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"Foregrounding Sexual Politics Through Textual Politics"

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Abstract

The concept of modernity conjures images of rising regional inequities in the global economic system, the rise of nation states, and the rise of capitalism and industrialisation. Many significant cultural and social shifts have occurred throughout this time period. Gender has arisen significantly as a basic axis along which people are exploited and civilizations are stratified in the current day. To explain the subordination and oppression of women all over the world, feminist scholars have turned to the concept of gender as an explanatory model, and they have condemned a society built on dichotomies. The search for one's identity, especially a woman's identity, is destined to be elusive in a society of binaries, in which roles are divided into the ideal and the real. Gender, or the social meanings linked to male and female, adds complexity to a basic biological base, with ramifications for both physiology and psychology. Feminine and masculine ideals are constructed at the cultural level.

To deconstruct the male/female dualism, or the ideal/real identity dichotomy, would be to see the spectrum of identities that we fail to see when we limit ourselves to just two categories. Researchers in and out of academia have tried to learn more about the sexual politics of pictures, or how women reacted when their idealized selves collided with their actual selves.

Keywords : Modernity, Gender, Dichotomies, Cultural Level, Sexual Politics.

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, women were written out of history books. To understand the origins of their dominance and the shifting dynamics of male and female roles throughout history, they explored their ancestry in many ways and made numerous failed attempts. They have spent their entire history muffling their voices, existing only in dreams, muffled bodies, silences, and aphonic uprisings. Women have historically been categorized almost exclusively in terms of their relationships to men, from the virginal maid to the chaste wife to the celibate widow to the adulteress, prostitute, courtesan, and procuress or "bawd," giving prominence to sexuality and the female body in accordance with the terms defined by the dominant socioeconomic culture of the time. Women as the Other come to symbolize the transient nature of life, a

life destined for destruction. The fear of his own carnal contingency is what a man inflicts onto a woman. According to (de Beauvoir 138), According to de Beauvoir, femininity represents the negative, the abnormal, and the immanent, while masculinity represents the positive, the neutral, the normal, and the transcendent. Above all else, she criticizes women for their "immanence" (58), by which she means their inability to break free of their own daily lives and routines. Therefore, the history of women is essentially relational, as it is also the history of males and the dominant socioeconomic forces.

Writing in response to this cultural malaise, contemporary authors decry all forms of oppression, including but not limited to gendered, political, economic, and social oppression. Many authors that are concerned with social justice explore topics such as masculine aggression and violence, misogyny, sexual abuse of women, the harshness of nature, and the use of science to assert male supremacy over women's reproductive systems. By rescuing forgotten works, reassessing feminine aesthetics, and rewriting sexist stereotypes, feminist art groups have broadened the field's canon. Collectives of women muralists have shown women's life in public art, such as New York City's Lower East Side Collective, who painted the Wall of Respect for Women. Women from many cultural backgrounds were depicted in the mural, doing tasks such as laundry, sewing, child care, street vending, and clerking while also carrying picket placards in support of a strike. A global generation of female authors and performers have turned the experiences of women into thought-provoking theater. Conservative politicians have been angered by experimental performance artists like Karen Finley since the 1980s, when they first began exploring female sexuality. Nobel Laureate Elfriede Jelinek argues that the culturally constructed picture of women reflected in modern mirrors requires repair because it does not accurately reflect the woman herself. Characters in her novels reflect this perspective that women cannot achieve the idealized version of the feminine self that has been constructed by males. Under the capitalist-patriarchal system, she says, a woman's body is her text, the sexual becomes textual, and she can only be defined by a man's gaze.

Examining the evolution of beauty standards and their significance in shaping the female identity across time sheds light on the workings of our social order. When women try to mold their bodies and identities to conform to narrow, idealized standards, they experience both pleasure and rejection. As a result, beauty standards, along with other problems, are seen as impediments to emancipation since they strip women of their agency and control over their bodies. Theorists like Foucault have also pointed to the body and sexuality as arenas where cultural authority is contested. These contradict the essentialist view that feminine and beauty are objective, non-political, and unchanging. In patriarchal countries, beauty standards are a point of control for women's sense of self, their bodies, and their relationships with others. Gender standards on what constitutes attractiveness serve to perpetuate the status quo of men as superior to women. Women who are unable or unwilling to adhere to conventional beauty standards are considered deviant and should be marginalized. Some women are able to harness the beauty myth to control the male gaze and push their own agenda, while others feel suffocated by it. Furthermore, there are occasions when the standard of beauty is at odds with the laws of nature. Recent attempts by women to conform to the slim image of a beautiful woman goes against nature since it requires the extreme decrease of body fat and weight that activate the sex hormones, which the body was created to produce during reproduction. Therefore, the act of being attractive robs a woman of her ability to reproduce, a power that no man can ever hope to achieve or wield.

Most women fall into the beauty trap that has been documented throughout history and most of our literature. Books written by women also record the long history of sexual bondage, agony,

and subordination that has resulted from women's roles as sex objects and simply role-players. This is being misread as intended, which is agony and obedience to men. A history of sexual enslavement of animals is also documented by feminism. The Women's Liberation movement was born out of opposition to these and related oppressions and has subsequently spread to many other arenas. Feminism is the cutting edge of revolutionary change, and it is still being molded and fashioned by the communities of women. It's well knowledge that there are numerous feminisms. There is a wide variety of people involved in the movement, both in its early stages and at present. It was and is, at its core, a search for one's own individuality, a belief in the liberation of the mind and the body. The goal of the Women's Movement was to assist individual women heal their fractured identities. She is, in the words of May Sarton, "broken in two/ By mere definition" (33). The shared goal of the fight for this identity is to liberate people from the repressive effects of the accident of sex by reshaping society and fighting against the harsh rules of nature. It's about removing the barnacle-like beliefs and expectations that have built up around the fact of sexual difference as a source of masculine power and privilege and need to be challenged. And the word "natural," with its contradictory meanings, is used extensively in this context: women are natural mothers and wives; women are passive; women are emotional, intuitive, and irrational; women are faithless and fickle; women are lustful and lascivious; women are naturally devoted, loyal, and faithful; women are naturally lustful and lascivious; women are naturally devoted, loyal, and faithful. And that's the way 'nature' planned it for women to be. Feminist theory was developed as a reaction to Marxism, psychoanalysis, sociology, structural anthropology, and so on. Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Mill, Freud, Engels, the social division of labor, the advent of private property, and universal patriarchal ideology are just few of the theorists that have attempted to explain where the oppression of women comes from (Juliet Mitchell). Feminists have raised objections to this precarious view of nature in letters, speeches, and essays since the movement's inception. By connecting with these rediscovered masterpieces, the women's movement has amassed a mountain of fresh testimony and fresh understandings of what it means to be a woman. They have done this as an act of re-vision, of looking back, of seeing with new eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction, and this is more than simply a historical footnote for them; it is a matter of life and death. Literature has painfully chronicled inequities, restrictions, fines, denials, and leechings; attested severe variations in conditions and treatment compared to those of males; and voiced limitations, hurts, and a sense of wrong. Moreover, women had to face their bodies and nature in the fight for sexual, political, economic, and social equality. And it should come as no surprise that women, in their literary protest, used the female body as one of their devastating weapons to disclose and demolish the "myths" constructed and supported by a male-dominated society and to fight against the merciless requirements of nature. In 1974, Helene Cixous offered the challenge, saying, "Write yourself. The noise of your body is required. (215) As a result, there is a strong connection between the female body and the Women's Movement, which can take the form of both support and opposition.

Politics, understood as the relations of power and control that govern a society, and literature, understood as the production of verbal constructs that in some ways reflect and in some ways help create those relations, were both impacted by the question of women's bodies and sexuality along with their idealized images. Women, who for centuries had been the objects of male theorizing, desires, fears, and representations, had to discover and reappropriate themselves as subjects; the obvious place to begin was the silent space to which they had been assigned again and again, the dark continent which had ever provoked assault and puzzlement - their bodies. Women were urged to build a

new poetics and a new politics based on reclaiming what was rightfully theirs but had been taken away by men: control over their bodies and a voice to speak about it. But it wasn't until much later that women authors started being open and honest about their bodies in their work.

Throughout the 20th century, feminist critics saw a significant dialogue developing between their work and the novels they read. Cora Kaplan traced the resurgence of women's writing and the feminist movement to the rise of feminist criticism. Like Mary Ellman in her book Thinking About Women, an early feminist critic. What Kate Millet has to say about sex in politics. Women's literature protagonists of the late 20th century, as shown by Judith Fetterley in her novel The Resisting Reader, often engage in historical revisionism. Fiction from this time period casts doubt on the veracity of traditional literary portrayals of women because these representations have historically fallen short of meeting the needs of modern female readers. That's why it was time for an update, and it marks a significant moment in their cultural and social history, particularly in the annals of the women's movement. The educated women felt a stifling of self-consciousness due to their confinement within the female sphere and the confines of the home. Even well-educated women were nevertheless victimized by the beauty myth. Sasha, the protagonist in Shulman's novel, realizes early on that "there was only one thing worth thinking about: getting beautiful." By the time she is a teenager, all she cares about is how she looks; (20) she believes that "a girl's future is in her hands because she gets to pick her man." There weren't many options for girls who wanted to be in charge of the decision-making process, but Seventeen detailed how to achieve it. (70) Sasha is always aware that she is on show; she "tosses her head back... and unleashes" a "outlandishly Hollywood, hold-it glamour smile" and "uses her eyes with the old bus-stop swagger" (102). Like Raskin's Coco, your author spends her days squeezing, gluing, plucking, polishing, and squeezing. Women's magazines detailed regimens, and while Miriam of Small Changes knows that "if she followed... even one or two of them, the upkeep of her body would consume her entire free existence" (Raskin 74), these routines offered salvation: "by dying one's hair blond or having another baby women could solve the problem with no men" (75). When combined with the educated woman's feeling of self-worth, the result is a schism within the female population as a whole. It forced the woman to keep an eye on herself, and her reflection was always there. The achievements of man in the realms of society and the spirit give him a powerful reputation. He is undivided, but women are expected to give up their status as sovereign subjects in order to fully embrace the femininity that is expected of them as objects and prey. The tight domestic ideology that forced women back into the home, the belief Friedan termed "the feminine mystique," led to the dissatisfaction of many educated women and heightened their expectations. She was against the idea that "They (women) were indoctrinated to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents," as she put it. True feminine women, they discovered, "do not want employment, higher education, political rights — the freedom and possibilities that the old-school feminists campaigned for." (16)

Writers of women's fiction in the present day are still preoccupied with the question of what it means for a woman to be an autonomous creator of literature, and they are doing so by seeking to bring together the many pieces of the female experience through their artistic ideas. The woman's novel has always faced cultural and historical pressures that marginalized women's experience, regardless of whether the author identified as a feminist or a woman. As mentioned previously, the identification of the woman with the domain of nature and her body is a motif related to femininity and its creation that has received and continues to gain attention from women writers in their books in the modern day. Throughout history, women have used and developed a wide range of tactics to counter the myth of the

'ideal,' and modern authors chart these shifts and responses in novelistic form, imagery, and language. Sex and gender are fluid concepts, and they play a role in how we define ourselves. The endeavor to untangle them leads to a muddled understanding of nature and culture, as well as a conflation of physical bodies and social potential. The boundaries between femininity, women, and feminism blur. Feminist politics, in all its forms, share a commonality in that they all begin with women's actual bodies. Feminism, at least in part, is interested in the connections between people's physical selves and other aspects of their lives, such as their work, reproduction, culture, sexualities, socioeconomic status, race, mental state, societal expectations, legal standing, and so on. In the metaphorical world of the body politic, feminism questions the legitimacy of actual bodies. Through the ages, people of all shapes, sizes, colors, and sexual orientations have been subjected to violence and abuse. Both women's bodies and the minds inside them have had it rougher throughout history. Women's bodies, which have been repressed more severely than men's simply by virtue of being female, are the primary focus. Female bodies, which have been subjugated probably more severely than male bodies, are the primary emphasis.

In addition to being connected to his theory of the dialogic, Bakhtin's concept of a "double-voice" is also central to his analysis of discourse. Each speech act, in Bakhtin's view, is molded by the subsequent speech acts it expects and acts as a response to all prior relevant utterances. This dual focus is advantageous since it thwarts the dominant culture's attempts to simplify meaning. As we imitate the authoritative statements and come to see their flaws and reevaluate them, we end up speaking with two voices. Bakhtin contends that the laughter elicited by these discourses is a significant source of fresh invention and new vision since it is integral to the process of obtaining what he calls an active, independent, responsible speech act. The historical importance of thoughts about women's bodies in contesting or supporting male dominance over females is illuminating. These concepts might be seen as weapons in a larger political battle; one that involves a certain type of sexual politics. From the oldest codified laws almost all the way to the current day, the law has traditionally defined women's bodies as the property of men. If a woman in an ancient society was not a slave, she belonged to her father until she got married, and then to her husband. Because of this, in Babylonian law, for instance, a rapist was required to pay a fine to the husband or father of the raped lady but not to the woman herself because rape was considered a sort of property damage. Before the 1970s, US law courts often refused to charge wife batterers unless they killed thenwives, and until 1984, courts did not condemn a man for raping a woman to whom he was married and with whom he still lawfully resided. According to Freud, a sense of the uncanny stems from a need to restore or reestablish familiarity. As the subject identifies with another, substitutes the other, external self for her or his own, or is unable to decide which of the two is her or his true self, this doubling, dividing, and exchanging can also engage the subject in his relation to others. The uncanny most frequently inhabits the space between reality and fiction. When a symbol fully replaces the functions and meanings of the item it symbolizes, when a symbol enacts a sublation of reality, when something previously thought of as imaginary is experienced as real, the line between fantasy and reality blurs ,symbol and meaning, or the erasure of the boundary between literal and figurative. In Bakhtin's view, language exerts a centrifugal force that pulls all meaning together into a single point. The problem, he warns, is that this force can be co-opted by a dominating power group and used to enforce their version of the truth, but he contends that it is important for developing a shared base for communication. However, according to Bakhtin, there is a centrifugal pressure working against this force, which disturbs any homogenizing procedure and keeps ideology flexible enough to accommodate a variety of

perspectives. This multi-narrative presence, or heteroglossia, as he calls it, allows for the mapping of discourses as their boundaries are drawn in relation to one another.

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