

The Genderization of Writing ((Masculine / Feminine)) between Affirmation and Negation - Illusion or Reality? "Literature Has No Gender"

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Abstract:

This research deals with one of the most important intellectual and literary thorny issues, which resulted from the intertwining of intellectual, cultural and literary principles and their fusion with the political, social, psychological and historical fields, in an atmosphere of cultural and intellectual conflict. Political thought, social thought...and historical thought...) between the two sexes: (men / women), which resulted in what is called (feminist writing), and as a result of this conflict, two groups arose, the first group claims that there is a feminist creative writing, or what has been termed as (feminist literature), and there is another group that rejects it and does not recognize the genderization of the literary creative writing. Hence, after enriching discussions and debates , we came to a conclusion that suggests that literature cannot be gendered depending the saying that suggests : " literature has no gender"

Keywords: Feminist writing, Feminist literature, Genderization of writing.

Introduction:

Feminist writing, or what is known as women's literature, is one of the central issues in contemporary literary and cultural studies, as it reflects fundamental transformations in how literature addresses issues of identity and gender. This phenomenon emerged in the context of a complex interaction between cultural, political, and social factors, leading to a reshaping of traditional literary narratives that had overlooked or marginalized women's experiences. Feminist writing, then, is not just a literary expression from a female perspective, but rather a part of a broader intellectual movement that seeks to reshape the relationship between the genders in literature and society.

This intellectual debate has produced two opposing currents: the first calls for the recognition of an independent feminist literature that reflects the uniqueness of the female experience, while the second denies the possibility of classifying literature based on gender, emphasizing that literature is an expression of a comprehensive human experience that cannot be fragmented. In light of this ongoing discussion, feminist writing remains a driving force aimed at challenging traditional narratives and reconstructing societal understanding of literature, raising profound questions about the nature of literary creativity and its boundaries. In this article, we will address these issues in detail, attempting to understand the different dimensions of this intellectual conflict and its impact on the development of modern literature.

1- The Origin of Feminist Literature:

In contemporary times, ideas have converged and perspectives have clashed. During the 1960s, a group of female writers in the West emerged, advocating for liberation from male dominance and exclusion and demanding equality in all rights and responsibilities. This movement began to influence the Arab world in the 1970s through studies, research, translations, and academic discussions of various works and efforts in universities and scientific institutions. This led to the proliferation of what came to be known as feminist literature, which provoked debate among writers and critics worldwide. Some sought to justify its existence based on personal beliefs shaped by their intellectual and cultural backgrounds, while others denied its validity based on their own cultural and ideological perspectives. This resulted in a feminist uproar aiming to address what they saw as an extreme path fueled by political, social, and economic conditions, claiming it had no basis in human intellectual endeavors. Consequently, the term "feminist literature" became a point of contention, with some rejecting it by arguing that literature should not be gendered, while others accepted it, suggesting that female writing has distinctive qualities that differentiate it from male writing. This debate has become a battleground of conflicting ideas and differing viewpoints.

What exactly is feminist or female writing? And is there genuinely a gender-based categorization of writing (male or female)?

2- Term and Concept:

Discussing the term "feminist writing" or "feminist literature" leads us to address the issue of "equality" between men and women, as it originated from the struggle related to women's rights. This, of course, stems from Western philosophy that differentiates and distinguishes between men and women based on gender.¹ Men are considered to hold a higher status and degree, with greater energy and ability in understanding various aspects of life—whether social, economic, cultural, or intellectual—according to some intellectual and philosophical currents under the political system. Within this environment, the term developed amid class struggle, political upheaval, and intellectual extremism. Many researchers attribute its origins to the political agitation demanding civil and political rights in the United States and France during the 1960s, where women's anger grew due to marginalization and exclusion among students, intellectuals, and workers, eventually leading to strikes and protests.²

Therefore, feminist writing emerged and developed in the context of political debates about gender equality, particularly in political, religious, and social rights initially, and later expanded to intellectual, cognitive, and creative aspects.³ This has resulted in differing definitions and multiple terms and concepts for feminist writing or feminist literature.

For instance, "Mary Eagleton" defines feminist writing as writing that seeks to reveal the personal and subjective side of women, away from the aspects that literature has focused on for long periods. It is writing that addresses women's hopes, pains, and ambitions, distinct from sexual considerations.⁴ This view places feminist writing within a realm of personal concerns and ambitions, attempting to express oneself through creative and artistic writing, aiming to liberate from the bondage of what is termed as "gender."

Similarly, the Jordanian writer "Jamil Amayreh" often states that literature is a separate human condition expressing self-feeling. Here, creativity is reflected in artistic writing that does not adhere to gender-based classification or categorization, whether masculine or feminine.

"Louise Tessier", a Canadian writer, defines feminist literature as an initial individual awareness, followed by collective awareness, and as a revolution against gender power imbalances and the complete marginalization of women.⁵ This definition also draws from the lived reality of intellectual and philosophical development among humans, especially women, who have challenged and resisted marginalization and exclusion. They have opposed being treated as commodities sold and bought in brothels, expressing dissatisfaction with their dark reality through revolution and challenge to change some balances and correct misconceptions and errors, in hopes of escaping the biological and sexual confinement imposed on them for centuries. This has often led to a devaluation of their status and capabilities compared to men, particularly in fields of production, work, and creative knowledge.

"Sarah Gamble" (1998-2006) "defines it as a set of rules governing women's behavior and appearance, aimed at making women conform to men's ideals"⁶ of sexual attractiveness. This view limits the feminist movement to a narrow perspective, focusing solely on sexual conduct, rather than the broader role of women as social, political, cultural, and intellectual partners.

These perspectives have led to the exclusion of the biological and natural characteristics of women, which is one reason why Western thought often treats men and women as one type or what is referred to as "gender." Gender and sex differ in that gender refers to the social and cultural differences rather than biological differences between sexes.

In the midst of these intellectual and political trends, the term "'feminist literature'" was coined and first used at the International Women's Conference held in Paris in 1982, where it was agreed that "feminism" represents a belief in women and support for their rights and dominance.⁷ Due to their oppression and sense of deprivation and marginalization, literature became a means for women to address their issues and discuss their various capacities and potentials through mature creative writing and conscious thought, liberating them

from the constraints of gender. This has led to a proliferation of terms such as "feminist," "feminine," and "woman's literature." What is feminism, and what is its relation to thought?

3-The concept of "Feminism and Literature:

represents a theoretical and practical effort aimed at revising, questioning, critiquing, or modifying the prevailing systems within social structures, as indicated by the Iraqi researcher Abdullah Ibrahim in his book **Feminist Narratives**.⁸ He suggests that this behavior emerged as a reaction from women in response to their difficult and inequitable position, striving to break free from marginalization and exclusion, and to correct some of the distorted views in society, or at the very least, to address certain deviations that have marred the social and natural structure of women's reality, values, and roles within Arab society. Consequently, the growth or emergence of the term has been linked to the intersection of politics and social justice between men and women. A range of definitions has been proposed in this context, varying in how they define the term and its concept.

4- The Concept of Feminine/Feminist Literature:

Some may differentiate between the overlapping terms that often convey similar concepts and objectives related to the development of "feminist literature." Some critics believe that there is a distinction between these terms. They argue that there is a difference between "women's writing" and "feminist writing." The former (women's writing) represents a general perspective of women on the world, a non-transparent view that does not necessarily reflect personal experience or convey a woman's sense of self towards the world. The latter (feminist writing), on the other hand, embodies an experience that reflects a woman's feelings, a feminine experience towards the world, representing a mature and conscious female perspective in the fields of literary creativity and other areas of life.

This distinction is highlighted in the thoughts of the writer Abdullah Ibrahim when he discussed "feminist literature" and differentiated between women's writing and feminist writing: "The first (women's writing) occurs independently of a feminine perspective of the world and the self",⁹ while the second (feminist writing) represents a feminine perspective of the self and the world." This distinction implies that the first concept does not necessarily relate to the specific concerns or artistic and creative issues of women; it is rather a general type of writing that does not represent a unique vision characterized by creative writing.

The second concept, however, represents the female experience and her contribution to thought, art, and creativity, alongside the fields of economics, sociology, and politics. It genuinely and firmly expresses her identity and being. Thus, we see that the writer has distinguished between two concepts that are frequently mentioned in this intellectual and literary debate, which originated from a political struggle, as indicated in several previous contexts. Due to the differing viewpoints among intellectual, philosophical, and rights-based currents, the term has diversified with the diversity of these opinions and perceptions. Some refer to it as "women's literature," others as "feminist literature," and still others as "feminine literature."

One writer noted: "There is critical chaos surrounding this term, with multiple opinions about it due to the efforts of some scholars; some accept the term 'feminist' or 'feminine,' while others reject it, and yet others avoid delving into it due to various intellectual, historical, and social considerations."¹⁰

Thus, the term has been given different names due to the circumstances of its emergence and attempts to link it to political and intellectual issues, leading to a variety of terms and divergent concepts, including "women's writing," "feminist writing," and "feminine writing" or "feminine literature."

In light of this political and intellectual struggle, we might ask: What is the relationship between the feminine term and the issue of feminist literature? Are they connected, or are they oppositional in the meaning conveyed by this concept, which genuinely and objectively reflects this type of literature? One critic, referring to the feminist perspective when discussing the concepts of "feminine" and "feminist," said: "The latter (feminist writing) is connected to expressing a woman's perspective as an element opposed to masculinity, which has led to demands for liberation and rebellion against structures biased towards masculinity, making her voice, resonant with this, part of postmodern literature. This connection is based on a reaction to the early Western image of women as the origin of sin and weakness, with a greater affinity for the material world than the spiritual one"¹¹.

In light of these perspectives on the concept of the term, it becomes clear that "feminine" does not merely refer to biological characteristics such as the ability to bear children. It also has an important aspect related to women's cognitive, cultural, and scientific capabilities, connecting with creativity and knowledge in general.

The female's status in these fields is not inferior to that of men; rather, she complements him or represents his other side. Some studies indicate that Western studies view the term "feminine" as merely encompassing its literal meaning, which is confined to a set of biological traits such as the ability to give birth.¹² This viewpoint strips women of many intellectual and cognitive values, placing them in a narrow prison that limits their function to reproduction. However, the reality is quite different; a woman's capacity extends far beyond that. She is a thinker and writer in various fields and possesses immense intellectual and cognitive abilities. To clarify "feminist," we must refer to the concept of "feminine literature" and how this relationship between the two concepts originated in the realm of thought and literature.

In response to these questions, we have sought to select some fundamental issues and intellectual and cultural positions to support and reinforce our opinion by presenting and discussing these facts, derived from political, social, and historical conflicts, social norms, and intellectual and logical principles. These all argue against the validity of this political and intellectual struggle.

5-Sociological Phenomenon and Personality Formation:

The effort of women is not confined to their contemporary literary contributions but extends across the horizons of literary history as active and productive agents, not merely as subjects consumed by men for personal benefit in various aspects of life, or merely for sexual gratification. There are numerous works that testify to their actual and powerful presence in the realm of creativity, serving as a memory that chronicles this presence and their imprint throughout human history. Therefore, all descriptions that associate women with inadequacy or weakness in the field of creative writing are mere mockery, alienation, and injustice to their role throughout a history filled with women's participation in intellectual and civilizational construction. However, political, economic, cultural, and intellectual changes have stripped women of their capabilities and rights, confining them to the darker sides of human life. One writer states: "Women were not suffering from literary infertility, and the creative silence often attributed to them is not an inherent characteristic of their being. Rather, the state of slavery we imposed on our women has destroyed their great talents and crippled their intellectual capacities, causing women's lives to wither away like plants."¹³

Many works testify to the superiority of feminine intellect in literary criticism, intellectual studies, poetry, and more, emerging with the advent of creative history, or writing, and women's contribution to the construction of a unified and sophisticated civilization that cannot be measured by gender (male/female). Researcher 'Aisha Abd al-Rahman' states that the literary renaissance has deep roots stretching back to the pre-Islamic era, during which women played a significant role in distinguished poetic creativity, despite the majority of poets being men. However, it was not devoid of some poetesses who immortalized women's memory and their unique and important creativity. The author further adds that this division of creativity and gender-based discrimination is attributed to a sociological phenomenon rooted in the primary educational nucleus that shapes the psychology of both sexes from their early years, aiming to create a strong barrier that separates men and women, placing each in their own distinct world. The researcher refutes this by stating that this division between the sexes in the realm of literary creativity is a result of education and upbringing, where certain myths, perceptions, and opinions about men are instilled in the minds of girls. This is what the novelist 'Abd al-Karim Ghallab' expressed in his novel "We Buried the Past."¹⁴

Therefore, we find examples from the literary creativity movement that refute this notion and support the view that there is a unified human creativity that cannot be fragmented in any way. This is evident in our literary history, which includes the poetess 'Al-Khansa,' who has been recognized by literary critics for her exceptional poetic quality, which is not inferior in ability or value to that of men like Al-A'sha and Al-Nabigha. History has also narrated to us the opinion of Al-Nabigha regarding Al-Khansa, acknowledging her strength and status among eminent poets.

6- Gender Fallacy and Gender Discrimination:

The notion that writing is an innovation and conspiracy against human writing in general, and against women in particular, has turned women into objects or commodities, stripping them of their energy, ability, and creative awareness, and hindering their participation in literary and humanistic creation. It has been said that the superiority of men in literary and critical production has led to the perception of a distinction between genders, where men are seen as superior and women as inferior. However, women must assert their presence through relentless struggle and perseverance. One critic states: "But she must engage in continuous struggle

without pause, even if she does not reap satisfying rewards from her efforts, other than proving her presence. Otherwise, she will be stigmatized by absence, and this stigma in the field of criticism is dangerously close to death in the realm of criticism."¹⁵

The call for this fallacy requires a specific linguistic approach for women, which in turn leads to the negation of the context of contemporary cultural freedom. On the other hand, it brings forth the issue of claiming that each gender has its own language—men have a language and way of thinking, and women have a different language and way of thinking. This further complicates and obscures the matter. However, many critics and writers argue that there is a single language that all humans use, and a unified way of thinking, though there are differences in personal characteristics, perception, and sensibility. Nevertheless, certain barriers have targeted the fallacy of gender-specific language, which led to the imposition of the term "feminist writing." Afterward, efforts were made to erase its general specificity in order to diminish the role of women as participants in human creativity. The Iraqi critic Nazik Al-Araji confirmed this targeting of specificity in feminist writing and outlined the levels of this fallacy and gender-based distinction as follows:¹⁶

"First:" The confinement of women in a place dominated by regressive legal and social norms, under the illusion of cultural equality.

"Second:" Then, the perpetuation of the misconception that she is included in the universality of human literature, which is a deception against her, compared to the superior status that men occupy.

"Third:" Then, her positioning in a state of stagnation and timid stability within a critical level that rejects cultural communication derived from Western culture.

The writer acknowledges that her position as an author or researcher in the field of art and intellectual and literary creativity is lagging behind due to legal, social, political, and intellectual circumstances imposed by contemporary life. These circumstances have been shaped by numerous obstacles, including the dominance of traditional regressive systems and norms, along with the male perception of being culturally superior to others. This has led to the obstruction of the female's efforts in the field of intellectual and knowledge production and the severance of ties to Western cultural communication. This marginalization has resulted in the undermining of women's rights to innovation and creative scientific contribution across all artistic and intellectual levels. Thus, the notion of gender differentiation, based on sex, which has lost objectivity, has produced a neutral policy dictated by specific circumstances unrelated to excellence in artistic and literary creativity.

7- The male is reason, and the female is emotion:¹⁷

by the Tunisian writer Khawla Al-Farshishi represents one of the aspects of this intellectual and social conflict. It is rooted in biological and natural appearances, making it a driving force behind its orientations and conflicts. This criterion might be considered one of the afflictions that creativity in general, and writing in particular, has suffered from. It reflects a pathological condition that has infected contemporary creativity and writing, a type of social schizophrenia, as pointed out by the writer and critic Layla Al-Rifai. She states: "Schizophrenia is considered one of the serious mental illnesses. The term 'schizophrenia' implies a splitting or breaking apart of something into pieces, which means fragmenting and dividing the different aspects of an individual—physical and mental—leading to mental disturbance and confusion. The person becomes emotionally numb and indifferent to everything."¹⁸

The Arab intellectual thought is suffering from a form of schizophrenia—an internal division and fragmentation of its parts, leading to the disintegration of its cohesion and the breakdown of the system of its ideas and the unity of its structure. This has negatively impacted the perception of the concept of "feminist literature." The root of this issue lies in the fact that the intellectual class has been affected by this ailment, leading to deviation and confusion, which in turn has driven the classification of writing along gender lines (male/female). This division persists despite the fact that writing emerges from a human mind that does not differ in terms of thinking and creativity, but rather in particular sensitivities, inclinations towards gender, cultural and intellectual orientations, or in the capacities of comprehension and understanding, or the ability to acquire skills and knowledge. This differentiation also stems from the inherent nature of human beings, characterized by unique physical, mental, and psychological traits.

The field of creative writing is one, but the differences in perceptions and visions between the two genders vary from one individual to another and from one gender to another. On this matter, Professor Mahmoud Abbas Al-Aqqad made an observation, pointing out a deviation and distortion in thinking. He noted that advocates of equality failed to properly distinguish between the genders, which led to an outcome that conflicts with the nature of women and strays from their unique physical, mental, and psychological characteristics. They burdened women with tasks they were neither equipped for nor capable of comprehending, whether mentally or physically. The professor states that contemporary thinking has suffered from a form of schizophrenia, resulting in confusion and disturbance in distinguishing between the roles of women and the purpose for which they were created: "Indeed, it is regrettable that one of the afflictions of modern times is the distortion of social thinking on clear human issues like this eternal one: the distinction between the genders in terms of competence and function..."¹⁹

The presence of this particularity is therefore a confirmation and proof of the complementarity between men and women. Without this differentiation and distinction, the purposes and functions between them would become confused, and consequently, the fundamental truth upon which the foundations and pillars of the universe are built would be lost.

Hence, there is no superiority in the structure of the body or the strength of its organs for one gender over the other, as matters are not measured by dominance or superiority in the affairs and aspects of life. Many weak individuals have dominated, prevailed, and conquered. Regardless of what is said about this, one gender does not generally excel in physical strength and the power of its organs without it being attributed to a particular advantage in formation that necessitates distinction and preponderance. As Mustafa Mahmoud Al-Aqqad says: "The gender, in its entirety, does not excel in physical strength and the power of its organs without being linked to a virtue in formation that warrants distinction and superiority."²⁰

8- The Cultural Betrayal of Women (The Rebellion of the Mind):

Certain circumstances imposed by intellectual agendas on literary orientation and its development by a distorted mode of thinking that has come to divide literary works between masculine and feminine have led to a kind of ideological warfare that has given rise to futile conflicts. These circumstances have exacerbated the polarization of ideas and intensified the tension within intellectual, philosophical, and literary domains. This situation has constrained the development of literature and art within a narrow space, leading to erroneous intellectual judgments. Consequently, the clash of minds and ideas has resulted in a form of rebellion and insurrection, diverting efforts from their rightful course to a deviant and corrupt path that leads to the deterioration of the intellectual and creative literary system, along with the studies associated with it. As the writer stated: "It is a great destruction that the critical discourse of the twentieth century is engaging in, rigorously supporting the rebellion of the mind instead of rebellion in the streets."²¹

Some have even said: "The woman has succeeded in producing a discourse that condemns the practices of patriarchal societies, but she has not succeeded in deconstructing and understanding them".²²

And I say: She has successfully restored her stature as a thinker, critic, and writer through a diverse array of distinctive and serious creative works in the fields of writing, such as the novel, poetry, and literary and critical essays. However, she failed to realize that the struggle that caused a stir—feminist writing—was nothing but a ruse designed to drag her into a futile whirlwind, making it a matter of conflict and confrontation. As a result, many female writers have fallen into these murky waters, attempting to describe this struggle and dominance. The Tunisian researcher Khawla Al-Farchishi aptly described a characteristic of this confrontation in her article, stating, "Reason is male, and emotion is female."²³

Where the female writer was thrust into an intellectual space with closed doors, her efforts and creative distinction were redirected toward an antagonistic mindset that seeks ideas supporting its cause, endorsing its orientations and visions, rather than being devoted to supporting the intellectual foundations of literature, criticism, and thought. As "Iyad Abdul Majid," a professor of literary criticism, says:

"I try at the outset to shield women's literature from categorization and draw it into its human dimension, for women, like men, possess innate fertility and a distinct self that must produce literature unique to that self. It is not a conflict between them, as literature is an expression of a human perspective and vision of the universe, life, and society."²⁴

The researcher acknowledges that literature is a human endeavor that transcends gender, and regardless of the differences in the identities of those who produce it, the distinction between genders is a matter of innate

nature and biological composition. This distinction does not necessarily lead to the intellectual conflict that is sometimes artificially created and intense. Rather, it is, in truth, an intellectual expression and perspective that complements the other perspective, contributing to the balance and moderation necessary for the construction of the earth, the movement of the universe, and the flourishing of life. It is the creation of human literature with a vast expanse and limitless boundaries in the realms of thought, art, and literature.

9-The concept of feminine writing through the voice of a man:

Creative writing is a human experience, and we cannot consider that what a woman writes or what a man writes differs or diverges from the general experience of human creativity. It is not possible in any way to categorize literature by gender, claiming that this is masculine literature and that is feminine literature. Rather, this classification stems from historical and social conditions that have shaped concepts and altered the course of events to benefit a particular group, serving specific purposes for a certain class, especially in the history of Western civilization. As we have pointed out in defining these terms and their associated concepts, researcher Ibrahim Ahmed Malhem emphasizes this truth in one of his studies, stating that literature cannot be divided based on the gender of the text's creator: "Feminism can be expressed through the voice of a woman, and it can also be expressed through the voice of a man, because literature cannot be fragmented in a manner that relies on the gender of the text's creator, but rather on the nature of the text, which manifests the woman's expression of her strength in facing life's hardships, and the transformations or betrayals of others towards her."²⁵

When we examine these ideas and delve into their depths, we must acknowledge that it is erroneous to classify the characteristics of male or female writing based on narrow subjective standards. What a woman feels and imagines can equally be shared by a man, who may even surpass her in mastering the depiction of emotions and feelings on many occasions. A man may write in a woman's voice, conveying the human dimension with his pen, mind, and insight. Therefore, it is entirely inappropriate to label a piece of feminine writing as "masculine" simply because it depicts certain elements related to women or their issues, or portrays some of their emotions. Similarly, it is equally inappropriate to describe masculine writing as "effeminate" because it carries aspects related to men, their issues, or their feelings. Thus, as the author asserts, this does not concern the critic in any way; rather, what ultimately matters is the ability of the writer, regardless of gender, and the artistic merits of their work that resonate with us and draw our minds into its embrace for critique, interpretation, and analysis. This is because the writing embodies a human experience within the broader nature of creative writing.²⁶

Conclusion:

Through the examination of social, historical, natural, and intellectual (ideological) facts discussed and debated by proponents of dissent, the following conclusions can be drawn from this research:

- Every creative writing emerges from an epistemological and intellectual space that possesses independence in building its scientific or knowledge-based system, relying on both previous and contemporary experiences among different peoples. Political, social, and historical conflicts cannot be used to establish a scientific system with its own rules and structures that we can refer to as literature.
- Subjecting the categorization of writing (literature) or any other form to a biological necessity does not establish itself on logical, rational, or humane grounds, nor on social ones. The differences in human beings' biological aspects are a necessity driven by other factors, primarily the adaptability of humans to the universe according to the abilities and potentials endowed in them based on their natural and biological constitution.
- Writing in thought and literature in the West has been founded on political, historical, and social conflicts, which have transformed the creative and intellectual issue (writing) into a struggle between male and female. This has shifted it from the creative orientation of scientific writing, which has a perspective on life, the universe, and humanity, to a narrow subjective direction, resulting from the deviation and misdirection caused by the political and social chaos and disturbances afflicting Western societies.
- It is impossible to establish scientific rules and philosophical and intellectual systems on emotions and feelings, as these are subjective, changeable, and unstable matters that pertain to individuals and their internal inclinations based on their personal makeup and the circumstances they have encountered in their private lives.
- After a bitter struggle against political, social, and historical currents, the female thinker and writer finds herself investing her time and effort in contributing to the construction of an intellectual and scientific renaissance that serves societies and nations. She transcends values of inadequacy, weakness, and exclusion,

rising to embrace values of ambition, diligence, and fruitful hard work in various fields of knowledge across all natural and human sciences, such as medicine, engineering, poetry, novels, criticism, and literature.

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