

# Representation of women and femininity



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Analysis is going to be on the two poems “ The River-Merchant's Wife” by Pound and “ To Elsie” by Williams Carlos. Williams defined a new idea of what feminist poetry could be. Pound as a poet adopts another persona, that of a young woman in the poem the river-merchant’s wife. On the other hand he leaves us questioning about the relationship in which a dramatic break up between two people came about. The poem has Pound taking the role of the speaker to explain the dramatic situation and bring out certain experiences that as a whole illustrates the intention the poem had on women in several ways. The two poems have been used to redefine what English poetry could do in depiction of a woman in form of free verse in English.

Consequently, the poem by Carlos was brought out to have a considerable power which neither resided in the summary image of Elsie herself, or in the words which occupies few lines, or in any precise particular texture. Its majorly focuses on the speaker himself who swiftly and passionately sums up his feelings about women in broken utterance in order to explain and explore human condition in which he participates. On the contrary, “ the poems diction is seemingly flaccid and general and as a monologue, it overcomes the use of language” (Cirasa & Carlos, 1995). The poems in a better point of view, represents women and feminism through extending the principles of imagism.

To start with, Pound defines the relationship between a husband and his wife in a manner that helps him bring about a counter-example with respect to culture and in this case, English culture which offers a picture of a society in harmonious living with nature. Modernity is therefore the major problem of the poem which concerns the way language is used in the poem to represent

marriage. He demonstrates how a clear and simple language can be used to stress the connection of objects found in nature to the emotions of female. The simple language also depicts how man lives in harmony with nature (Helen, 2000). To bring out the scope of feminism, the poem's specificity depends on the capacity to make the speaker have a subjective depth which depends on the subtle variations of tone and the way non-numeric verse is used. The persona figure therefore represents the subjective view which depends on the movement of speech in writing (rhythm).

To heighten the representation of woman the poem charts temporal trajectories, which are both the process of growing up and the history of a marriage. Various devices are used to give the poem's movement a sense of aesthetic completion: the poem uses the image of the gate at beginning and end, and the gate is successively described as a point of arrival and departure. More particularly, though, the girl's story is inscribed within the seasons: the references to flowers and blue plums in the first stanza evoke spring and summer, while the last stanza refers to autumn and August, "leaves falling and the color are yellow" (Betterton, 1999). The poem thus leaves us to understand that the girl's evolution is itself inscribed in the time of nature.

The picture of a marriage in this poem is depicted by part of the interest in the poem to stem from the fact that it constructs a representation of what is apparently a loving marriage within the context of a highly patriarchal society; the inversion in "My Lord you...." almost seems to treat the expression ironically (Betterton, 1999). The poem is organized around a basic tension between gender categories where the man travels freely, while

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the woman, without an occupation, remains in the domestic space. Arranged marriage appears to be the proper context for the emergence of strong feeling which comes through the description of the wife's awakening to love. The poem defines a society in which social structures accommodate natural desire. This makes an important comparison with, " To Elsie" where the young woman described in the contemporary preoccupations of the period is the repression of sexuality in a society. Through this expression of love the poem thus appears to offer an apology for a hierarchical, patriarchal Chinese culture.

In the poem " The River-Merchant's Wife", the central problem concerns the political significance of Pound's writing, his conception of China as a model society. On one hand, the poem may be read as an idealized vision of a woman's fulfillment within the structures of a patriarchal society, as representing love within marriage; on the other hand, what is most striking about it is the sense of subjectivity it makes possible. This relies on two things at least, first is the connection of feelings with natural objects and the way the concrete objects are designated in the poem. " The poem's images then and its words for concrete objects, become associated with feelings and the subjectivity of the writing itself" (Cirasa & Carlos, 1995). Seen in this regard, a principal suggested that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings passed to us through perplexed combinations of concrete objects are passed to us as involutes in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reaching us directly, and in their own abstract shapes. One may argue that Pound is portraying here a counter-model placed against European societies, a model of an emotionally satisfying life

lived within ancient traditions based on, or in harmony with, natural processes. Yet, in contrast to that, the poem seems to build in maximal suggestions of inner life, of interiority and feeling of the woman.

“ To Elsie” by Williams Carlos takes the subject of dynamic representation where it turns inside out the essential conventions feminine point of view by putting his opinion side by side within the material frameworks of power surrounded by class, sex and race (Pound, Baechler. & Litz, 1990). The poem brings the imagination of tying imaginative potential of cultural diminishment to the work of male (masculine) systems of control and the need they have in making the female body (Perry, 2005). The first few stanzas describes Americas’ “ pure products” the class of workers as “ the peasants” and those who are alive as “ mountain folk” and “ desolate” because they have an imagination which have been detached from their normal peasantry tradition. The poet explains escape from deprived conditions to stem from gender-specific means. That is men can take to railroading because of sheer lust or because they need some form of adventure since their mobility is assured by their sex. Thus it portrays that the lust men have assures their mobility.

The women on the other hand can only escape through the means of sexual surrender, and the young maidens to succumb without emotions to the male conventions of desire. They should face their submission by means of having a numb terror which cannot be expressed. The women are defined as sluts and are silenced by the desire of male operations. In other words, “ they are silenced when the mechanisms of male desire are enabled through severance of imagination and rigidification of habits in the thought which is

rooted in the supremacy of masculine system” (Helen, 2000). Elsie is created to represent both results of two antagonist system and given the potential break from them.

Elsie a product of marriage with traces of Indian blood is enclosed in the conditions the poet has described as a form of gender and class. She retains much of the old ways through her movements and her financial language. She is therefore as a young woman still enclosed by the male identification of instructions that continues to define who she is. This is depicted through the agent who came to her rescue, the suburban doctor who employed her and the state that rears her. “ The poet uses “ us” to represent the truth about Elsie’s broken brain” (Shmoop, 2006). To be against the sanctions of public authority, the “ us” insists upon Elsie’s body and her hips and breasts are portrayed as “ voluptuous water” furthermore, we are alerted to the process of reading the female body parts within the framework powers of masculinity as described and joined in the poem. From the beginning, the poem deconstruct itself from its representation and objectification of a female body as linked to the state’s hierarchies, gender and class which helps us to read and to represent women in our culture.

Finally, as have been seen, the two poems have been used to redefine what English poetry could do in depiction of a woman in form of free verse in English. This is possible because, literature is a good media and a tool through which artists or people use to reflect what is in the mind, what is in the society, what will happen in future and tell on innovations among others. Literature therefore reflects issues and objectivity of a female being as a whole and what builds the female. There are many literary works done by <https://assignbuster.com/representation-of-women-femininity/>

different writers that communicate specific messages which are either meant to talk of a vice in a society. These teach the society of the norms they are expected to follow and direct those who have gone astray.

The two poems “ The River-Merchant's Wife” by Pound and “ To Elsie” by Williams Carlos Williams define a new idea of what feminist poem could be. The poems have been used to redefine what English poetry could do in depiction of a woman in form of free verse in English. Pound as a poet adopts different persona, in this case, that of a young woman in the poem the river-merchant’s wife to bring out his position. On the other hand he leaves us questioning about the relationship in which a dramatic break up between two people came about. Pound is taking the role of the speaker to explain the dramatic situation and bring out certain experiences that as a whole illustrates the intention the poem had on women in several ways and how literature is used to redefine what is in the society.