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IDENTIFYING FEMINISM: THE NARRATIVES OF POWER AND RESISTANCE

Abstract: Even though the feminist agenda has always been related to the concept of empowerment and resistance, the feminist struggles, both in theory and practice, have often just replicated forms of exclusion and domination in their own ranks and narratives. This failure to bring about substantial changes in the underlying systems of power has made it necessary to reconsider the achievements made so far, while the ability to identify the structural matrices of oppression in the existing narratives is seen as crucial to performing a radical break with dominant culture of systemic violence. Today, it is the culture in a consumerist world in which women have been declared free, and are persistently lauded for having won most of their feminist ‘battles’, but it is more often than not, and usually under the surface of its politically correct speech and democratic ways, even more toxic and oppressive than ever. Redefining the idea of transformative power – of both words and deeds – and a choice to resist is therefore related to remembering the warning words of bell hooks, the recently deceased feminist icon of resistance. In the context in which mainstream feminism has been largely appropriated to serve the ends of neoliberal agenda, her warning states that it has become urgent to re-appropriate the term, change the narrative by identifying and proclaiming feminism to be not just about gender roles but about liberation for all people – female and male – from domination and oppression in all its different manifestations, old and new. The paper will then proceed to illustrate different aspects of power, and different ways of speaking out to demonstrate resistance to its destructive ways by calling upon the resisting voices of three contemporary literary figures: that of Antigone (Sophocles), of Adolfinia Freud (Goce Smilevski), and of Michael K. (J.M. Coetzee).

Key words: the feminist agenda, identifying oppression, the idea of transformative power, changing the narrative and re-appropriating the term, resisting oppression

1. Introduction

Feminism has usually been defined as a theory and practice, or a set of practices, based on the belief in the crucial importance of advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. Its organized activity has been focused upon defending women’s rights and interests by demystifying and subverting the cultural matrices of double standards and oppression. Exposing patriarchy as a culture of power based on systemic violence has been at the root of all feminist struggles. Its agenda has therefore necessarily revolved around constructing forms of meaningful resistance

and promoting the importance of sisterhood and solidarity. The proclaimed ideal of universal sisterhood was surely something that initiated the movement, triggering and keeping its emancipatory dimension and revolutionary impulse, but the history of the movement has shown more than just occasional or minor departures from the declared ideals, and failures to stay true to its own beliefs, convictions, and proclamations. The fact that the movement's progression towards achieving some of its most cherished goals coincided with reproducing similar patterns of exclusion in its own ranks and narratives has made it necessary to stop and reconsider not just the strategies used to resist patriarchy, but also some of the fundamental postulates that this struggle has relied upon. Even though words of warning in this regard were uttered from the very beginning, too much time had passed, and many opportunities lost before these voices of despair were given any serious thought. If what has happened with mainstream feminism included legitimizing the power patterns of the dominant order, thereby subverting its own goals and ideas of liberation, then obviously some thoroughgoing gestures of redefining and reclaiming have been long overdue. As it will be clear from a brief overview of how oppression works, all these betrayals of solidarity have always been about privilege, even if maintaining it sometimes had nothing to do with a deliberate act or conscious intention.

2. The Concept of Oppression and the Feminist Agenda

In order to keep intact the system of power based on constructing, maintaining and exploiting the other, it is crucial that the voice of subversion should be suppressed. That is why silencing those who may threaten a dominant order has always been the most efficient method used by authoritarian societies. Throughout history, the fate of the suppressed other has been allotted to the woman, but also to the worker, the negro, and the colonized. As long as their voices/stories were kept at bay, unrecognized as having anything important to say, the official history – and so far it has been a self-legitimizing story of the white, colonizing master/employer – had little difficulty safeguarding the sanctioned frame of perception and the system of accepted knowledge. In order to make this work of domination go smooth, the power system has always needed the inferior others to internalize and accept a distorted and degrading image of the self as natural and beyond change. In her essay on psychological oppression, Sandra Lee Bartky (1979), who was a distinguished feminist philosopher, argued that our ordinary concept of oppression was too narrow and insufficient to explain the nature and experience of oppression. She insisted that it needed to be expanded so as to include understanding of the less visible, but all the more pernicious forms hidden in the very structure of the system which thrives on domination. It is so because as long as individuals and collectivities are rendered incapable of understanding the agencies responsible for their subjugation, their spirit will remain broken, and their resistance null. “To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem” (Bartky, 2008: 51). This process is accomplished when a person, or a

group of people, become internally oppressed/colonized, and so far it has usually gone hand in hand with ways of political and economic dispossession.

Bartky, however, makes it clear that for psychological oppression to do its work of damage, it is not necessary for economic or political dispossession to exist. As long as the established order is perceived as legitimate, and the colonized other has internalized the socially desirable, prefabricated image of the self – one's own status of inferiority – any additional effort or recourse to overt acts of violence is indeed no longer required. On the other hand, economic and political oppression are in themselves psychologically oppressive. It is because poverty and powerlessness, or the fact that one occupies an inferior social position, are quite sufficient in themselves to undermine or destroy one's sense of worth and self-esteem, and thus to prevent any meaningful gestures of self-determination and self-actualization. Through stereotyping, cultural domination, and sexual objectification, the three major patterns that Frantz Fanon identified as strategies of oppression, the culture of passivity stays unchallenged while the subjugated other is kept under control – their voice of resistance successfully obliterated. These are the special modes of psychic alienation which make it possible for the terrible message of inferiority to be delivered even to those who do enjoy some form of economic privilege or material benefits. "Even when economic and political obstacles on the path to autonomy are removed, a depreciated alter ego still blocks the way" (Bartky, 2008: 53). But it is also important to note that this blockage that Bartky refers to has two sides actually; on the one hand, it may stand for unconscious self-sabotage (self-deprecating gestures obstructing the path to agency and autonomy), while on the other it stands for deliberate obstructive acts preventing the others from achieving the same. That is why understanding privilege is so essentially related to understanding and demystifying oppression. The power system is basically dependant on those who will, as an act of hypocrisy and at times unconsciously, defend oppression in order to maintain their own position of privilege even if it is the system which turns them, in some other important ways, into the victims themselves.

To demonstrate this double bind of oppression at work, it could be useful to go back briefly to the official beginnings of the women's movement and see how the same mechanism of silencing and exclusion was employed in the contexts primarily intended to resist and not promote oppression. Among the participants at the World Anti-Slavery Convention, which met for the first time in London in 1840¹, there were American and British female abolitionists, yet their presence and participation was a point of contention even before the meeting was held. For many leading opponents of slavery – a practice which they saw as oppressive, immoral and degrading – it was inadmissible that women should be allowed to engage in politics and their voice heard publicly. So, despite the fact that both the Massachusetts and

¹ There are numerous historical sources available describing how this particular event unfolded, while including the information related to women delegates, which is the focus of our interest here. The visual representations of the London Convention have also become significant part of our cultural legacy. The photographs memorializing moments from this groundbreaking historical event, as well as the images trying to reconstruct it can be found on the internet.

Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Societies were going to send women delegates to this Convention, their participation was still in question when eventually the Convention started. The final decision was eventually reached on the first day of the Convention stating that the presence of the women delegates would not be denied – meaning they were allowed to watch and listen from the spectators gallery – but participation and the right to speak was limited to ‘gentlemen’ only.² This important lesson – that fighting inequality did not necessarily include all those who were unequal – would eventually lead to the movement advocating the rights of women, but the hypocrisy of exclusion, which was so blatantly demonstrated at the London convention, would continue to haunt the feminist struggle itself. In spite of the Declaration, a legacy of the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls (1848), indicting a patriarchal culture for repressing the rights of women through a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, as well as asserting that “all men and women are created equal” (Castle 2007:94), the reality proved to be very much different than the idealized picture these promising words had anticipated. Very soon, and in very much the same way, this revolutionary statement, modelled on the famous words of Thomas Jefferson from the U.S. Declaration of Independence, ended by betraying the promise it had given, just as the Declaration of equal rights did not lead to equality in practice; or just as the gentlemen at the London Convention never thought that oppressed humanity, which they officially defended, should also include and refer to that of their female colleagues, or women in general.

When it became clear that this new movement was not going to fight for the rights of all women with equal zest, including their proletarian and black sisters, the pattern of exclusion had already taken root, subverting the revolutionary potential and the ideals the movement had started with. When in 1851 at the Ohio Women’s Convention, the former slave and a black activist, Isabella Baumfree (Sojourner Truth) cried in despair and asked her famous question “Ain’t I a woman?”³, the noble ideal of universal sisterhood had already been undermined beyond repair. The important words of the American abolitionist Sarah Grimke – that slavery and subordination of women should be looked upon as two sides of the same coin – would not, unfortunately, become the platform for the now officially instituted feminist struggles. It is hard to miss the irony that this crucial insight about oppression was

² It so happened that this important landmark in the international effort to end slavery was marked by discussing something that from our perspective today should not even be an issue, and it is interesting to note that much of the first day of the Convention was actually spent debating whether or not the women delegates should be allowed to take part in the proceedings.

³ Although the American historians widely disagree on the exact words spoken by Sojourner Truth on this memorable day in 1851, the cultural memory has retained the image of the legendary woman in connection with these prophetic words, so that the version in which the colloquial form of her accusatory question is scattered throughout the text has gone into history books: “Look at me! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me. And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well. And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me. And ain’t I a woman?” (For more details about this controversy, see the Internet Modern History Sourcebook).

repressed and forgotten by the very same people who had based their own resistance on the knowledge and experience of being excluded themselves within the movement founded to oppose inequality and oppression. The paradox of what is at work here is clear enough – the oppressed have now become partners in oppressing others, collaborators in the hegemony, perpetuating the status quo of the class-based, racist society which can increase its power of domination only by co-opting others who are willing to replicate the same patterns of exclusion that their policy officially condemns.

3. Feminist Narratives of Power and Resistance

That not much has changed in the structural matrix of oppression and the co-opting strategies used to subvert the power of resistance becomes even more evident when we take a closer look at the so-called *third wave feminism* which, as Gail Dines (a radical feminist and Professor Emerita of sociology and women's studies at Boston University) has claimed, is basically what happened⁴ when postmodernism met and was 'happily' combined with neo-liberalism, and she is quite downright in her pronouncement that this "has absolutely killed feminism" (Dines, 2012). To be quite specific, this murder of feminism, as Dines insists on clarifying, did not occur because postmodernism itself had no precious insights to offer about the phenomenon of power and oppression, but rather because the potentially radical ideas shifted in their nature when this unprincipled alliance came into being. The agenda of neo-liberalism foregrounds an individual and free choice but these tenets are not meant to promote any essential empowerment. Actually, quite the opposite has happened – it has now become crucial to make it look like we all act according to our free choice instead of having a social structure examined and deconstructed. The problem is, as Dines was able to articulate it, that the only level of analysis has become the individual, his alleged sovereignty, and the right of free choice but these are de-contextualized from the collective realities of that same individual life. What is left of feminism in this unfortunate combination is just an empty husk of high-sounding words and declarations. The paradox is that all the proclamations of new feminine power are mostly focused on the superficial, cosmetic changes in living style but are basically devoid of any meaningful substance or capacity for transforming the structural matrix of oppression.⁵ If one considers a definition that became a kind of manifesto for the third wave activists – that feminism is something individual to each feminist (Jennifer Baumgardner) – it comes as no particular surprise that things got confused to such a degree that it was possible to see Margaret Thatcher or Hilary Clinton as feminist icons of the new age, embodying authentic feminine voice and female power!

⁴ She calls it the new hegemony in the academy, but it is easy to see how through education and the media an already existing social paradigm is successfully reproduced, reshaped, or updated, having been given new forms of expression.

⁵ Hence the apt title of the lecture delivered by Dines – "From the Personal is Political to the Personal is Personal: Neo-Liberalism and the Defanging of Feminism" (July 2012).

Apart from Dines, there are others who have been able to identify this self-defeating shift and ultimate betrayal of feminist ideals: Luce Irigaray, for example, who posed the question of whether we should really consider a desirable goal for women to be equal with man within the existing system which feeds on inequality, or in a social order which now in different ways still treats them as merchandise. The patriarchal exchange system which capitalism has only ‘improved’ to perfection is based on viewing women as commodity, or objects of exchange, and it is not only in the domain of sexuality that this dehumanizing distortion has been taking place. It is within the whole of economic, social, and cultural system that these exchanges have been imposed as something which is only too natural and self-evident. “A woman “enters into” these exchanges only as the object of a transaction, unless she agrees to renounce the specificity of her sex, whose “identity” is imposed according to models that remain foreign to her” (Irigaray, 1985: 85). Demanding to be equal is therefore something that presupposes a term for comparison, and Irigaray is justified to question what seems to be a transparent issue: “What do women want to be equal to? Men? A wage? A public position? Equal to what? Why not to themselves?” (Irigaray, 1991:32). The mainstream feminist inability to offer a more profound insight into pernicious ways of patriarchal attitudes has resulted not only in similarly superficial critiques of inequality, but also in the misguided conviction so many feminists share today that it is enough to be professionally successful and have a career to be declared free, independent, and liberated. Nancy Fraser, the American feminist and critical theorist, did not mince words when she came up with her own diagnosis of what actually happened to feminism, a sad irony that a movement which started as a critique of capitalist exploitation ended up contributing key ideas to its latest neoliberal phase:

In a cruel twist of fate, I fear that the movement for women’s liberation has become entangled in a dangerous liaison with neoliberal efforts to build a free-market society. That would explain how it came to pass that feminist ideas that once formed part of a radical worldview are increasingly expressed in individualist terms. Where feminist once criticized a society that promoted careerism, they now advise women to “lean in”. A movement that once prioritized social solidarity now celebrates female entrepreneurs. A perspective that once valorized “care” and interdependence now encourages individual advancement and meritocracy. (Fraser, 2013)

What Fraser has in mind is to pinpoint the blind spots of our feminist failures, which is transparently clear from the very title of her article – *How Feminism Became Capitalism’s Handmaiden and How to Reclaim It* (Guardian, 2013) – and though Irigaray and Fraser have never been put together for discussion in feminist anthologies, it is obvious that they both advocate the necessity to reconsider some of the most tenacious, and most pernicious orthodoxies that have been shaping mainstream feminist thinking for a long time now. Finally, there is bell hooks, the recently deceased American feminist who, in one of her public talks, was quite honest in admitting that she herself used to be a very pro-Hillary Clinton supporter before she was able to see Clinton’s true nature as militarist, imperialist, and white

supremacist. Of course, all these qualities which she managed to identify, but which somehow still remain hidden for so many others, contradicted everything else that she, as a dedicated feminist, had always stood for and believed in. And her own stance was quite articulate as early as 1981 when in her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* she wrote her own diagnosis of what she recognized as the feminist cul-de-sac:

It is obvious that many women have appropriated feminism to serve their own ends, especially those white women who have been at the forefront of the movement; but rather than resigning myself to this appropriation I choose to re-appropriate the term “feminism”, to focus on the fact that to be “feminist” in any authentic sense of the term is to want for all people, female and male, liberation from sexist role patterns, domination and oppression. (hooks, 2015: 261-2)

However, hooks does not think that this betrayal of the term, or contradiction in the fact that white females have actually structured a liberation movement which has replicated the racist agenda, should be something to lead us away from feminism, or make us ignore the feminist issues. Quite the opposite, we can make our own contribution by doing the same she did in her own work – subject the problem to critical analysis and try to articulate meaningful and relevant frames to make these issues more easily visible. For example, the problem of analyzing how class, race, gender, age, and disability combine to form interlocking systems of domination is still something that remains largely ignored by mainstream feminist thinking. And yet by functioning simultaneously, these factors of identity determine and define our social and psychological realities. Gail Dines, who tried to shed light on these issues herself, is quite keen on emphasizing the concept of empathy, and the fact that empathy has to stay out of the picture in a system which, in order to survive, needs to keep the engines of expansion moving on relentlessly. If we elaborate the concept a bit further, and take capitalism to stand for any authoritarian regime or an oppressive social structure, it is easily understood that the same is always bound to happen when it comes to empathy because for empathy, or solidarity to appear, there has to be both mental ability and readiness to identify with the just cause even if the lack of privilege, or sharing the same plight, do not apply to one's own position. And this is exactly what happened at the London Convention when those few genuinely noble men decided to join their female colleagues in the spectators gallery, thus showing solidarity while at the same time expressing resentment at the fact that oppression was demonstrated by the very same people who had organized the event; and the event had been organized to condemn the inhumanity of slavery and promote ways of resistance! In the circumstances of the prevailing attitudes at the time, and bearing in mind the strength and tenacity of these patriarchal attitudes, it would have been unrealistic to expect others to have followed suit, or to have realized their own hypocrisy in advocating the end of oppression while being oppressive to somebody else. But the fact that the others didn't follow suit does not make their gesture of solidarity either irrelevant or any less significant. The same could be said for the three literary examples selected to illustrate both the meaning of transformative power and the significance of resistance.

4. Power and Resistance in Literature

If there is any doubt related to why *Antigone* has been chosen for discussion in the context of contemporary literary characters, the explanation is simple: the play is not only one of the founding narratives of the Western tradition, but its main protagonist has long been hailed as the icon of feminist agency and defiance. Her literary fame has never waned despite the fact that her defiance – against the intransigent attitudes of the authoritarian regime – could have had no other outcome but her death. This outcome is to a good measure the result of her uncompromising stance that the rituals of mourning should be performed for her dead brother Polyneices (a traitor of the state officially) at all costs. Her determination and revolt against what she identifies as the pathological absurdity of the law are seen as irrevocable. As one of the most striking characters of all literature, Antigone has proved to be “infinitely interpretable” (Kureishi 2016:viii) and “has been repeatedly written about by philosophers, psychoanalysts, feminists, literary critics and revolutionaries”. In his foreword to Slavoj Žižek’s book, Hanif Kureishi, for his part, does not deny her being a feminist, “a girl defying patriarchy, a lone woman standing up to a cruel man” (Kureishi, ix), but he insists that there is no solidarity, or community in her actions. In being a rebel, he claims, she is not a revolutionary since her actions are not intended against the autocratic state in the sense of attempting to replace dictatorship with a more democratic system. From a certain perspective, she is indeed somebody who can be viewed in this manner – just as terrifying and monstrous as Creon – the uncompromising position of the one being a reflection of the other, so that the two of them, the law and dissent, seem to create and generate one another. But in this play of voices colliding with each other in a deadly conflict, eventually bringing ruin to both, Antigone’s choice⁶ is motivated by compassion and empathy, whereas Creon’s is just blind, uncompromising service of institutionalized brutality; his acting is that of the law which knows no compassion and will never allow it.

The problem with Kureishi’s view is related to the fact that he takes no account of the role of both the chorus and the blind prophet in the play, and the significance of his warning to Creon, which the latter ignores in mocking indifference. Antigone – the one who is of the opposite opinion (which is the etymology of her name in Greek) – refuses to renounce the innermost truth of her own humanity (she can’t stick to life which she finds no longer livable in Judith Butler’s term) in very much the same way as Coetzee’s apparently antiheroic Michael K. refuses to comply to the demands put upon him by the world he feels to be unlivable. What puts these two in meaningful connection is that they both find themselves amidst the so much stronger forces of destruction, but both refuse to play by the rules. Neither will abandon their own vision of a world in which empathy is a prerequisite for a community where a true conversation of mankind⁷ is both possible and desirable; or in the case of Michael K,

⁶ A more detailed analysis of the deadly conflict between Creon and Antigone, and the symbolism of the two opposing principles of living that these two embody, is given in my book *Zašto crno pristaje Elektri* (75-79).

⁷ The term was used by the British political philosopher, Michael Oakeshott, to refer to the utopian community in which different universes of discourse will meet and joyfully acknowledge each other, with no requirement that any of these should ever be assimilated to any other (Bohm, 2000).

what he will not renounce is his vision of a garden (and himself being a gardener) in a world which seems to have forgotten the supreme importance of both literal and metaphorical gardens.

Surrounded by the turmoil of the country ravished by a civil war, Michael is a complete outsider, alone on a quest to find the distant farm on which his mother was born and raised, so that her ashes would be given their final and the only appropriate resting place. That this feeble-minded, emaciated escapee with his pumpkin seeds and thoughts of flying is actually trying to preserve the remnants of a lost humanity is recognized by a single person, an unnamed medical officer whose role seems to be that of articulating a different understanding of Michaels, thereby showing the world his significance.⁸

Let me tell you the meaning of the sacred and alluring garden that blooms in the heart of the desert and produces the food of life. The garden for which you are currently heading is nowhere and everywhere except in the camps. It is another name for the only place where you belong, Michaels, where you do not feel homeless. It is off every map, no road leads to it that is merely a road, and only you know the way. (Coetzee, 1985: 228)

With quite the same task in mind, Goce Smilevski has written a novel to give voice to an exceptional woman silenced by history. So that her life should not remain just a footnote on the margin of what has been established as the officially known history, Adolfinia Freud, one of the five sisters of the famous founder of psychoanalysis (four of whom were murdered in concentration camps, including Adolfinia herself), was given her subjectivity back in this fictionalized memoir by the Macedonian writer, which quite deservedly took the prize of *The best European fiction* (2010). In some ways, she is very similar to Michaels in that she also does most of what she is told to do – yielding in will but not in her body, or not in her soul. And yet, Smilevski is intent on making the reader understand that this woman, who was forgotten by both her brother and the official history, is not just a passive figure going towards her sacrificial death without understanding why this death was inevitable (Mitić,

⁸ Bearing in mind that in the circumstances of unequal distribution of power and wealth, the freedom to speak can easily deteriorate into coercion to speak, not all critics would agree with the view that the doctor's act of speaking on Michael's behalf is ultimately benevolent and beneficial. This coercion to speak in a destructive (neo-colonial) social context is seen as the principal theme of the novel by both Arnd Bohm (2000) and Duncan McColl Chesney (2007), and the respective titles of their essays are quite clear in this regard. To justify his analysis which takes this particular direction, Bohm is on a good track when quoting the words spoken by Michael himself, and using these as the motto of his own essay: "They want me to open my heart and tell them the story of a life lived in cages. They want to hear about all the cages I have lived in, as if I were a budgie or a white mouse or a monkey." The paradox in that he is repeatedly asked to tell his own story even though his story is precisely the version *they* do not want to hear is just one of the many subtle maneuvers of the author's compositional mastery. But even if the doctor remains part of the establishment bent on crushing and obliterating the memory of the very existence of someone like Michael K, the stance taken in this paper argues that it does not necessarily undermine the depth of his understanding of what Michael and his resistance actually stand for. Surely, all narration has been contaminated with the violence of the institution (Bohm, 2000), but that is exactly what the doctor himself is intent on articulating.

2021: 126). Through her capacity to empathize and her precious acts of giving (even when there is little else left to give), she is shown to communicate a much more profound knowledge and understanding of the political, social and historical reality than her famous brother ever did. It is her ability to go deeper and understand better, as well as her capacity to forgive even those who wronged her terribly, that make her a figure to be cherished and remembered. And yet it is Freud's legacy which the official history has preserved and promoted, while hers has been pushed aside into nonexistence. By letting her voice be known to the world, as well as that of some other forgotten people of her time, Smilevski has pointed to the necessity of reshaping cultural memory so that both voices can be heard, and a significance of comparing and choosing made visible.⁹

5. Conclusion

The paper has made an attempt to provide an analysis of the narratives of power and resistance by referring to the feminist agenda, its major misconceptions and failures, and by shedding light on the same topic with reference to literature. The focus has been on the meaning and mechanisms of oppression, and the possibility to speak out against it or suggest ways of articulating productive forms of transformative power and opposition to master narratives in both theory and practice. The importance of empathy, solidarity, and community has been emphasized throughout, in critical voices coming from the realm of feminist theory, and also in literary narratives following the same path of resisting the official paradigms, thus proving the ethical dimension of literature to be the most precious guide we have in our constantly subverted search for a true humanity. The main standpoint of our discussion here is that even when "the brutality of totalitarianism has dissolved the possibility of a conversation of democratic equals" (Bohm, 2000), the exceptional individuals will always be there to still offer hope and show the way forward.

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⁹ A detailed analysis of the novel is provided in my paper "Zaboravljeni ljudi Sigmunda Frojda: politički aspekt kulture sećanja u *čitanju* Goceta Smilevskog" (Mitić, 2021).

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Petra Mitić

PREPOZNAVANJE FEMINIZMA: NARATIVI MOĆI I OTPORA

Iako je feministička agenda oduvek bila blisko povezana sa konceptom osnaživanja i otpora, u svojim redovima i narativima koje su proizvodile, feminističke bitke su često ostajale tek replika dominantnih obrazaca isključivanja i dominacije. Ovaj neuspeh da se suštinski izmene postojeći sistemi moći čini neophodnim preispitivanje dosadašnjih postignuća, dok sama sposobnost da se u postojećim narativima prepoznaju strukturne matrice ugnjetачkog sistema postaje presudna za radikalni prekid sa dominantnom kulturom sistemskog nasilja. U današnjem svetu potrošačkog društva, žene su proglašene slobodnim pa je stvoren utisak kako je njihova borba za jednakost urodila plodom i dala hvale vredne rezultate. Ali često se ispod površine politički korektnog govora i demokratskih procedura nazire društvo koje je ponekad čak više toksično i ugnjetачko nego ranije. Zbog toga se redefinisane ideje o tome šta predstavlja transformativna moć – kako na rečima, tako i na delima – dovodi u vezu sa rečima

upozorenja koje je uputila nedavno preminula ikona feminističkog otpora, bel huks. U kontekstu u kome je glavna struja feminizma većim delom preuzeta kako bi služila ciljevima neoliberalne agende, njeno upozorenje ukazuje koliko je od presudnog značaja da se što hitnije termin feminizam prisvoji natrag i vrati sopstvenom ishodištu, kao i da se promene njegovi narativi time što će feminizam biti prepoznat kao borba koja se ne tiče samo rodnih uloga, već pretpostavlja oslobođenje svih ljudi – žena i muškaraca – od svih vrsta dominacije, u svim nekadašnjim, ali i novim oblicima ispoljavanja. U nastavku rada, ilustruju se različiti vidovi moći i različiti načini da se protiv nje ustane i pruži otpor njenoj destruktivnosti. Sa takvim ciljem, daje se kratki osvrt na tri paradigmatična glasa otpora u književnosti: danas još uvek aktuelne Antigone (Sofokle), Adolfine Frojd iz romana Goceta Smilevskog, i Majkla K. iz Kucijevo romana.

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