



ELAINE SHOWALTER'S VIEWS ON FEMINISTIC CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

Elaine Showalter feministic criticism is a landmark in the history of English literature. She with her feministic criticism lays the foundation for the rights of the women in her novels. She views the novels and criticism in a broader way by the representation of women's condition within literature in the first and second waves of feminism. Literary criticism is informed by feminist theory or by the politics of feminism. The language, the, economic, political and psychological forces with an insight to literature. The classic works of 19th century women authors such as George Eliot and Margaret Fuller with their chief works in women's studies by third wave authors mark their broad and varied representation of women's condition within literature in the first and second waves of feminism. Feministic Criticism is concerned with the exclusion of women from the literary Canon. Lois Tyson relates the reason for this to be that the views of women authors have often not been considered to be universal ones.

INTRODUCTION

The third wave feminism has given rise to the development of more complex conceptions of gender and subjectivity. There has been a close association with the birth and growth of queer studies concentrating more on feminist concern with representation and politics of women lives that had begun to play a crucial role in criticism.

Feminist literary criticism is essentially considered to be the political, social and ethical movement for equality of the sexes and thereby to end discrimination against women.

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Feminist criticism is not chiefly a 20th century phenomenon .It goes all the way back to ancient Greece, in the work of Sappho and in Aristophanes play Lysistrata where women were depicted to be taking over the treasury in the Acropolis a female chorus as physically and intellectually superior to the male chorus. Feminism has focused upon what has been absent rather than on what is present, women in a patriarchal culture in which men have been favored. A women role in tales narrated by women narrators to be individual hopes and that of their status in society. Thus the tales portray the feminine ideals of the middle ages and also of individuals who fall short of these ideals and solutions of people who seek happiness and respect in society. ”Chaucer ‘s wife of a bath who has more than a match for each of her five husbands blatantly values “experience “over authority comments Habib.

The 19th century witnessed the flowering of numerous major female literary figures in both Europe and America from Jane Austen George Eliot and Elizabeth Barret and Emily Dickenson and also modernist female writers like Hilda Doolittle and Elaine Show Walter.

Elaine Showalter is a renowned American literary critic, feminist and writer on cultural and social issues. She is one of the founders of literary criticism in unites states who played a key role in developing the concept and practice of gynocritics. Gyno criticism is concerned with women’s experience and women’s writing .Her well known works are modern Media, Sexual Anarchy, Women Madness and English culture. In 2007, Show Walter was the chair of judges for the prestigious British literary award, the man Booker International prize. Show Walter chiefly focuses on the development of women centered criticism and re-evaluation of women’s writing based on an expression of women’s experience.

Elaine Showalter’s Feminist criticism in wilderness is an essay that allows the read we to study the field of literary criticism from the feminist point of view. The essay is an attempt to discuss various aspects of feminist criticism while trying to attain the aims pointed out, simultaneously portraying the problems it faces and also the reasons for these problems. The essay was first published in criticism Enquiry in 1981.IN the essay show Walter argues that there are basically two kinds of feminist theories.

The first concerns itself with the women as a reader and may be called feminist critic. The second concerns itself with the women as and may be called “Gynocritics” Showalter recalls the year1975when no theoretical declaration could be explained properly the different ideologies going under feministic reading and writing and she had to convince herself upon this concept. The situation gave way to a great anxiety at isolation of feminist criticism from theory based male critics were not fixed but incoherent and multiple. There we was a debate that followed in Europe and United States about how feministic criticism should define itself with respect to the new critical theories. Showalter opines that culture Feminine is mostly



about women's repression that has slowly become geocentric, stressing more on women's writing.

The essay begins with show Walter pointing out a dialogue by Catherine Simpson that two poles were identifiable in feminist literary criticism, one that seems to be concentrating on the errors of the past and the other that focuses on the beauty of imagination .It is always observed in association with some other strategy and hence fails to work consistently. Women in some aspects of society had been locked out and in in some cases locked in. They were restricted to take part in some aspects of social interaction and in a few other cases, they were forced to participate .Thus feminism was believed to be equivalent to opposition to the established canons. Showalter says that this theoretical impose was in fact an evolutionary phase.

Here, at this stage, feminist criticism moved on from the stage of awakening to the stage marked by anxiety about the isolation of feminist criticism from a critical community.

There has been a serious debate on the definition of feminist criticism the issue which made the feminist critics unable to address. The communication has been clear as it was based entirely on the media of feminist critics. According to Showalter, feminist criticism is The definition of feminine has always been a problem though accepted that a revision as it is dependent on male creative theory, the creative works and interpretations analyzed and produced on the bass of male experience. This concept has to be changed to achieve feminist criticism that is women centered, independent and intellectually coherent.

Women's writing would always be feminine. The second mode of feminist criticism studies this definition. Though 'gynocritics has been coined as specialized critical discourse identifying the unique elements of women's writings is again a major problem .French Feminine Criticism has been identified the influence the human body on female language and texts differently in different countries. There has been a concept which studies what me and women use language in a different manner in countries. There has been a concept which studies that men and women use language in a different manner while creating texts as factors like biology the language of gender. For a woman, the popular language could be like a foreign language that she might be uncomfortable with.so; there has been a call for development of separate feminine language that though their language is marked by secrecy of intellect.

Hence, feminist criticism has been working for providing women to have an access to language when there is an accessibility of wide range of words to them.



History has not included female experience and it is inadequate to understand the experience of a woman. It is to be understood that woman's culture is not a sub-culture of main culture but part of general culture itself. Evidently patriarchal society when applied restraints on them, they could transform it into complement. Wilfred in his book A Handbook of critical approaches to Literature remarks:

Showalter's biological model is the most problematic. If the text can be said in some way to mirror the body, then does that reduce women writers merely to bodies? Biological model of difference says "anatomy is textually". Feminist criticism totally rejects the ambition of literal biological inferiority preconceived by the Victorian physicians and anthropologists.(85). Showalter writes: Victorian anthropologists believed that the frontal lobes of the brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus women were inferior in intelligence. (Critical Inquiry,8).

Hence, the bio-feminist criticism stresses the significance of the body as a source of imagery that influences women's writing. Nancy in her words says "the body of her writing and not the writing of her body". According to Mary Dolly language is not an intellectual luxury but an essential part of struggle for women's liberation. The Oppressor's Language commented by Rich has been criticized as sexist, sometimes as abstract.

Nelly Furman explains:

It is through the medium of language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity, which in turn allow us. (Furman, 6).

Showalter asserts," It incorporates the biological and linguistic models of gender difference in a theory of the female psyche or self, shaped by the body, by the development of the language and by sex-role socialization. Showalter cultural model defines the ideas and the ways in which women conceptualize their bodies and their sexual and reproductive functions that are intricately linked to their environments. Much of the feminist literary criticism continues in our times to be interpreted with the movement by political feminists for social, legal and cultural freedom and equality.

In a nutshell, the demand has been not just the recognition of women's writing but a radical rethinking of the conceptual grounds of literary study. Sandra Gilbert also opines that feminist criticism would like to decode all the disguised questions and answers all that has been kept in guise existing between genre and gender, psycho sexual identity and cultural identity. Thus the goal of feminist criticism is committed to expanding the canon to include neglected genres of women's writing such as diaries, letters, science, fiction and romance.

CONCLUSION:

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Elaine show Walter has given the definition of feminism that a women's writing would always be feminine .According to her feminist criticism is revisionist as it is dependent on male creative theory and interpretations produce on the basis of male experience.

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