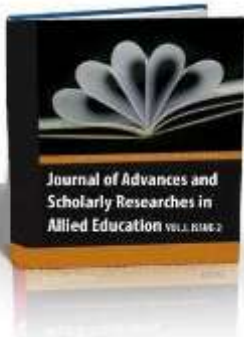


Feminist Modes and Poetics: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

This paper entitled "Feminist Modes and Poetics: An Introduction" deals with the intellectuality of the fair sex, i.e., the class of the ladies. From time immemorial there was male dominancy in the field of producing literature and sharpening critical standards but times changed progressively and ladies could find ample of pages to express their literal mentality and the prominent class of the male writers had to accept that the ladies are not inferior in any language or may it be any part of the world to show their talent.

Critics like Elaine Show walter and others made an analytic study of accounting literal caliber of the ladies in a systematic way. Her work needs appreciation and this research paper also intends to highlight the same that is to establish reputation of the ladies in all possible literal fields may it be drama or poetry or prose.

Key Words:- Feminism, Symbolic, Gestures, Framework, Incoherence, Male-privilege

INTRODUCTION

Ladies have been demanding a separate group in literary studies to establish their own reputation so a separate group of feminist literary study came up in the recent times like the development of Dalit literature. This group of class of ladies had its own treasure of literature which is studies by the ladies and the gents both. This paper further focuses on females literary class and their literary achievements

OBJECTIVES:-

1. Present paper intends to create interest in literature produced by the ladies
2. This paper aims to win reputation and respect for ladies in general.
3. This study makes an attempt to remind the class of male writers that ladies fully command intellectuality

HYPOTHESIS:-

Ladies are fully competent to produce any kind of literature which gents can produce

In 1845 Elizabeth Barrett Browning commented that "England has had many learned women and yet where are the

poetesses?.... I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none." (Kenyon 1899, 230). Emily Dickinson (1862) too felt the same bewilderment when she wrote:

They shut me up in Prose

As when a little Girl

They put me in the Closet

Because they liked me still

Thus it was quite natural for critics to opine that a "woman poet" was a "contradiction in terms" (Sewall 1963:120). Roethke (1965) itemizing the shortcomings of women poets listed the following:

Two of the most frequent charges....are lack of range in subject matter in emotional tone and lack of a sense of humor. And one could, in individual instances among writers of real talent, add other aesthetic and moral shortcomings: the spinning out: the embroidering of trivial themes: a concern with the mere surfaces of life - that special province of the feminine talent in prose - hiding from the real agonies of the spirit: refusing to face up to what existence is: lyric or religious posturing: running between the boudoir and the altar: stamping a tiny foot against God or lapsing into a sententiousness that happens the author has re-invented integrity carrying on excessively about Fate, about time, lamenting the lot of the woman: caterwauling: writing the same poem about fifty times, and so on.

The considered critical opinion therefore was that sex subverts art. Being a woman meant being "a little home-keeping person" who could only fiddle with ideas and not weave them into a profession; the relationship between poetry and femaleness thus became problematic. The repercussion of such an adverse attitude was that Emily Dickinson set out to prove that poetry could indeed constitute a woman's fulfillment. She had a romance with poetry, not an open, flagrant one, but simmering from under a becalmed exterior. She subtly put more into her lexis and her syntax than ordinary discourse would allow, and even the incohesive incoherence of her structures projected more meaning than mere syntagmatic unity could. Her code of expression thus became highly symbolic.

Recent feminist thinking has tried to explain why what happened in the case of Emily Dickinson is not surprising and perhaps is a common experience of all women who endeavour to write. The difficulty women have in writing seems to originate from the fact that public speaking was considered to be a male privilege and women's speech was restricted and of a very private nature, an extension of their trivial domestic discourse. So when women write, especially poetry, they try to express their right to speak and write differently. To be a woman and a poet presents itself with a profound split between their social sexual entity and their artistic practice that the split becomes the insistent subject, sometimes often hidden or displaced. There, thus, emerges a crucial nexus between the acquisition of subjectivity through language and the recognition of the social nature of female identity. In Emily Dickinson it is the former that gets foregrounded - she has made a uniquely subjective use of her medium of expression. Her signifiers are not some fixed phenomenological objects, they keep sliding off and make referentiality symbolic.

All symbolic use of language uses two tropes: metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor equals condensation and metonymy equals displacement. This could well explain why women use symbolic language in particular because they themselves lead condensed and are more often than not 'displaced' social entities. So the ghosts of the meanings they wish to resist, shadow their words. A fitting example of their endeavour is contained in lines of an early poet Anne Finch :

My hand delights to trace unusual things,

And deviates from the known common way internet

Nor will in fading silks compose

Faintly the inimitable rose.

As it is the choice of the poetic medium privileges the 'axis of selection' over the 'axis of combination', and added to it the gendered difference proves well nigh chaotic. Poetry then does not simply remain a battleground between the metaphoric and metonymic functions of language, but rather a text in which energies directed towards structuring content on an extended scale and in a unified and significant manner are entangled with the pressures of form. Reconfigurations occur; sequentially is defeated or gets complicated because of deletions; formal pattern becomes not

so much a framing device for the unfolding of a distinct separable "plot" as a kind of employment in its own right. Such poetry dispenses with the closely ordered boundaries of the stanza or has no use for rhyme, its unfolding nevertheless tends to be affected by the deployment of the verse line. The redeployment and interruption of syntactical units releases the language of the text into a different kind of semantic space, where new relationships of form and signification, no longer solely defined by syntax and punctuation, may be perceived.

Since linguistic structures can in themselves be seen as being constitutive of oppressive social orders of meaning, women instinctively try to break them. They unconsciously work against the hegemonic masculine signifying practices, the 'regulatory practices'. Women's writing usually projects a resistance to phallogocentric linguistic norm and women's poetry essentially displays a gendered violence of grammar as well as grammar of violence. Since women struggle to represent the previously 'unthought', make comprehensible, their ways of doing so are also 'unthought of'. Grosz (1995) using Butler (1990) concept of the performativity of gendered discourses concludes, besides other things that:

A feminist text will not only challenge the patriarchal norms within which it works, but will help to produce new, sometimes unthought discursive spaces - new styles, new forms of content, new ways of arguing, new genres - to contest the limits of current modes of textual production and reception and current modes of understanding these (22)

Recent feminist critics, especially psychoanalysts like Cixous (1975), believe that 'it is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing....for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded - which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist'. (253)

It does exist in its recognizable qualities of style, language, and syntax. Cixous writes:

We the precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen, our wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the ladders, the trampled spaces, the bevvies - we are black and we are beautiful.

We're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we're not afraid of lacking.

In women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which once we've been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us - that element is the song: first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. Why this privileged relationship with the voice/.....a woman is never far from 'mother'.... There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink.

Flying is woman's gesture - flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying; we've lived in flight, stealing away.

A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the truth' with laughter. (248,251,258)

Women simultaneously make words fly - soar free from old repressive moorings, and steal them away. Their language is intensely metaphoric, its meaning pluralized heterogeneous. Questions, exclamations and declaratory affirmations are used to convey the immediacy of voice. So do the many sentences beginning with 'And' or 'But'. Such syntax works accumulatively rather than hierarchically. Sentences tend not to be structured and controlled by the grammatical logic of main and subordinate clauses; instead phrases and clauses pile up and spill over into the next idea.

Rhythm and sound patterns convey a sensuous tactile immediacy rather than rational mastery of what is other and separate. Identity slips free of a unified 'I' and 'you' not 'I' or 'you'. Such heterogeneity mocks any authoritative or dominant language which must always insist on its version of 'truth', 'identity' and 'knowledge' as single and unquestionable. The subversiveness of a feminine practice of writing, then, is aiming to undermine the underlying logic, the very perception of reality on which the present structure of cultural order rests. For this reason Cixous likes the metaphor of women as moles tunneling out the darkness imposed on them: 'We are living in an age where the conceptual foundation as an ancient is in the process of being undermined by millions of a species of mole. When the process is successful, 'all the stories would be there to retell differently, the future would be incalculable'. (124)

Since all women do not inhabit the same socio-historical spaces, no 'master' discourse can be formulated. Since

perception and signification are not always mapped similar ways it is inevitable that different writers will represent their 'truths' differently. And it also follows that the codes used to decode the ethos of every writer must be different. However, this would spell out a chaos, and hence certain notions of treading through the uncharted territory must be formalized.

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