

Salient Features of Feminist Literary Criticism

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Abstract

Feminist literary criticism as criticism schools is marked by gender, widespread gender awareness, and feminine consciousness is its elementary characteristics. This study introduces the different phases of Feminism through various insidious social and cultural mores. The main objective of this study to Criticism the Salient Features of Feminist Literary. The main content of this paper is divided into three aspects, the first, second, and third wave of feminism from the 19th century to date. Methodology Employed based on qualitative research. The secondary sources of this study are taken from various books, articles, diaries, proposals, official records, archives, Govt. Gazetteers, Manuals and sites, and so on.

Keywords: Feminist, Feminist Literary, Wave of Feminism, Western Feminist Literary Criticism.

Introduction

In the 18th century, Feminism is a socio-political movement for the freedom and equality of women. Feminism emphasized women’s emancipation and equality, and focused on female oppression, and struggled for their liberation. Robert Briffault (1876-1948) described that: “the state of things brought about by the economic domination of women who remain, controllers of property, is one of gynaecocracy”; in his ‘The Mothers’ (1927). In gynaecocracy, the child was lived with the mother and there were motherly relations including mother, son, daughter, brother, and sister. The father was visiting member of that family. Women have invented agriculture as well as cloth. These inventions are the solid foundation of human culture. Feminist literary criticism is based on the ideas and worldview of feminism and emerged in Europe and America in the 1960s. This is due to sexual violence, women’s reproductive abilities, their roles as the primary caretakers in families, and their second-class status in most conflict zones. After the conflict, women are certainly targeted for sexual violence, in countries as diverse as Syria; Sri Lanka; Uganda; Liberia; Sudan; Rwanda; Somalia; Haiti; Kosovo, and Chechnya.

The eminent philosopher like Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Kant supported the common belief in contemporary society that of lacking women’s abilities. Aristotle’s theory of nature provides direct theoretical support for the political status of inequality between men and women. He insisted women (matter) compromise for men (form). Nietzsche (1844-1900) adopted this Aristotelian philosophy of sex and gender contradictions. He emphasized that on the traditional metaphysical dualities such as truth and falsity, mind and body, reason and emotions for explanations of the binary opposition of sexual difference.

In societies throughout the world, men are often regarded as superior and women as inferior. “Boys, more in the family system of partisans’ hat is always the only hope in continuing the descent” (Ratna, 2004). Natural biological often used as an excuse to view women as second-class citizens. According to Dagon (Ratna, 2004), no research shows a correlation between biological conditions and differences in behaviour conversely, it can be ascertained that behaviour is influenced even determined by certain cultural characteristics.

Patriarchy is a network of systems created by men to overpower women through control of homes, education, marriages, and creative outlets like art. It is based on a male-cantered worldview and it works to subordinate, marginalized, and interiorize women in all fields. The great contribution of Indian women to the development of the Indian English Novel of Pre & post-independence period (Das & Sen, 2021). It can be summarised as:

1. An individual man holds power through the institution of fatherhood.
2. The ‘symbolic power’ of the father is the essence of patriarchy within the culture and the unconscious.
3. The foundation of patriarchy is specific to the relationship between father and daughter.
4. Patriarchy emerges out of the pre-capitalist kinship networks and institutionalized in the nuclear family and
5. The complex relationship between power and gender. Patriarchy is most frequently, associated with material and ideological control over women’s sexuality and labour at home and workplace.

The Main Intentions of Feminist Criticism are:

1. To unfold and widen the female tradition of writing.
2. To interpret the symbolism of women’s writing so that it will be not lost or ignored by the male point of view.
3. To help women’s writings gain a significant place even in the world of men.
4. To consider female writer and their writings from the perspective of women.
5. To prevent sexism in literary texts.

6. To regarding sexual politics of language and its approach.

Objective of the Study

To find out the Criticism the Salient Features of Feminist Literary. The main content of this study is divided into three aspects likely the first, second, and third wave of feminism from the 19th century to date.

Analysis

History of Feminism

According to Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker, the history of feminism can be divided into three waves:

- The first wave of feminism was in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- The second wave of feminism was in the 1960s and 1970s; and
- The third wave of feminism extends from the 1990s- to the present.

The First Wave of Feminism

It promoted equal contract and property rights for women, opposing ownership of married women by their husbands. Feminist activism was mainly focused on the right to vote. American first wave of feminism ended with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the US constitution in 1919, granting women voting rights. The term first wave was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as political inequalities.

The first wave of feminism activism included mass demonstrations, the publishing of newspapers, organized debates, and the establishment of international women’s organizations. Women were first allowed to go to university in the early 20th century, having both a career and a family.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) is the mother of the First wave of feminism. She wrote “A Vindication of the Rights of Men” (1790) -argued Edmund Burke’s false image of women and an incorrect aesthetic so that women would submit to the categorized of the old order. “The manner of women, let us, disregarding sensual arguments, trace

we should endeavour to make them co-operate, if the expression is not too hold, with the Supreme Being”. (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792). In her other work, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” (1792), she argued for rejecting old traditions and constructing a new, more liberal model of living for all of humanity. She pointed out that women were led into the trap of placing a high value on the social construct of beauty and femininity.

“The association of our ideas is either habitual or instantaneous; and the latter mode seems rather depend on the original temperature of the mind than on the will” (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792).

John Stuart Mill (1806- 1873) was another social thinker of this wave. He presented the bill of the right to vote for women in the parliament in 1866 and argued for women to be seen as equal in marriage and society in his essay, “The Subjection of Women”(1869). “The principle of this essay, which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes- the legal subordination of one sex to the other- is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other” (John Stuart Mill, 1869).

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was active as a feminist and was a part of the suffrage movement. She wrote *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), a classic work now part of the canon of feminist criticism. It would be turned into” the object of a feminist cult of the ‘great foremother’ (Bowlby). Rebecca West argued that *A Room of One’s Own* was “an uncompromising piece of feminist propaganda-the ablest yet written” (West, 2011). The principal feminist appropriation of the essay, by mapping out a panorama of the contradictory feminist interpretations of the text and Woolf’s feminist stance, and to explore by what means *A Room of One’s Own*, this highly feminist text, paradoxically resists interpretations and feminism in its various forms. Woolf develops a textual strategy that both resists (feminist) direction and precludes any definitive feminist interpretation or appropriations of the essay, but she also openly, if partly ironically, disfavours feminism and sketches out elusive feminism of her own.

The Second Wave of Feminism

The second wave of feminism will trace the history of marriage and singlehood leading up to the resurgence of women’s liberation in the 1960s. American republic demands of nation-building were so great that white women’s civic virtue was largely defined by early marriage and high rates of childbearing. White middle-class respectability was defined as the unorthodox practices of the non-white and poor. The second wave of feminism aimed to achieve’ women’s liberation. It also results in new areas of science; women’s studies became a discipline to be studied at University and in books.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86) was one of the most significant feminist theorists. Her *The Second Sex* (1949) offered great insights to feminists, literary critics, philosophers, and historians and opened up a whole new range of feminist interpretations. In her definitive assertion of this book that’ one is not born a woman. It is implicit in the work and debates surrounding all our proto-feminist and pioneers.

Elaine Showalter’s (194) most significant book, *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) introduced many forgotten and neglected women writers, hoping to build the female literary tradition. She is divided into the three phases of feminism:

1. A Feminine Phase(1840-1880) - women writers imitated the male writers in their norms and artistic standards;
2. A Feminist Phase (1880-1920) - a different and often a separate position was maintained;
3. A Female Phase (1920- onwards) - a different female identity, style and content.

Her most important contribution to feminist literary criticism is of ‘gynocriticism’. Katherine Murray Millett (1934-2017) wrote her most significant book *Sexual Politics* (1969). She writes: “my father left us and became only the handsome stranger of his youth”.

Germaine Greer’s (1939) book *The Whole Woman* talks about the future of feminism and its status with a new generation of women. Greer’s feminist writing is taken as a paradigm of a continuity of purism in feminist thought which resists the current pragmatic approach of the” new feminists”. His other book, *The Female Eunuch*

(1970) deals with the old suffragettes, who served their prison term and lived on through the years of gradual admission of women into a profession which they declined to follow, into parliamentary freedoms which they declined to exercise, into academics which they used more and more as shops were they could take out degrees while waiting to get married.

Feminists like Adrienne Rich have remarked that second-wave feminists tried to find space for women within the patriarchal structure.

The Third Wave of Feminism

The third wave of feminism began in the early 1990s. Feminism grew out of the ideas of the second wave, arguing that the second wave over-emphasized experiences of upper-middle-class white women. The third wave sees women's lives as intersectional, demonstrating how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism.

The third wave is widely acknowledged that Rebecca Walker's article "Becoming the Third Wave". Walker's definition of feminism was significant because it challenged the idea that women of the so-called "postfeminist generation" were political and uninterested in furthering the gains made by the second wave of the women's movement. According to Leslie Heywood, the Third Wave is "self-described as multiracial, multicultural, multi-ethnic, multisexual and containing members with various religious orientations". It "was the first organization to articulate the views and concerns of a new demographic with identities that could not easily be broken down into opposing categories such as black/white, gay/straight, female/ male. The ideas they forward addressed these complexities and the need for new forms of social justice that could address this kind of hybridity whining individual identity" (Heywood, 2006). Woolf and Beauvoir laid the foundation of feminist criticism and offered various positions to examine the repressive male ideology and biased projection of women. Bety Friedan (1921- 2006) wrote a highly influential book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)—shows her deep concern for the repression and subordination of middle-class American women. She explains how patriarchal modes restrict women to the

private, domestic life and deny them entry into the public space. Other writers like that Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, Jean Genet, D.H.Lawrence, and Mary Ellman discussed literature as a place where such sexual politics and it is necessary to analyse literary works. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) offered a detailed examination of nineteenth-century women's works and explained women writers' struggle against the patriarchal structure for their self-assertion.

The French feminist critics have drawn ideas from sources as different as Jacques Lacan's structuralism concept of the unconscious; Jacques Derrida's deconstruction; Roland Barthes's Semiology and Michael Foucault's concept of power. French criticism--- Helen Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray have been influenced by poststructural ideas in their analysis and they offer strong critiques of phallogocentric.

The Fourth Wave of Feminism

In the present phenomenon, the fourth wave of feminism is still in formation. It is debating in connection to women's activism mediated through social media. This wave is formed by digital native late Millennials and Generation Z. In 2009, Jessica Valenti stated about the Fourth wave of feminism that "maybe the fourth wave is online". The framework of this feminism is of "intersectionality" and the concept--- a central idea of comes from Black feminism insight about power. The theory of intersectionality explains how various forms of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, capitalism, and heterosexuality are inextricably intertwined and therefore cannot be examined in separation from each other. The term was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989.

Results

Feminism is a socio-political movement that fights for social, economic, and political rights and the cultural place of women. It protects the marginalization of women in the literary canon and shows a powerful orientation towards the writings of women. It attempts to redefine theory in the light of the feminist consciousness.

Reproduction, representation, and sexual division

of labour rescue in feminist literary criticism assigns more importance to women's personal experience as it believes that the personal is political. New concepts "sexism" and "essentialism" are proposed to reveal the oppressive nature of the traditional mode of thinking.

Conclusion

The woman has an ambiguous attitude towards man and his World. She is unable to establish a counter-world of her own and sets herself up as a prototype of love in man's world. She displays her body as a promised happiness and a work of beauty to gain some power and agency. The woman is deceptively drawn out of her Feminine consciousness by man through various insidious social and cultural mores.

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