Feminist Discussions on The Remembrance of Earth’s Past Trilogy

Pembahasan-Pembahasan Feminis dalam Trilogi Remembrance of Earth’s Past

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Abstract
As the first Asian Hugo Award laureate, Liu Cixin is an illustrious science-fiction writer in China, whose chef-d’oeuvre is an award-winning trilogy entitled Remembrance of Earth’s Past, or more widely renowned by the title of its first volume, viz. The Three-Body Problem. The series not only features intercivilisational belligerence via a fecundity of imagination and richness of imagery-evoking representation, but also manifests humanity and benevolence, so it has attained a loyal readership and commercial success. Notwithstanding critical acclamation, this male-authored trilogy encounters contentiousness concerning gender discrimination. I propound that the Remembrance of Earth’s Past series does not exhibit sexism, though there are depictions with gender stereotypes.

Keywords: Chinese science fiction, Liu Cixin, The Three-Body Problem series, gender stereotypes

Abstrak

Kata kunci: Fiksi ilmiah Tiongkok, Liu Cixin, seri The Three-Body, stereotip gender

Introduction
In this research, I investigate an award-winning trilogy entitled 地球往事 Diqiu Wangshi ‘Remembrance of Earth’s Past’ (also renowned by the title of its first volume), which is a science-fiction series comprising 三体 Santi ‘The Three-Body Problem’ (2006), 黑暗森林 Heian Senlin ‘The Dark Forest’ (2008) and 死神永生 Sishen Yongsheng

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'Death’s End’ (2010) (China Writer 2015, Fan 2019). The first volume, *The Three-Body Problem*, was first published in a leading Chinese magazine 科幻世界 Kehuan Shijie ‘Science Fiction World’ (China Writer 2011a, Li 2015), and it was then bestowed a Hugo Award, the most prestigious international science-fiction prize, by the 73rd World Science Fiction Convention in 2015, rendering its author, an illustrious novelist 刘慈欣 Liu Cixin (1963-), the first Asian writer to win a Hugo Award (Global Times 2015, China Daily 2019). The writing of Liu Cixin is saliently inspired by the epic science-fiction novel *2001: A Space Odyssey* composed by Arthur C. Clarke (China Daily 2015, Leung 2017). As a prolific writer possessing literary aptitude, Liu embarked upon his science-fiction creation in the 1980s and has been consecutively winning China’s highest honour for science-fiction writing, viz. the Galaxy Award, since 1999 (Guo and Basu 2010, Yang and Wang 2019). Apart from the phenomenal trilogy, Liu’s chefs-d’oeuvre also encompass the 2005 球状闪电 Qiuzhuang Shandian ‘Ball Lightning’ that has been rendered into English (Dwyer 2018), the 2000 流浪地球 Liulang Diqiu ‘The Wandering Earth’ that has been adapted into an influential namesake film (Si 2019), as well as the 2001 乡村教师 Xiangcun Jiaoshi ‘Village Teacher’ (Trans. Mine) that has been adapted into a hit film 疯狂的外星人 Fengkuangde Waixingren ‘Crazy Alien’ (Qian 2015, Teng 2019). The first volume of the trilogy, *The Three-Body Problem*, is entitled by an astrophysical terminology denoting the Earth-Moon-Sun problem concerning the ‘motion of three celestial bodies under their mutual gravitational attraction’ (Valtonen and Karttunen 2005: 1), and the narrative has its setting during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that has left the author scarred for life (Shanxi Evening Newspaper 2015, Alter 2019). The protagonist of *The Three-Body Problem* is an astrophysics student who witnesses her father’s excruciating decease in a struggle session initiated by Red Guards. During forced labour afterwards as a political suspect, she is recruited into a secret national defence project deploying high-powered radio waves to annihilate spy satellites as well as searching for extra-terrestrial life (Richardson 2018). Years later, notwithstanding a caveat, she kills her husband and contacts the planet Trisolaris to resolve political predicaments, thereby establishing Earth’s initial correspondence with an alien civilisation (Li 2015, Tong 2019). The second volume, *The Dark Forest*, concerns the subsequent defensive efforts against the invasion of the Trisolarans possessing exceptionally advanced technology, via the secret Wallfacer Project designed by three leading scientists and an unambitious, romantic sociologist (Han 2012, Alexander 2015, Liu 2015). In the third volume, *Death’s End*, Earth attains peaceful coexistence with Trisolarans and enjoys unprecedented prosperity, yet the subtle balance between two civilisations is imperilled by an aerospace engineer who brings knowledge of an immemorial project, so the intercivilisational war spans across three-dimensional universe and other dimensions (Huang 2011, Hu 2015, Liu 2015). The creation of the *Remembrance of Earth’s Past* series is adulated as a milestone of China’s science fiction (China Writer 2011b). Since its publication, the trilogy has attained global popularity and commercial success (Li 2015, Qian 2015, Ruan 2015). Taking *The Three-Body Problem* as an example, it has been translated into twenty-six languages and sold nearly nine million copies worldwide (Fan 2019). Moreover, since the release of its English version rendered by an American lawyer and science-fiction writer 刘宇昆 Liu Yukun (aka Ken Liu), who is also a Hugo Award laureate, in 2014 (Zhang 2016), the work has been granted the ultimate critical
accolade as an ‘inventive, hard SF alien-invasion saga’ (Roberts 2016: 492) and ‘a groundbreaking work of speculative fiction’, and attracted legions of non-Chinese-speaking readers exemplified by Barack Obama and Mark Zuckerberg (Alter 2019). According to a novelist George R. R. Martin, The Three-Body Problem ‘is a very unusual book, a unique blend of scientific and philosophical speculation, politics and history, conspiracy theory and cosmology, where kings and emperors from both western and Chinese history mingle in a dreamlike game world, while cops and physicists deal with global conspiracies, murders, and alien invasions in the real world’ (Martin 2015). The author not only demonstrates a fecundity of imagination and richness of imagery-evoking representation, but also depicts humanity and humans’ love, benevolence and broad-mindedness in the face of depredation (Hu 2015, Liu 2015, Fang 2016).

Method
By means of hermeneutically scrutinising the trilogy, I investigate its potential feminist issues. In the three monumental works, Liu encompasses a wide range of disciplines, exemplified by theoretical physics, political theory, game theory, history, sociology and aesthetics (Richardson 2018). He paints a very vivid portrait of legions of multi-faceted characters, by means of unravelling their mentality and ethos in a turbulent context, and he extensively deploys science-fiction elements in both macro and micro manners (Gao 2015, Xu and Wang 2017). As summarised in the preface of Remembrance of Earth’s Past III, each volume of the trilogy manifests its distinct characteristics and artistic value (Example (1)).

(1)在整个三部曲中,我个人认为第一部最有历史感和现实性;第二部的完成度最高,结构最完整,线索最清晰,也最华丽好看;而《三体Ⅲ》则是把宇宙视野和本质性的思考推向了极致,这方面目前无人能及。

In the trilogy, I think the first volume has the most historical and realistic representations, while the second volume has the most complete structure and clearest plot, so it is the most wonderous one. As for the third volume, it displays the utmost universal standpoint and fundamental thinking, which is unparalleled.

(From Yan 2010: III. Trans. Mine)

Result
The Remembrance of Earth’s Past trilogy is censured for poor characterisation and sexism (Glinter 2016). Nonetheless, I propound that the author does not display gender discrimination.

Feminist science theory, as being explicitly captured by a feminist science-fiction writer Katherine MacLean in her portrayal of future science, is constituted of three traits. First, equal opportunities to participating in science should be bestowed upon women, so that men will not be able to define research in terms of men or conduct research that benefits men only. Second, generic and cell research supported by male scientists is potentially detrimental to women. Third, women might construe scientific phenomena from a different perspective and notice ‘the possibilities of interaction rather than autonomy in biologic processes’ (Rosser 2000: 81, Donawerth 2013: 68-69).

In The Three-Body Problem, the heroine discourages her daughter’s interest in physics, by means of drawing on Marie Curie and Wu Chien-Shiung, a female Chinese-born American physicist, as examples (Example (2)). The contentiousness of the
character’s utterance lies in that she attributes men’s dominance in physics to their mentality that is discrepant from their female counterparts. Nevertheless, I propound that the author does not defy the first characteristic of feminist science theory, namely, equal participation in science between two genders, as both the protagonist and her daughter are proactive female scientists, along with other women scientists in the series.

When she first expressed an interest in abstract theory, I told her that field wasn’t easy for women. She said, what about Madame Curie? I told her, Madame Curie was never really accepted as part of that field. Her success was seen as a matter of persistence and hard work, but without her, someone else would have completed her work. As a matter of fact, Wu Chien-Shiung went even further than Madame up Curie. But it really isn’t a woman’s field.

(2)  当她第一次表现出对那些抽象理论的兴趣时， 我告诉她， 那个世界，女人是很难进入的。她说居里夫人不是进入了吗？我告诉她，居里夫人根本没有进入，她的成功只是源于勤奋和执著，没有她，那些工作别人也会完成，倒是像吴健雄这样的女人还比她走得远些，但那真的不是女人的世界。女性的思维方式不同于男性，这没有高下之分，对世界来说都是必不可少的。

Furthermore, as can be seen from the posterior context, the author maintains that albeit being divergent, both types of mentality are indispensable to the world (Example (3)). In the English version of The Three-Body Problem, the author’s stance on the mindset of two genders has not been included (Example (2)), yet it is preponderant in terms of illustrating that the author does not incline to male chauvinism.

(3) 女性的思维方式不同于男性，这没有高下之分，对世界来说都是必不可少的。Women’s way of thinking is different from men’s, but they are equally indispensable to the world.

In terms of Example (4) extracted from Death’s End, it manifests Liu’s observation on feminised masculinity, rather than the male gaze. The post-1980s ‘crisis of masculinity’ alluded to in Example (4) occurs during the post-Mao period under a global context, ascribed to China’s reform and opening-up policies as well as productivism and consumerism, which refrains from orthodox Confucian credos of manhood and asexual revolutionary heroes in the Mao era (Song and Hird 2013: 8). Traditionally, the indigenous Chinese masculine ideal is comprised of two identities, viz. 文 wen ‘cultural attainment’ encapsulating feminine features and 武 wu ‘martial valour’ encapsulating masculine features (Louie 2002), which are not mutually exclusive (Hinsch 2013: 91). However, the wen-wu dyad is more ‘softened’ and feminised in contemporary China, and wen has been undergoing transformation from scholastic learning to monetary power since the 19th century (Louie 2000). On the threshold of the 21st century, popular culture industry advocates icons with blurred gender boundaries for youth culture and media in China and other East Asian
countries, which further departs from the orthodox norms concerning Chinese masculinity (Louie 2012).

(4) Cheng Xin looked at the pedestrians along the street: a woman, two women, a group of women, another woman, three women—all of them were women, all beautiful. Dressed in pretty, luminous clothes, they seemed like the nymphs of this magical forest. Once in a while, they passed some older individuals, also women, their beauty undiminished by age. As they reached the end of the branch and surveyed the sea of lights below them, Cheng Xin asked the question that had been puzzling her for days. “What happened to the men?” In the few days since she had been awakened, she had not seen a single man. “What do you mean? They’re everywhere.” AA pointed at the people around them. “Over there: See the man leaning against the balustrade? And there are three over there. And two walking toward us.” Cheng Xin stared. The individuals AA indicated had smooth, lovely faces; long hair that draped over their shoulders; slender, soft bodies—as if their bones were made of bananas. Their movements were graceful and gentle, and their voices, carried to her by the breeze, were sweet and tender…Back in her century, these people would have been considered ultrafeminine. Understanding dawned on her after a moment. The trend had been obvious even earlier. The decade of the 1980s was probably the last time when masculinity, as traditionally defined, was considered an ideal. After that, society and fashion preferred men who displayed traditionally feminine qualities. She recalled the Asian male pop stars of her own time who she had thought looked like pretty girls at first glance. The Great Ravine interrupted this tendency in the evolution of human society, but half a century of peace and ease brought about by the Deterrence Era accelerated the trend.

(Death’s End. Chapter 2.3. Trans. Liu 2016)

Discussion

Given the fact that Death’s End was published in 2010, Liu only alludes to androgynous Japanese and Korean idols (Example (4)), without deploying the

It is notable that the series is contentious in terms of the author’s oversimplified depiction of female characters and his mindset towards women. Although female characters in Liu’s narratives are created to convey loyalty, sacrifice and benevolence, they tend to be reduced to flat characters (Fang 2016). Liu is fully aware of such critical comments, yet he admits that he has been concentrating more on plots, rather than characters (Shanxi Evening Newspaper 2015), and characters’ gender is not important for him, which means female characters in his writing can be simply converted into the opposite gender (Xu and Wang 2018). Furthermore, Liu is surmised to imply that it is ‘nurturing, sentimental and weak’ women who exhibit humanity’s softness and repeatedly imperil Earth, exemplified by the female protagonists in the first and third volumes, whereas it is men who rescue Earth and human beings (Glinter 2016, Ma 2019). In terms of the second volume, it is also prone to gender discrimination. After the translation of The Dark Forest by Joel Martinsen, the book has been made more than 1,000 edits by an American publisher in the English edition for gender discrimination. While a proportion of Liu’s fan readers indeed perceive female characters in the narrative as being unfavourably depicted, other readers’ stance is that editors are supposed to refrain from forcing their own interpretation of literary works. As for the author himself, Liu accepts the necessity for the edits and attributes them to cultural differences (Zhang 2015); his attitude towards the editing is shown in Example (5) (Shi 2015).

(5) TOR的编辑是个女权主义者，且极其认真仔细，这儿那儿都有性别歧视，像purity和angelic类词用多了也是性别歧视，要限制其使用数量，说联合国秘书长是美女是性别歧视，四个面壁者都是男的是性别歧视(不过这个没改，我说那几十届美国总统还都是男的呢？可人家说马上就有女的了)，这些修改对我和Joel来说工作量都很大，很累人，但总算完成了。

The editor from TOR is a feminist who is extremely meticulous in spotting sexist expressions, so words used to describe women, such as ‘purity’ and ‘angelic’, cannot appear too much. A reference to the Secretary-General of the United Nations as a ‘beautiful woman’ involves gender discrimination, and so does the design that the four Wallfacers are all male (but it was not revised, because I said all US presidents were men, although they said there would be a woman soon). Such a large amount of revisions was arduous for both Joel and me, but we managed.

(From Shi 2015. Trans. Mine)
The prototype of science fiction, Mary Shelley’s 1818 *Frankenstein* (Donawerth 1990), inspires scientific romances (Attebery 2013) and is regarded as a pioneering work of feminist science fiction and fantasy, in that it ‘can be interpreted as a fantasy of “womb envy” (male desire to usurp female productive power), a cautionary tale against irresponsible and unethical (masculine) science, and/or a story about man-made creature whose disempowerment mirrors women’s social status, all of which establish the novel as an important originating text for feminist concerns in science fiction and fantasy’ (Helford 2005: 290). Science fiction in the modern society, however, is still marked by a stark gender disparity (John 2013, Walter 2013). Women’s consumption and production of science fiction depicting their roles in a high-tech future has been intrigued by a 1952 novella entitled *Night of Fire* composed by Helen Reid Chase (Yaszek 2007: 1-2). Nevertheless, as pointed out by a feminist science-fiction writer and critic Joanna Russ in her influential *The Image of Women in Science Fiction* (1971), albeit being more active and livelier than their counterparts created by male writers, female characters in postwar women writing of science fiction are still portrayed as a ‘sweet, gentle, intuitive little heroine [who] solves an interstellar crisis by mending her slip or doing something equally domestic after her big, heroic husband has failed’ (Russ 1971/2017: 206). In other words, as opposed to feminist fiction, these female-authored works fail to reflect on sex and gender relations facilitated by new science and technologies (Yaszek 2007: 3-4), and are hence referred to as ‘domestic’ ‘ladies’ magazine fiction’ (Merrick 2000).

Notwithstanding lack of sexism, there is no denying the fact that the male-authored *Remembrance of Earth’s Past* trilogy conveys sexual stereotypes. As can be seen from Examples (6-7) extracted from *Death’s End*, the female protagonist’s self-perception is depicted to be merely an enfeebled woman, instead of a warrior, which implies women in the narrative are stigmatised on the basis of gender identity. Note that the last sentence in Example (7) is ‘She was nothing but a woman’ (Trans. Mine), in which the expression 只是一个女人 zhishi yige nüren ‘only a woman’ has been omitted in the English version.

(6) 在程心的潜意识中, 她是一个守护者, 不是毁灭者; 她是一个女人, 不是战士。In Cheng Xin’s subconscious, she was a protector, not a destroyer; she was a woman, not a warrior.

(7) 七年前, 在全人类面前她没能按下那个红色按钮, 现在想到两个朋友,她也难以吞下这粒会带来解脱的药。她再一次看到了自己无边无际的软弱, 她什么都不是, 只是一个女人。Seven years ago, she hadn’t been able to press that red button in front of all of humanity; now, thinking of her two friends, she could not swallow this capsule that would bring her relief. She saw again her boundless weakness. She was nothing.

Moreover, in Example (8) extracted from *The Three-Body Problem*, Liu describes Bach’s music as being ‘the kind of music that shouldn’t have mesmerized a kid (Trans. Liu 2014), especially a girl (Tran. Mine)’. The expression highlighting the child’s gender,
Analogously, in Example (9) extracted from the same volume, the same character conveys that women are expected to be as tolerant as water. It is notable that the metaphor regarding water is complimentary in Chinese culture, without discrimination against women. Taking the metaphysical masterpiece Tao Te Ching (道德经 Daodejing) as an example, the Taoist philosopher 老子 Laozi (aka Lao-tzu) states in this 5th BC classic that ‘[t]he man of supreme goodness resembles water’ (上善若水 shangshan ruo shui) (Trans. Lin 1977: 15). Having said that, the metaphor in Example (9) is inextricably intertwined with a generalised preconception about attributes ought to be possessed by women. Similarly, Example (10) from Death’s End entails an unconscious idea and stereotypical expectation about women’s romantic tendency and their behavioural sequelae of being in love.

(9) “叶老师，您这么想我觉得也不对，现在发生了一些让我们难以想象的事，这是一次空前的理论灾难，做出这种选择的科学家又不只是她一人。”“可只有她一个女人，女人应该像水一样，什么样的地方都能淌得过去啊。”
“Professor Ye, I can’t say that I agree with you. Right now, events are happening that are beyond our imagination. It’s an unprecedented challenge to our theories about the world, and she’s not the only scientist to have stumbled down that path.” “But she was a woman. A woman should be like water, able to flow over and around anything.”

(10) 程心又忍不住把星星的事告诉了瓦季姆，后者倒是热烈地祝贺了她，说她让全世界的女孩都嫉妒，包括所有活着的女孩和所有死去的公主，因为可以肯定，她是人类历史上第一个得到一颗星星的姑娘。试问，对于一个女人，还有什么比爱她的人送她一颗星星更幸福呢?
She couldn’t help but bring up the star to Vadimov, who enthusiastically congratulated her. “Every girl in the world must be jealous,” he said. “Including all living women and dead princesses. You’re certainly the first woman in the history of humankind to be given a star.” For a woman, was there any greater happiness than to be given a star by someone who loved her?
(Death’s End. Chapter 1.4. Trans. Liu 2016)

Furthermore, in the second volume, The Dark Forest, despite the over 1,000 edits to circumvent gender discrimination (Shi 2015, Zhang 2015), there are still stereotypical depictions of female characters’ demeanour, which comply with traditional attitudes towards women, as in Example (11). Additionally, Example (12)
bears similarity to Example (11), in that they both ascribe to women features of delicacy and complaisance.

(11) Something in Luo Ji’s mind caught fire, and he stood up and began to pace restlessly in front of the fireplace. ‘She... how should I put it? She came into this world like a lily growing out of a rubbish heap, so... so pure and delicate, and nothing around her can contaminate her. But it can all harm her. Yes, everything around her can hurt her! Your first reaction when you see her is to protect her. No, to care for her, to let her know that you are willing to pay any price to shield her from the harm of a crude and savage reality. She...she’s so...ah, I’ve got a clumsy tongue. I can’t say anything clearly.’...The door opened. A slender figure floated in on a breath of rain. The sole light in the living room was a floor lamp with an old-fashioned lampshade that cast a circle of illumination beside the fireplace but lit the rest of the room only dimly. Luo Ji couldn’t make out her face, but noticed that she wore white trousers and a dark jacket that stood in stark contrast to her white collar and made him think of lilies.

(The Dark Forest. Part I. Trans. Martinsen 2015)

(12) The gorgeous Japanese kimono on her petite figure resembled a layer of blooming flowers, but when Cheng Xin saw her face, the flowers seemed to lose color. Cheng Xin could not imagine a more perfect beauty, a beauty animated by a lively soul. She smiled, and it was as though a breeze stirred a pond in spring and the gentle sunlight broke into a thousand softly undulating fragments. Slowly, Sophon bowed to them, and Cheng Xin felt her entire figure illustrated the Chinese character 柔, or soft, in both
shape and meaning... The pair followed Sophon into the yard. The tiny white flowers in her bun quivered, and she turned around to smile at them from time to time. Cheng Xin had completely forgotten that she was an alien invader, that she was controlled by a powerful world four light-years away. All she saw was a lovely woman, distinguished by her overwhelming femininity, like a concentrated pigment pellet that could turn a whole lake pink.

(Death’s End. Chapter 2.3. Trans. Liu 2016)

Moreover, depictions of some female characters’ outstanding appearance are not indispensable to characterisation or narration, as in Example (13). Analogously, Example (14) portrays a female military representative from the Intermediate People’s Court, who strives to induce the protagonist to sign a document besmirching her father; it is not unjustifiable to describe the appearance of a supporting character, whereas the depiction ‘it was clear that she had been very beautiful when she was young’ does not necessarily contribute to the character’s personality.

(13) 程心最初留给云天明的印象是不爱说话，美丽而又沉默寡言的女孩比较少见，但这并不意味着她是一个冷美人。她说话不多却愿意倾听，带着真诚的关切倾听，她倾听时那清澈沉静的目光告诉每一个人，他们对她是很重要的。与云天明中学的那些美女同学不同，程心没有忽略他的存在，每次见面时都微笑着和他打招呼。Initially, Cheng Xin gave Tianming the impression of being taciturn. Beautiful women were rarely reticent, but she wasn’t an ice queen. Listened. She said little, but she listened, really listened. When she conversed with someone, her focused, calm gaze told the speaker that they were important to her. Cheng Xin was different from the pretty girls who Tianming had gone to high school with. She didn’t ignore his existence. Every time she saw him, she would smile and say hi.

(Death’s End. Chapter 1.3. Trans. Liu 2016)

(14) “程丽华。" 女干部自我介绍说, 她四十多岁, 身穿军大衣, 戴着一副宽边眼镜,脸上线条柔和, 看得出年轻时一定很漂亮, 说话时面带微笑, 让人感到平易近人。叶文洁清楚，这样级别的人来到监室见一个待审的犯人，很不寻常。她谨慎地对程丽华点点头,起身在狭窄的床铺上给她让出坐的地方。“这么冷，” 炉子呢?” 程丽华不满地看了站在门口的看守所所长一眼, 又转向文洁, “嗯, 年轻, 你比我想的还年轻。” 说完坐在床上, 离文洁很近, 低头翻开公文包来，嘴里还像老大妈似的嘟囔着, “小叶你糊涂啊, 年轻人都这样, 书越读得多越糊涂了, 你呀你呀...” 

“My name is Cheng Lihua,” the cadre introduced herself. She was in her forties, dressed in a military coat, and wore thick-rimmed glasses. Her face was gentle, and it was clear that she had been very beautiful when she was young. She spoke with a smile and instantly made people like her. Ye Wenjie understood that it was unusual for such a high-grade cadre to visit a prisoner about to be tried. Cautiously, she nodded at Cheng and moved to make space on her narrow cot so she could sit down. “It’s really cold in here. What happened to your stove?” Cheng gave a reprimanding look to the head of the detention center standing at the door of the cell. She turned back to Ye. “Hmm, you’re very young. Even younger than I imagined.” She sat down on the cot.
right next to Ye and rummaged in her briefcase, still muttering. “Wenjie, you’re very confused. Young people are all the same. The more books you read, the more confused you become. Eh, what can I say…."


It is worth mentioning that in the English version of Example (14), the expression 嘴里还像老大妈似的嘟囔着 zuili haixiang laodama shide dunangzhe ‘still muttering like an old woman’ (Trans. Mine) is rendered into ‘still muttering’ (Trans. Liu 2014: 33), yet the original expression manifests a preconception that elderly women are prone to verbosity and expostulation. Such an expression is correlated with a gender stereotype and might be ascribed to writer’s overgeneralised stances on attributes of elderly women.

Conclusion

Although the Remembrance of Earth’s Past trilogy is chastised for poor characterisation and The Dark Forest has been made more than 1,000 edits owing to its potential gender discrimination, I postulate that the author is not sexist. In the first volume The Three-Body Problem, Liu describes equal participation in science between two genders and acknowledges that both the disparate mindsets displayed by men and women play a preponderant role in the world, which embodies an absence of male chauvinism. Additionally, in the third volume Death’s End, Liu alludes to feminised masculinity on the threshold of the 21st century, yet I posit that this observation is not conducted via the male gaze. Nonetheless, there is no denying the fact that some depictions in the series are correlated with sexual stereotypes, in that female characters are stigmatised on the basis of gender identity and featured by delicacy and softness. Moreover, depictions of some female characters’ appearance do not necessarily contribute to characterisation or narration.

Therefore, in order to avoid gender stereotypes and create more complex, multifaceted female characters, male writers could enhance understanding of the opposite sex in different age groups.

Reference


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