

Intersectional Feminism
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Abstract

The issue raised in this paper is a very important problem in the domain of literature. The key factor in this paper is “Intersectional feminism”. What is feminism?, Feminism simply means believing that men and women are equal, neither is better than the other and neither should be treated with more respect than the other – everyone should be equal on all levels.

Intersectional feminism is much more than the latest feminism buzzword. Intersectional feminism is the understanding of how women have overcome racism, religion and the way it has impacted the way they experience oppression and discrimination. The number of published women authors was greater in the 19th century than in any preceding century. It was in the 19th century that gender consciousness and feminist attitudes first came to the forefront of the literary imagination, changing forever how the works of female authors would be written and regarded.

This paper is about the modern critical analysis of 21st century women's literature seeking in part to understand the underlying reasons by which the women authors were able to gain such widespread exposure and prominence in an era known for its patriarchal and often dismissive attitude towards the intellectual abilities of women. The image of women writers in recent writings has undergone a sea change. Women writers have moved away from the traditional, age-old portrayal of self-sacrificing women towards conflicting female protagonists searching for identity and self respect.

Keywords: Feminism, Intersectional feminism.

Introduction

Often people seem to think feminism is only the idea that women should be equal to men. But there's more to feminism than letting women have the same opportunities as men, although those struggles are very important and a staple to the feminist movement. Let me introduce you to a smaller branch of the feminist movement called intersectional feminism, also known as womanism.

Intersectional is the adjective form of the noun intersectionality, which is the study of intersections between different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, trans-phobia and many more. Intersectional feminism, therefore, represents a type of feminism that is aware of the intersection of these systems, and of how these systems affect women's condition in society. "Intersectional feminism is the idea that 'gender' or 'women' doesn't just refer to a single unified concept: all women have a race, whether white, black, Asian, Latina, etc. as well as a class, ethnicity, religion, etc., and their experiences as 'women' differ because of those other differences."

Although roughly two centuries have passed since the Victorian era, it is clear that women writers still struggle for recognition and acknowledgement, especially in the literary genres where men appear more dominant than women. Women writers often doubted themselves to express their struggles, subsequently forcing them to live in fear of their writing careers. Although women writers have gained more respect and acknowledgement since the 19th century, they still experience hardship against the disrespect they receive from male writers, readers, and critics. Women writers have been slowly taking over literature as centuries pass. The dedication that women writers exert towards their writing has made them more powerful in the world of literature. The success of women writers have increased and they do not face as much unjust gender based remarks regarding their writing in the present times. Women and their voices have emerged and been heard by the public with more recognition and success. However, the issue of gender inequality still remains in the literary world. Man still stands as the dominant figure, and woman is forced to "prove" her worthiness.

Challenges Faced By Women Writers

- Women writers faced numerous obstacles when they stepped out of their spheres by becoming professional writers. Critics declared that women could never be innovators and therefore they would always fall into the category of imitators.
- Women were commonly thought to lack certain characteristics that made a good writer. The reason for that is that women were usually categorized into either angelic beings or monstrous beings. Therefore, women were supposed to be angelic and as angelic beings they could not feel passion, ambition, anger or honor. In fact, critics commonly "did not believe that women could express more than half of life".
- Women writers faced many obstacles when trying to write novels, since girls were restricted from reading various types of literature. As a result, the range of novels offered to men or boys were far more than that offered to girls. For example, novels offered to boys and not to girls were adventure novels with strong spirited heroes. Those novels were not considered to be healthy or advisable for girls to read. In fact, it was believed that it could cause resentment and dissatisfaction in girls, for they might want to enter the public sphere and experience an adventure of their own. This went as far as being considered threatening to society, for it relied

on girls knowing what role they played, This created a difficulty for women writers, for they were supposed to follow certain rules when writing novels and there were limits to what was considered socially acceptable

- If a woman wanted to be a writer, she had to understand that her priority was to be a woman and that was always supposed to be her main profession. Therefore, her career as a writer would always come second to that, even though men could make it their first and foremost career. Therefore, “self-sacrifice, not self-sufficiency was the mark of professionalism for women”.

Beginning of Women Writers in Literature

Women writers have been subject to cruel and degrading remarks for centuries, even before Anne Bradstreet responded to the male suggestion that women are more suitable holding a “needle” than a “pen”. Women writers were mostly known to write about their enclosed domestic spheres. They were ranked below the male writers who supposedly dealt with “weightier themes”. As they started venturing out of their enforced comfort zones the sight and quest for an identity, the so called male bastion started falling apart. Women now, desirous of proving themselves and their acumen, walked shoulder to shoulder with men proving themselves equal and even better sometimes. Thus emerged women literature and contemporary women writers.

Many women writers in the 19th century felt it was necessary to publish their writings under their pseudonyms. Their use of a pseudonym was a form of artistic expression, rather than a tool to conceal their true identity from the male dominated literary world. Even to this day, male writers in the literary world have forced women writers to stand in their shadows. Though some light has shown the lack of acceptance of women writers, yet are still forced to “spend their valuable time demonstrating just how serious, pervasive, and far reaching this problem is instead of writing about more interesting topics.”

Male criticism and the lack of gender equality in the literary world is not the only thing that women writers face in the 21st century. Within fiction, there is an arising category labeled as “women's fiction,” which has been listed in a variety of online bookstores, such as Amazon. “Women's fiction” is defined as “a story that centers on a woman or on primarily women's issues”. The social constructs of man and woman as separate entities in the binary oppositional structure fell apart and women no more subjugated to the whims and fancies of the male society. She had emerged from the cocoon of her existence, the beautiful butterfly ready to take on the world. Her writings in English- the language of the cosmopolitan society gave her wings to fly.

Evolution of women writers

Scholars have examined the broad thematic concerns that characterize much of the literary output of twenty first-century women writers, many arguing that it was in the nineteenth century that gender-consciousness and feminist attitudes first came to the forefront of the literary imagination, changing forever how the works of female authors would be written and regarded. Modern women writers face the challenge of being unaccepted in the literary world, often having to prove the worthiness and importance of their works, being categorized in ways different to men, and still have been subject to unethical remarks. Although women now have more freedom to write, many of their struggles are similar to those of the 19th century women writers. For most women writers at the time, the mere act of “picking up a pen” held a great significance.

In a generation where women writers are flourishing by the minute and have the freedom to publish; the struggle of convincing the public (mostly the male audience) on the importance and credibility of their work still remains a reoccurring issue. The unfortunate reality is that even if women writers try to “prove” themselves with their work, they still remain unrecognized. Although it is evident that there has been significant change in men's perspective on women since the 19th century, a talented male writer would have an easier journey than a talented female writer, who might very well get bad reviews. It depends enormously on who reviews the work,” suggesting that although there has been improvement in the status of women writers since the 19th century, they still do not find complete freedom in taking part in an art that has been controlled by men and are still subject to discrimination.

The 19th century women writers and contemporary women writers in the 20th and 21st centuries share similar concerns regarding male criticism and the lack of recognition and respect they attain, but the growth of the media has introduced a much more complex issue for women writers—that of organization.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, women writers were largely confined to the genres of children's literature and poetry. The emotionalism of poetry, particularly poetry, in which depth of feeling, sentiment, morality, and intuition were expressed and celebrated, was considered a "feminine genre," suitable for women writers. As twenty first-century women increasingly began to write fiction, however, critical reviews of the age often derided the inferior talents of women novelists, faulting what they perceived as women's lack of worldly experience, critical judgment, and rationality—traits thought to characterize men—and dismissing their works as little better than pulp designed to appeal to the unrefined tastes of an ever-expanding female readership.

The number of published women authors was greater in the twenty first-century than in any preceding century. Women's access to higher education increased exponentially during the century, providing them with skills that they could use to develop their art. The growth of market economies, cities, and life expectancies changed how women in Europe and the United States were expected to conform to new societal pressures, and made many women more conscious of their imposed social, legal, and political inequality. Finally, the many social reform movements led by twenty first-century women, such as religious revivalism, abolitionism, temperance, and suffrage, gave women writers a context, an audience, and a forum in which they could express their views. While most scholars agree that many women writers expressly or tacitly accepted the separate sphere of domesticity that the age assumed of them, they also argue that as the century progressed, an increasing number of women began to express, in their writing, their dissatisfaction with gender relations and the plight of women in general.

Some modern critics have continued to disregard the contributions of twenty first-century women authors, while others have noted that by the end of the century, women novelists were more prevalent, and often more popular, than male novelists. Others have focused on representations of women in literature written both by men and women to illuminate the full spectrum of expectations of

and perspectives on women and their perceived roles in society. Commentators have also compared the thematic concerns of women writers in England, France, and the United States, recognizing in these three cultures intersecting movements toward creative and feminist literary expression.

Toward the end of the century, twenty first-century women writers expanded their subject matter, moving beyond highlighting the lives and hardships suffered by women locked in domestic prisons. Instead, they increasingly expressed their individualism.

Reason's for Adapting Intersectional Feminism in Literature:

Now that you understand a bit that intersectional feminism wants to include literally everyone, we are going to share some reasons why our literature can truly benefit from embracing intersectional feminism.

1. More representation means better stories

The idea here is that if we're open to all kinds of writers, we'll get a wealth of new stories. If you simply want something fresh and original, you're more likely to find that by welcoming all kinds of writers to share the stories in their hearts. I've heard it said that "insanity" is basically doing the same thing multiple times and expecting new results. Letting the same writers do their thing will likely mean good books, but readers deserve more.

2. Diversity inspires others to write

If it weren't for writers like Shannon Hale, Tamora Pierce, and many others we wouldn't have been exposed to as many timeless and unforgettable female characters. We mean all of us here because someone once inspired us to write books, right? Imagine waiting a decade to finally read or see a character that looks like you. It would instill in you that you can emulate a great hero or you can add your own.

3. 'Intersectionality' helps us learn more about the world

Do you know what it's like to be or experience different things? With books, we've always been able to get a glimpse of what the world looks like in someone else's point of view. However, if you refuse to see what other people go through, you might never know what they've endured and what you can learn from them. We're learning more about these things because more women are sharing their experiences.

4. Diversity invites honesty & healing

Have you ever read a book that made you emotional? Stories are all about overcoming our biggest obstacles, and it's not just a wizard or a dragon. It can be social ideals that make you feel less than human. And once we know there are others like us out there, we don't feel alone. We feel encouraged to reach our dreams, break barriers, and heal real life wounds.

Conclusion

Many women writers were able to challenge the idea of gender roles through their writings and raise awareness of women's rights through their heroines. Certainly, through the act of becoming professional writers they were challenging the notion of separate spheres, the notion that women could only belong in the domestic sphere. Therefore, they served as examples to young women that women could indeed become much more than wives and mothers. In addition, they challenged male dominated society by showing that women were not inferior to men and that women did not lack in mental or physical strength. Their novels had strong heroines who were able to inspire women, as well as help them understand the injustices that they were made to endure.

If the contemporary women are successful in penning their narratives with energy and authority, they are able to do so only because of their eighteenth and nineteenth century foremothers who struggled in isolation – that felt like illness and alienation; that felt like madness and obscurity; that felt like paralysis – to overcome the anxiety of authorship that was endemic to their literary subculture.

In a concluding note, the status of women in the literary world has improved since the nineteenth century.