



A Comparative Study: Feminism Perspective In Men And Women Writers

M. Jayanthi, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Arts College, Bengaluru city
University, Bengaluru

Abstract

Gender plays an important role in the lives of human beings, starting at the moment of their birth when they are given a blue blanket or a pink blanket and sent forward on a path that will turn them into what their culture considers proper men or women. From the very first breaths, humans are taught to follow a strict code of behavior that differs depending on their sex. Many research have critics about the men writers writing about women. Many times, the men author fail to express the issue of women. In a patriarchal society, this often means that a male will lead a privileged life in which he is thought to be the standard for human experience and the female will lead a subjugated, subservient life in which she is defined only in relation to males. Forcing men and women to fit into gender roles is damaging as it leads to the belief that these roles represent truth, causing gender stereotypes to endure. It also forces men and women to experience life only from their point of view as men or women, not as human beings. If art is a reflection of life, then one would expect that literature would present worlds in which these gender roles exist and women experience life far differently from men and suffer because of it. Gender roles are hard to dispel, but some male authors have attempted to see life from a woman's perspective. Researcher have written this article based on the few theories and novels.

Introduction

Gender plays an important role in the lives of human beings, starting at the moment of their birth when they are given a blue blanket or a pink blanket and sent forward on a path that will turn them into what their culture considers proper men or women. From the very first breaths, humans are taught to follow a strict code of behavior that differs depending on their sex. The feminist movement involves sociological and political theories concerning with gender difference issues. The movement has been here for many decades, and British women have started to fight against the oppression during mid 1850s when the first feminists started to advocate their thoughts about inequality and when the first suffragette movement emerged, since then women have started working on accomplishing their goals to have the same rights and to have the same position in society as men have. The feminist framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. For example, according to definition in *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* written by Jane L. Parpart et al inequality results from “the need to establish unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society,”⁴ other definition from the same book also says that the inequality results from “the practice of providing differential rewards to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race.”

Theories of Feminism

Alan Williamson explains his ideas in the introduction to his book *Almost a Girl: Male Writers and Female Identification*. He focuses on the difficulties that many male authors have with writing from the female perspective. He writes first about gender issues: Certain emotions, certain basic human motives (including ... narcissistic display, intense awareness of one’s own body, tender self-surrender, vulnerability) are typed by are culture as ‘feminine.’ So the man who experiences them – or, especially, who finds them predominant in his own psychic makeup – may face a crisis of gender identity. Williamson feels that today’s male authors are still being held accountable for the ways in which past male authors used feminist ideas against women. This is a discouraging idea, because if today’s feminist critics are not willing to look beyond past mistakes, they are preventing themselves from reading and studying literature that would offer new understanding of the sexes. This kind of thinking only reinforces gender roles that can be as damaging to men as they are to women. If men continue to be seen as patriarchal and sexist, then they may never see themselves as anything different, and may resist change, thinking it is futile. Williamson also notes that many of the “female-identified” male authors he

has studied have actually been very unhappy with the real women in their lives. To explain, he cites the work of Jessica Benjamin who focuses on the psychology of “female-identified” male writers. Benjamin feels that understanding the oedipal stage allows understanding of the male author as a whole. During the oedipal stage, “commonality between son and mother” exists which includes “emotional attunement, sharing states of mind, empathically assuming the other’s position, and imaginatively perceiving the other’s needs and feelings” (5). These are character traits which are commonly associated with women, and during the oedipal stage the male child possesses these traits in relation to his mother. However, once the oedipal stage is over, the male must identify with his father and his masculine side which leads to grief over the lost bond with his mother. The male child either turns this grief into anger – which is the negative effect–or he tries to regain the bond he shared with his mother by re-identifying with women – which is the positive effect. Writing from the female perspective allows male authors to achieve re-identification. As for the anger that can develop, Lori Saint-Martin, a literary theorist, writes in the introduction to her essay “Feminist Readings of Contemporary Male Writers,” that she believes male authors sometimes act out their aggression toward real-life women–or the feminist movement–on female characters in their works. Again, literature becomes an outlet for the emotions that develop after the oedipal stage. Saint-Martin does note, like Williamson, that other male authors do portray women honestly.

Other theorists believe that male authors may initially seem as though they are feminist in their writing, but that is not always the case. In the introduction to the book *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism*, editors Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland write, “For to write against patriarchy as a male fettered by it does not necessarily result in writing for liberation of gender bondage, a primary aim of philosophical and practical 2 *Lange UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research XI (2008) feminism*. ‘Feminist’ tends to imply a political agenda”. With deep analysis, the reader may discover that the male author may have his own agenda in mind, rather than a feminist one.

Many female writers and feminists argued that what they needed was recognition of what women need to fulfil their potential and their own natures and not only equality. Virginia Woolf, in probably the most notable pages of *A Room of One’s Own*, states her argument about how women’s talents have been wasted. Walters supports Woolf’s argument and comments on it: “She contemplates a number of greatly talented women from the past, from the Duchess of Newcastle to George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë – who were deprived of experience,

intercourse and travel and that is the reason they never wrote quite as powerfully and generously as they might have. Woolf also reasoned that a woman need money and a room of her own to be able to write.”

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was an English writer, philosopher, critic and foremost modernist of the 20th century. At the age of six she was sexually abused by her brother and the memory of this incident became only more permanent after her mother suddenly died. As a result of that she suffered from nervous breakdowns and anxiety. In her twenties, after the death of her father, she moved to Bloomsbury and became a member of the Bloomsbury Groups. The group consisted of many influential figures; writers, intellectuals, and artists, who were united by a belief in the importance of the arts. In 1912 she got married to Leonard Woolf, a member of the Bloomsbury Group, 15 however, she kept a romantic relationship with Vita Sackville-West. Woolf was known for her mood swings and deep depression, and she committed suicide in 1941, in her late fifties. She pioneered a new style of writing – the stream of consciousness, which she applied in most of her novels. In her writings, she explores problems of personal identity and relationships, love, isolation and change. Woolf’s highly acclaimed novels are *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando* (1928). Nonetheless, Woolf was not only a novelist but also a feminist and she is also known for her essays, especially for *A Room of One’s Own*, which is an extended essay defending women’s rights. The essay also includes the very famous quote “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.”

Judith Kegan Gardiner also emphasizes identity as being an important factor in women’s writing. Just as Williamson had a theory about the way male identity is formed, Gardiner has one about the formation of female identity and its relation to literature. She explains: “Female identity formation is dependent on the mother-daughter bond . . . the maternal metaphor of female authorship clarifies the woman writer’s distinctive engagement with her characters and indicates an analogous relationship between woman reader and character” (179). In other words, the female author often sees her female protagonist as her “daughter,” and women readers will recognize this in the text, relating it to their own identity which has been formed because of a mother-daughter bond. In addition, she believes, “The woman writer uses her text, particularly one centering on a female hero, as part of a continuing process involving her own self-definition and her empathic identification with her character” (187). It is very clear that Gardiner believes that women writers are much more attuned to their writing—as well as their female audience—because it is representative of themselves.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to explore the difference in the men and women writer about feminism. Researcher has focused on the theorist perspective and two female authors perspectives. This concludes that women authors are more sensitive and explain the issues, concerns of women detailly. Men writers will have difficult to express the feeling emotions in different perspective.

References

Ghosh, Bishnupriya, and Brinda Bose, editors. *Interventions: Rethinking the Nineteenth Century*. Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Saha, Poulomi. *Marital Rape and Indian Literature: Gender, Power, and Identity in Contemporary Writing*. Routledge, 2018.

Carter, A. (1986) "Linguistic Models, Language and Literariness." in R.Carter & G.J.Brumfit (ed) *Literature and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.110-132. In

Woolf, Virginia. (1927). *To the Light House*. London, United Kingdom: Hogarth Press, Wollstonecraft, Mary. (1792). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. With Strictures on political and moral subjects*. United Kingdom: Printed for J. Johnson.

https://www.academia.edu/44641822/Emancipation_of_Women_through_Education_and_Economic_Freedom_A_Feminist_Study_of_Begum_Rokeyas_Utopias

Claridge, Laura and Elizabeth Langland. "Introduction." *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender(ed) Criticism*. Amhurst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

Shuttleworth, Sally. "Jane Eyre and the 19th century woman." *British Library*. Accessed March 22, 2016. <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/jane-eyreand-the-19th-century-woman>.

Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Wayne, Tiffany K. *Feminist Writings, from Ancient times to the Modern World*. Santa Barbara, Greenwood, 2011.