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The Soiled Fertility of Female Script

The traditional attribution of written correspondence as masculine territory has allowed men to pursue stanzas of philosophical length while dispatching women to the triviality of petite lyrics. Thus, literary graziers plow and allot the field discriminatorily; male's surplus of epical substantiation overshadow the small flower plots of female quaintness. Regarding this misallocation in *Thieves of Language*, Alicia Ostriker remarks that "insofar as speech is 'feminine,' its strength is limited to evoking subjection sensation" (70), a denial of erudite consideration to women writers "because they write 'personally' or 'confessionally'" (73). Such stratification of male mentality above female mindfulness perpetuates patriarchy, for if women miss out on mythical contribution, they lack opportunity to "challenge not only our culture's concepts of gender but also its concepts of reality" (Ostriker 79). Hence, in the artistically cultivated field, men alone access machinery, while women till by the resistant mule. These soiled predispositions doomed the female literary voice from emergence, exacerbated by linguistic weakness, the proliferation of post-structuralism, and phallogentric traditions.

Language eludes the writer, despite attempts to conquer the capricious system. Even the fastidious scholar, after pondering pertinaciously as to which words properly beget the private cogitation, must render his chaste child of thought for explication, and perhaps denunciation, under external opinions. Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* describes an author's composition

as “*in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper systems, laws and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely... only letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed the system” (158). A master of story-telling, novelist William Golding remarks that “language fits over experience like a straight-jacket,” conveying the inherent technicalities and restrictions of communication even to one who flourishes within its boundaries. To further complicate such processes, poetry in itself is covert language, subject to boundless elucidation: a poesy boat rocking on interpretive seas with but wooden language for oars. The female writer confined to small metric verse is denied objectivity, her balladry condensed and unravelled as encrypted irrationality shakes foundations with liquidly indecisive decodings; this fluidity renders disproportion, lack of empathy, and preference for cold fact if readers are confused with figures of speech from women stating “her self-definitions in code form” (Ostriker 69). Code, if unsolved, sends for repressive silence to bury specific unknowns inside the universal Unknown; women’s writing, undeciphered, invites the like fate of unconscious inhumation.

Emerging to prominence in the 1960’s, Post-structuralism founded upon philosophy, questioning granted fabrications of truths and seeking motives in subconscious texts. In a subjective system of interdependent signs and cultural relativity, no objective meaning can be teased out of dialectic fluidity, put plainly by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, “there are no facts... only interpretations” (139). With newfound freedom to undermine understood lifestyle norms, extricated women finally explored realms hitherto restricted, claiming righteousness with their trespassing onto old ideals; this contemporary revisionist concept of “hit-and-run attacks on familiar images” with “social and literary conventions supporting them” (Ostriker 73-74) gave validity to literary adventure. The

critical practice of Post-structuralism specifically searches for disunity, augmenting minor inconsistencies until fissures pronounce themselves as a convention falling apart. In regard to traditional metaphysical dyadic pairs, in which the former dominates the latter in a set of opposites, Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy* describes Deconstructive practices as "an overturning of the classical opposition, and a general displacement of the system" (329). This literary uprising gave support to women's gratuitous acceptance of a poetic lifestyle over the familial norm, mirroring the Church Fathers' misogynist approval of philosophy over marriage. As Roland Barthes, an arch-advocator of post-structuralist movement, prophesied, "there is only one way left to escape the alienation of present day society: to retreat ahead of it." In response to poetic inauguration, the morbidly metacognitive Sylvia Plath contemplates in *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, "Do I like to write? Why? About what? Will I give up and say 'living and feeding a man's insatiable guts and begetting children occupies my whole life, don't have time to write?' Or will I stick to my damn stuff and practice? Read and think and practice" (33)? This remarkable permission for women to break barriers of homemaking and wifedom gave unprecedented flexibility to feminist future; however, despite liberty in scholarly technique, the cultural unwelcoming of women into mentally stimulating situations remained unwavering. Plath longs to mingle with "road crews, sailors and soldiers, barroom regulars-to be a part of a scene, anonymous, listening, recording" (30), but her womanhood prohibits her, gender being causal of "danger of assault and battery...misconstrued as a desire to seduce them, or as an invitation to intimacy" (30). Extrapolating the binary concept from practical employment to gender study, one could confirm that men are incomplete. For, inferring nourishment from woman's classic symbolism of watery composition and character, their humanly application is as irrigation onto

masculine souls, which females lack according to Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* (185). Since a hierarchy cannot claim authority if the primary substance lacks complete aptitude within itself, it stands that, with water (woman) and soul (man), one is not inherently superior to the other. Simultaneously, however, women are attributed with dirt, as maids lamented from ancient choruses in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (22); then, nourishing their own kind, the females are complete within themselves, proffering both the means for enrichment and the substance to be enriched. Arbitrarily assigning categories to genders ingloriously shows that even paradoxes become impenetrably entrusted in basic understanding.

The phallogocentric views passed generationally refuse society of existence without misogyny. Emily Dickinson's "Tell All the Truth But Tell it Slant" prophesies that, if not revealed gradually, candor will result in blindness. The narrator of Chaucer's *Philomela* complains "myn eyen wexen foule and sore," revealing that truth was evidently disclosed and the result hindered his sight. Analyzing the text for this candor, it follows that women's characters do not have purpose until male counterparts have been introduced, and if the former endeavor to disregard ordinances, the latter have ability to silence the insubordinates. A literal metaphor, Tereus lacerates Philomela's tongue when she declares her plans of verbal revenge. Furthermore, Chaucer heads his version of Tereus' tragedy with the Latin phrase "Deus dator formarum" (God is the giver of forms). Man, not woman, was created in God's image (*The NIV Rainbow Study Bible*, Genesis 1.27); thus, only male forms, including literature, have validity. Philomela's weaving, for lack of spiritual or male appropriation, inevitably could not have brought about desired justice, but only destruction and further evil. Consequentially, when women dare cross into darker realms of unnatural territory, silence and inactivity suffocate the pioneer's intentions,

for “wherever...we find images of compelling dread, there we also find images of muteness, blindness, paralysis, the condition of being manipulated” (Ostriker 77). In Plath’s *Ariel*, Medusa typifies muteness in her “stony mouth plugs” (Plath 44), but what more could have been expected of effeminate malevolence, since “the female power to do evil is a direct function of her powerlessness to do anything else” (Ostriker 78), even speech of terror? Thus, in order to have chance of voice, the female wordsmith must incorporate docility and passivity in her expressions.

Helene Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* attaches mother’s milk and the blood’s language to woman’s writing (878, 881, 891) (also Ostriker 70), though this association renders an excessive airy quality of carefree and playful attitude according to ancient humorism’s understanding of bodily fluids. This perpetual association of women to liquid shows that women, like liquid, are subject to mutation through an external variable, whether that be men or temperature, respectively. However, this symbolism could also prove a fallacy within masculine denunciation, for if “water is patient” according to *The Penelopiad* (Atwood 43), and “love is patient” (*The NIV Rainbow Study Bible*, 1 Corinthians 13.4), and “God is love” (1 John 4.8), conclusively women, emblematically the element of water, are gods. Women, comprehending this logic, strove to peddle matter for spirituality, desiring God to be with their image as well and to reconcile Aristotle’s womanly attributed matter with the intangible; they craved accessory to Steven’s post-Nietzschean formula, a reconstruction consisting of “God and the imagination and *my body* are one” (Ostriker 77). But, like previously explained dyadic couples, cultural expectations would not allow spirituality to be debased to a level accepting womanly matter, eliminating hope for female expression in the masculine upper domain.

The female inability to manifest and harvest full literary potential to change misogynistic views was inevitable, predetermined, and recognized before its time; the identified insufficiency of female aptitude unveils itself in a number of expositions. Ostriker reveals constructed language to have never belonged to the female community, for she demands that “women writers be...thieves of language” (69), which shows that the coveted notion was not originally possessed by women. In Mina Loy’s *Love Songs*, the narrator laments an “Evolution fall foul of/Sexual equality/Prettily miscalculate/Similitude.” Similarly, Atwood’s *Circe/Mud Poems* speaker will submissively “spend [her] days...collecting the few muted syllables left over;” the scattered remains of masculine dominance must suffice the female intellectual who craves articulation. Atwood, in *Fishing for Eel Totems*, also reports “listening/to the signals from the ones who lived/under the blue barrier,” symbolically representing the oppression of women beneath their own tradition image, who “had no words for things/in the air.” This watery icon continues to categorize women as inconstant and easily manipulated, the gender involuntarily drowning itself in a sea of interpretation as the masculine boat boasts of buoyancy.

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