

A Rhetorical Analysis of Chinese Netizens' Use of Artistic Expression to Advocate for Social Change in Response to the Chained Woman Case

Who is the Chained Woman?

On January 28, 2022, a video was posted to Douyin of a woman in eastern Jiangsu, China, shivering from the cold and mumbling incoherently (Cao and Feng). This woman was shivering in the cold from her thin clothing, and next to her was a bowl of frozen porridge. She seemed unaware and confused at what was happening as she was asked a series of questions. There was a blurred section around her neck; this was later observed to be a lock and chain. She had this chain around her neck, holding her to the shed wall that was missing the door (Cao and Feng).

The Distance Between Her and Her

This artwork humanizes the Chained Woman; she is no longer an image on social media but could be the tragic reality of any woman or girl in China. Furthermore, the Chained Woman was once a little girl, just like the girl on the left side of the manga, which only reinforces the idea that any woman, mother, girl, or daughter could become just like the Chained Woman.



Perspective by Incongruity

A rhetorical strategy defined by Kenneth Burke as an action of "altering an orientation or expectation by viewing an incongruity" (qtd. in Bostdorff 44). Putting two or more opposing ideas or concepts together can show contrast and give onlookers a new perspective. For example, in *The Distance Between Her and Her*, a black bar separates the lives of two women in China, the left depicting a young girl living free, and the right depicting the experiences of the Chained Woman.

Metaphor

A figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance. A metaphor conveys a straightforward idea by comparing two items; this rhetorical strategy is helpful in understanding complex emotions that may not be obvious to the reader. For example, in Message 1, the Chained Woman's treatment is compared to the treatment of dogs, as she was chained by the neck like dogs when they are mistreated.

Pathos

The effort to evoke emotion in one's audience and, therefore, make them more receptive to one's argument. When people feel involved or directly impacted by events, they will sympathize and be more receptive to activism. For example, many of the authors draw on the Chained Woman's experiences and tell parts of her story which then make the audience more susceptible to experiencing empathy.

Thank you to my advisors
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Overview of Research

The research question guiding my analysis is, "How did the netizens use artistic outlets and expression to advocate for social change?" The scholarly topics covered in my literature review were human trafficking, feminist frameworks, and art as activism. I selected four messages to analyze that commented on themes of feminism, the intersectionality of women in China, criticism of family planning policies, human trafficking of women and children, male preference, and more. In addition to these messages, I provided and commented on the context of five official government news statements on the Chained Woman case.

Overall Conclusions

There are two major conclusions on how Chinese writers, poets, and artists use artistic expression to promote social change: the use of rhetorical questions and themes of fear of human trafficking in China.

1. Use of rhetorical questions to give the reader a new perspective on the Chained Woman incident
2. Utilization of perspective by incongruity to induce fear and to question government credibility.

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