

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND LITERARY THEORIES IN ENGLISH



Principal
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Prof. P. Kannan



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The Interdisciplinary Approaches in Feminist Criticism in 20th Century

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Abstract:

Feminist literary criticism is an interdisciplinary approach which focuses on gender politics. It rarely confines itself to merely textual analysis; rather, it looks at the text within the society in which it was produced in order to discover what this tell us about what gender means in that particular context. Initially, Anglo-American feminist criticism was primarily concerned with challenging the notion of the canon in two main ways. First, critics noted that the texts which constituted the canon were mainly male authored and that their representations of female characters tented to be largely negative and stereotyped. 1980s can be characterized as a decade in which feminist literacy critics looked both backward, to earlier feminist critical work, and outward, to the work of feminist in other disciplines. The combining of existing feminist criticism with feminist theory from other disciplines proved to be a productive dynamic in 1990s. Important influenceers on feminist literary criticism in 1990s included Liesbet van Zoonen's (1994) work in media studies.

Introduction

Feminist literary criticism is an interdisciplinary approach which focuses on gender politics. It rarely confines itself to merely textual analysis; rather, it looks at the text within the society in which it was produced in order to discover what this tell us about what gender means in that particular context. It emphasizes the ways in which discrimination against women is manifested and how this can be resisted and countered. Unlike many other academic approaches, therefore, feminist criticism is not simply a theoretical approach; it also has political aims.

Feminist criticism developed from the women's movement in Europe and North America in the 1960s, the so-called second wave of feminism. This movement was characterized by the founding of a number of consciousness-raising groups whose fundamental beliefs can be summarized by the slogan "The personal is politics," meaning that personal experience is neither individual nor isolated, rather it is social, political, and systematic.

Various works of feminist literacy criticism came out of and followed on from the first wave, such as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and many such writings share a number of