

A Psychoanalytical Post-feminist Reading: A comparative study of the works of Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf

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Abstract:- Psychoanalytic Feminism and feminism had played a major role in the current gender issues that is prevailing and feminism is still fighting to get along and even above men. Women try to regain the power that they had and the feminism that is continuing is happening as not any gender struggle as such, but a political power struggle. The patriarchy, when they gained power, used the same ideology called victimization and they gained the power through the compassion of women. Now feminism also does the same victimization game and tries to get over to power. This might bring the other gender men also into the same struggle which women struggled when they were put down. This paper is a post-feminist reading of the current gender issues using the works of Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf.

Key Words: *Psychoanalytic Feminism, Post-feminism, sexuality, biology, stereotypes, chemistry, power, victim*

Sexuality has a very deep biological meaning that isn't explicit in the current world of gender issues. Sexuality derives itself from the chemical mechanism of the human body and it decides the erotic expressions and experiences of a being. Sexuality is claimed by many researchers as not just a biological or chemical orientation of the body, but a psychological and a psychoanalytical one as well. The next important variation that gender issues and feminism portrays is the difference between sex and gender. Gender, according to this research is a proclamation of the sex a human body designs. Stereotypes are the symbols that are both inherent and imposed in a human being that celebrate the sex that the being is physically and psychologically built on.

Current feminism and gender ideologies continue to blast a great deal on the patriarchal set up that they claim to be still prevailing. The claims continue to protest more that the oppression of women is validated and continue to be oppressed mentally behind the bars of the psyche of women themselves. Even though feminism started in the account of a good cause, to clear all the inequality the patriarchy posed over women, now feminism leads to a path that opposes the very chemistry and biology of women's sex. This paper doesn't support any particular gender, but does talk about the blunders feminism makes in the post feminist era. "It is no longer necessary for women to ask anyone's permission for social equality" (52 Wolf)

Feminism accordingly had grown to a greater extent that women started loving power more than love or being loved. The general concept of compassion that exists within women is slightly getting lost eventually. Apparently, women started internalizing the habit of victimizing themselves for the practice that had been taking place over a century. This internalization of victimization is still making women to feel as if they strive for their basic rights. But, on the contrary, women have been reaching out to power through the mode of victimization. "Women have to establish a safety to men" (24 Wolf)

Victim Feminism, as Naomi Wolf calls it, has been used to a greater extent to attain power, which was the same mistake done by men, when Patriarchy came into existence. Patriarchs, archeologically, used the idea of victimization to get on the limbs of power and headed to a strong patriarchal society. Now the post-feminism also deals with the same kind of idea to deal with the power that women think are destined to regain. Women, gain the power through many ways and victimization and love being the main ideals. "Power feminism welcomes men and honours their place in the lives of women" (53 Wolf) Sylvia Plath, one of the arduous and ardent writers of twentieth century, was born during the most tumultuous times of the World Wars. She had an extremely preoccupied life right from the death of her father, Otto Plath. Growing under her mother's embrace was her only way of living. When she was about to let herself out of the existing ambience, she was perturbed by her own thoughts and perished within. She was a Fulbright scholar in her graduation and started writing at a very young age- right from her school days. Whenever she gets an outlet from the shell, she is struck by her own thoughts and is bewildered for her way outside the shell. The plight of a woman struck between the two sides of a modern-mythical life, is portrayed in *The Bell Jar*, a semi-autobiographical novel. Virginia Woolf, a perturbed English writer of the nineteenth century recreated a nineteenth century England of that time. She had a turbulent life psychically and physically. After the death of the mother, her continual effort to abide to a father made her many a time weak. Even though her father was not oppressive in nature, she had to abide to her

stereotypical imprints created by her familial circle. The family was her mostly used society. Her childhood was as disturbed as her whole life. Her step brothers Gerald and George sexually harassed her, which created a mark forever. Her works had coped with the recent trends of feminism with many feminist interpretations. But all she tried to prove was her disability to communicate certain aspects in life. Women of that century began to extend themselves in writing and other industrial jobs and started their liberation actions. Unable to be completely liberated, they are partially hackneyed by the imbalance they are into.

Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath, British and American writers respectively, share commonalities, even though they are from different origins. Phobia, trauma, suicidal instincts, mental instability, are common issues that all the studies have tried to prove. Plath's only semi autobiographical novel is *The Bell jar*. The novel is an instigated plot of Esther Greenwood under mental instability. Under Internship, Esther Greenwood moves to the New York City and she gets herself into the clutches of the lifestyle. Unable to untie the knots around her, she falls prey to the instability and she involves herself in abnormal activities (according to the society). She talks about electrocution and Rosenberg and she assumes herself being in the situation of a Jew and she imagines all men to be German dictators. She tries to escape from their clutches virtually and she falls sick often. She befriends Doreen and Betsy, and she parties with them. The clutches she is into is her own mind, her own self, struck in the air tight Bell Jar, the stereotypes, in which she was immersed in. One such is her party with Doreen, where she is unable to choose her drink.

"I'll have a vodka," I said The man looked at me more closely. "With anything?" "Just plain," I said. "I always have it plain." "I thought I might make a fool of myself by saying I'd have it with ice or gin or anything. I'd seen a vodka as once, just a glass full of vodka standing in the middle of a snowdrift in a blue light, and the vodka looked clear and pure as water, so I thought having a vodka plain must be all right. My dream was someday ordering a drink and finding out it tasted wonderful." (10 Plath) Virginia Woolf gave the readers a family picture of the Victorian times. The family was her mostly used society like Plath, and her works express different facets of life. In Woolf's semi-autobiographical novel *To the Lighthouse*, the characters in the house seem to have lost the connection between them. Mrs Ramsay is seen with her youngest son James Ramsay and is always seen being just a mother to him. Mr Ramsay tries to overpower Mrs Ramsay in every way possible and he tries to subdue Lily Briscoe, a painter, even though he's an artist and aesthetician himself. Being a sympathy seeker, Mr Ramsay tries to humiliate Mrs Ramsay, for which she replies and responds politely and subtly. He never tried to recognize her and never did he care to realize her recognition for him. All he managed to do was to assert himself all through the novel. "At that moment, he said, 'very fine' to please her and pretended to admire her flowers." (62 Woolf)

Both these novels of Woolf and Plath have a great deal of power struggle and they use their sexuality to accumulate the power. This is a detailed research on the power that they use and the same mistake done by the patriarchs. The victim feminism should shut down and must bring in power feminism, incorporating both women and men and accepting the few biological, chemical, stereotypical imprints that provide a healthy society.

Works Cited

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