not close to each other due to their only daughter's death which was caused by the negligence of Beth Ann, and Beth Ann lived in suffering and self-accusation every day for her daughter's death. One day, she heard from her

neighbor accidentally that her husband was having a love affair with a waitress named April. She was very upset and angry. She came to the restaurant to see April and introduced herself with the fake name Shelia. April said that the reason why Robert was dating with her was that Robert was bored with his wife. Beth was determined to win her husband back by dressing herself extremely beautiful and making love with him in new tricks, but it didn't work. Dramatically, after several meetings, Beth Ann discovered that April was a very pretty, outgoing and kind girl. She couldn't help having a great friendship with April. With the development of plots, Beth Ann knew the real cause of their daughter's death, it was because of Robert's cheat on her. Robert's numerous lies were gradually caught one after one, the love turned into hate. Smart Beth Ann designed carefully a murder to kill her husband and the murder was successfully realized. The ending of this story was Beth Ann helped April to realize her dream to become a singer and lived a very happy life with April and April's daughter with Robert in New York.

Living in 1980s, Simone stood for women with the strong awakening of feminist consciousness. She was a very gorgeous and confident social celebrity of high class. She had her own business and friend circle and enjoyed her life very much. She had a daughter, and Carl was her third husband. She cared very much her reputation and anything that did harm to her reputation would be eradicated including her husband. One day, Carl was caught kissing with a young man by Simone. She was shamed that her husband was a gay. Worrying her friends will laugh at her, Simone asked her husband to get out of their home immediately. Carl threatened Simone to let her friends know the scandal, and she had to let him stay. The handsome boy Tommy who was only 18 years old was the son of Simone's best friend named Naomi. Tommy loved Simone from a very young age, but Simone refused him at first. However, after knowing that Naomi lied to her about Carl's affair, Simone decided to make love with Tommy to revenge herself on Naomi. After a period of time, Simone realized that Tommy truly loved her and gradually fell in love with him and even wore the cheap watch Tommy gave to her. Simone was a woman who attached great importance to love, and she was not afraid to hate and to love someone. After knowing that Carl got Aids, she accompanied with him and sold everything that could be sold to cure Carl. At the end of Carl's life, Simone was with him and helped him to die decently.

Taylor was a very smart modern lawyer and she was a black American. As a bisexual, she had an open marriage with her husband named Eli who was a writer. Jade was her girlfriend who was very insidious and vainglorious. One day, Jade asked Taylor's help to live with her and Eli for a period of time to avoid her ex-boyfriend's threat. At first, Eli was very jealous of Jade, because he thought Taylor really fell in love with Jade. However, Jade was really a scheming girl, she showed his pretentious respect to Eli to get a high position in this house. With the development of the plots, Eli was attracted by Jade's pretty looking and faked kindness. He asked for a three-way with Taylor and Jade, and Jade said yes. As a writer, Eli had had ever glorious days but he couldn't write out anything now, he needed inspiration eagerly. In order to control Eli, Jade improved his script and gave him pills to get him addicted again, and then the war began. Taylor realized Jade's conspiracy and what really she was and decided to fight against her and protect her marriage. At last, Jade was kicked out of the house and she was very angry with Taylor and Eli and decided to take revenge. At the end of the story, Eli was badly hurt by Jade, but fortunately alive.

3. The Diachronic Development of Feminism in Why Women Kill

At the beginning of the first story, Beth Ann stood for the very traditional and conservative American housewife. After knowing her husband was having an affair, instead of condemning her husband, she chose to change herself from bottom to top and to make love in new tricks to please her husband. We can see that, at that time, women were only an appendix of men and they were always subordinate to men. Women didn't have their own job, friend circle, and their

husband was everything to them. When Beth knew all her husband's lies, especially the true reason of their daughter's death, she was no longer the old Beth but turned into a strong feminist who fought for her own and all women's rights. Beth encouraged and helped April to pursue her dream to become a professional singer, because April was no longer her competitor or enemy but another old Beth. Beth's cleverness, fearlessness, prudence and kindness showed the lofty image of women. At this time, Women began to realize their own existence and the need to fight for their own position, happiness, freedom and rights.

Simone was a woman of high social class with a strong feminist consciousness. Reputation was the thing she cared about most. Different from Beth Ann's reaction, after knowing her husband was a gay, she decided to kick Carl out of their home to avoid the scandal. When she realized Tommy's true love to her, she accepted him without considering the big discrepancy in their age and wealth. We can see Simone's continuous pursuit of true love. However, when Carl got Aids, Simone came back to him and accompany with him in his last days. Simone spared no efforts to save Carl's life, we can see she was very responsible for marriage.

Different from Beth Ann and Simone, Taylor was a reasonable black lawyer and also a bisexual. It was already a big success of feminist movement to let a black and bisexual woman be a heroine of the story. From there, we can see the third story is the climax of feminism. In this story, Taylor could use her knowledge and intelligence to protect herself and also her marriage. It seemed more like a war between two women, Taylor and Jade, even the male image of Eli was undermined. In this story, Eli was a nose of wax, he relied on Taylor. He couldn't distinguish the true and false and lacked self-control.

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