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A Feminist Stylistics Analysis of “The Laugh of the Medusa,” by H el ene Cixous

H el ene Cixous'un “Medusa'nın G l ş ” Feminist Stilistik Analizi

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Abstract

This present study adapts feminist stylistics framework to examine and analyse the gender representations and language of the *laugh of the Medusa* a speech written by H el ene Cixous. The paper, using a content analysis method, will mainly focus on issues related to gender representations and the language to interpret and uncover the implied and underlying meanings of the text. H el ene Cixous in her speech brings samples from the ancient Greek mythology of *Medusa* to give advices to her young female audience to write for themselves. She highlights the challenges and struggles that females have been repressed themselves through the patriarchal society. She encourages young girls to express themselves, their strengths and strong points in bravely through writing and boys to understand the feminine world. The study will scrutinize the speech to reveal the foregrounded features related to gender.

Keywords: *Female Representations, Feminism Stylistics, H el ene Cixous, Medusa.*

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Bu alıřmada, Feminist Biembilimsel kuramı ıřıęında uygulanmaktadır H el ene Cixois'in The Laugh of The Medusa adlı eserinin dili incelenmiřtir. İerik analiz y ntemi kullanılarak incelenen makalede, temel olarak cinsiyet betimlemeleri ve metnin ima edilen ve altında yatan anlamları yorumlamak ve ortaya ıkartmak amalanmıřtır. H el ene Cixous kullandığı dilde Medusa adlı eski Yunan mitolojisinden  rnekleler alıp, geen adın dinleyicilerine  nerilerde bulunmaktadır. Kadınların ataerkil toplumunun baskısı altında olduklarını ve bunlara nasıl meydan okuduklarını, ve bunun iin nasıl savařtıklarını anlatmaktadır. Yazar eserinde geen ızları, kendilerini ifade etmeleri iin cesaretlendiriyor. Ona g re geen ızlar, g l  duygularını cesaretle kaleme d kmeli. Bununla beraber geen erkekler de kadının

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dünyasını anlamalıdır. Çalışma kısaca, dilin cinsiyetle ilgili özellikleri nasıl ortaya çıkardığıyla ilgilenmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Kadın betimleme, Feminist biçembilimsel, Hélène Cixoux, Medusa*

Introduction

To get a close look on the meaning of the ‘feminists’ theories’ and their *Freedom of Speech* is:

A truth claim can be understood as a claim about such shared reality. The point is seeing shared reality as a goal is that we recognize our independence and moral necessity for each of us treat the others as joint participants in the value of shared reality thus arise from a particular moral commitment closely connected to feminism’s concerns for both to go forward together on the basis of trust, respect, and understanding. (Williams, S. H, 1995: 1005)

The Feminist Theory and Freedom of the Speech points out that if the truth is presented through speech: the listener will recognize what the main struggle is. The feminist’s announce the truth of the reality can possess through oral communication. However, it may convince if the listener really believes in it. Their aim is to create friendly relationships in between both genders in the society. Therefore, the feminists need their listeners’ help through their trusts.

Background information

Echoing to the history, why is it that the male is centred to be dominant?

Like Sade he wrote “for his pleasure alone” in the strongest sense of the expression; he carefully mixed editing and rereading of his text with erotic scenes which those writer’s activities repeated, prolonged, and stimulated. But after all, the Christian pastoral also sought to produce specific effects on desire, by the mere fact of transforming it – fully and deliberately – into discourse: effects of mastery and detachment, to be sure, but also an effect spiritual reconversion, of turning back to God, a physical effect of blissful suffering from feeling in one’s body the pangs of temptation and the love that resists it. (Foucault, M. 1978: 22 – 23)

As Foucault claimed in his book; ‘History of Sexuality,’ the male had the right to be in the central position in his kingdom. Using the concepts of religion: God as the creator of the Earth, using the noun “He,” as a male. The king in the palace, the male in the family of a

household gained the opportunity to receive the power of becoming the empire of the genders. The male seems to be powerful because of their biological creations. Furthermore; having a phallus, he is able to use it for his own pleasure and reproduction. Referring to the approach of *reproduction satisfaction* it is not only in physical pleasure, more in conjunction with works of art. He will be able to write in figures of speech through the use of his erotic fantasies in the work of fiction. This may seem to be harmless at a point until this reproduction caused danger for the females in previous decades. The male changes characteristic behaviours and fall into false complexion of *selfishness* and as this selfishness grew; he took great authority over the universe.

2.0.Methodology

This study adapts a content analysis method to examine the gender representations from a feminist point of view in a speech. According to Fraenkel and his colleagues “content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through written contents of a communication” (Fraenkel & et al, 2012: 448). In this previous study, we will focus on seven different categories which hold out the concept of this text: (1) *Stylistics into Feminism*, (2) *Feminist Analysis of Text*, (3) *Female Sentences*, (4) *Metaphor in Feminist Literacy*, (5) *Psychoanalytic Theory and Bisexuality*, and (6) *Discourses in Feminism*.

3.0. What is the meaning of feminism?

In order to understand what this previous study it is best to identify the meaning of *Feminism* itself:

Most the feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and intuitional discrimination. Feminists also believe that it works, in general, to be benefit of men rather than women; that is, that it is patriarchal. Feminist theory has been concerned with analysing the way that different forms of

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oppression and/or discrimination, such as racism and homophobia, may overlap and interact with forms of sexism. Feminists are very aware of the dangers of making simplistic analyses, based on the assumption that “women” form a homogeneous group. (Butler 1990, Fuss 1990) (Mills, S. 2005: 2 – 3)

The meaning of feminism is what a group of women challenge on the subject of men are observed as the middlemost of the universe. Men are dominating the world with a patriarchal society. However, this feminist group believe that both women and men are equal in the society. Moreover, men use sexism as to some extent for relation of power where they dominate women. In addition to sexism, the man can over-power women by their race, class, education and wealth too. As a point, women were not allowed to be well educated as men could. No matter what class or race they would remain in, they had no chance to provide any ability in any field at all. Men had the chance to succeed in any level of opportunity that the society would offer them. Within all in mind, women felt, and still feel that there is no equality held for them.

3.1 How does *Stylistics harmonize into Feminism?*

As Feminism is a protesting movement, it befalls in many different categories of literature and *stylistics* is one of those ways:

Feminist stylisticians have other questions, in addition to these posed by Leech and Short, for example, we place less emphasis on the *artistic* function of language than on other aspects of language, since it is clear that there are regularities in representations across a language in a poem is less important than perhaps that the same techniques are employed in the poem as in pornography. But feminist stylistics is concerned with the general emphasis outlined by Leech and Short that is why authors have chosen certain ways to express themselves rather than others, and how certain effects are achieved through language. (Mills, S. 2005: 4)

As Leech and Short expresses literary stylistics referring to its artistic function language in text *implicitly or explicitly* by focusing on the authors' perspective use of language. The author associates to hidden meanings in their tasks. This mysterious language in context, gives some mystic view to literature. Thus the reader alters to curiosity and asks questions through reading. Unfortunately the female physical appearance is in the prime attraction of the male satisfaction. This gravitation causes *sexism*; pornography. Therefore, the feminists directly decorate their literary work with certain patterns of sentences, and phrases about sexism. With the help of indirect language, the feminist author can burst out the hatred disgust against men from their chests without exasperating the male reader.

3.2. How does feminists do their analysis of a literary text?

The French feminists use the *Psychoanalytical Theory* in their analysis of literary text:

French Feminist literary and psychoanalytical theory, language is a key issue analysis. Within psychoanalytical theory and much literary theory, language is perceived as the medium through which self is formed and which shapes the way that we think about the world. This approach reduces the theorist to evaluating the texts; “this is sexist because it produces a false representation of women.” When critics take on this kind of evaluate role, they position themselves very much within the domain of the phallogentric literary criticism (that is, criticism which generally tends to privilege male opinions and writers), which feminist theory aims to criticize and displace. (Mill, S. 2005: 11)

As Mills, examines the French feminist theory, *Sigmund Freud psychoanalytical theory*, which is based on the perception of language that relates to patriarchy. The French feminists uses the psychoanalytical theory as their main approach in order to antipathy it. The female is represented as a symbol or an object for the male. This is a great disadvantage for the women herself; due to this it is rather sexist. The French feminists are furiously criticizing the concept of the women being represented as objects.

3.3. How do the feminists create their literary work into literature within the concepts of female sentence and challenges gender sentence?

The *female sentence* somehow is in a challenge to the gendered sentence:

As with everything which is labelled masculine/male or feminine/female, terms have very little to do with biological sex differences, but a great deal to do with assertions of power. In defining the female sentence at all, but females; this is just part an ideological enterprise; we do not define males to anything like the same extent. As Cameron says; “stereotypes, however false, tend to persist for as long as they reinforce important social inequalities.” (Cameron 1985:33). Defining the feminine sentence as lacking rationality, coherence, assertiveness and so on, is an attempt to set up a particular subject – position for females in the real world. (Mills, S. 2005: 43)

The society labels gender with power relations rather than their biological sex differences as *masculine/male* or *feminine/female*. Dismally, men and women are not identical categories. According to Cameron, the society uses *stereotypes* to portray genders in the society. The stereotyping method is another way of offending the female and supporting the male with

binary opposite phrases. Feminists claim that stereotyping is false because men and women are referred to unequal rights in the society. It seems that when men have the power, women are weak.

3.4. How do the feminists use the metaphor in their works of figures of speech?

Many authors use figures of speech in their literacy work and one of them is the *metaphor*.

Feminists' authors refer to metaphors such as:

When you use a metaphor, you are drawing on a body of thought or background knowledge which might in fact slow your analysis or thinking of what particular object. Particularly if the metaphors which are being used are so-called "dead" then the thought – processes which are involved in the use of those metaphors may not be as open to analysis as if a less reconstructed phrases were used. Let us consider two metaphors and cognitive structure," one referring to males and one to females.

That man is a wolf.

Sally is a block of ice. (Cited in Miall 1982:23)

Male sexuality is often described in terms of metaphors of animal behaviour, so that it is seen to be at the same level of instinctual behaviour as an animals and as little under control. The describing of sexuality in these terms means that extreme male behaviour such as rape may be understood to be only "natural." (Mills, S. 2005: 106)

A metaphor in feminist stylistics concentrates on women and the woman figure is used as the subject in every context. The feminists prefer to practice their literature with metaphors. As in Miall's example; *The man is a wolf*, and *Sally is a block of ice*. Where here a wolf thinks that it can act cunning by approaching to the female, to trap her and to rape her and satisfy himself. Additionally, the female is seen to be passive as she is represented as a block of ice, she cannot move, she will melt at her only spot. The metaphor of *ice* referring to the female is a cold creature because she is motionless. As the woman is a sexual product for the male, with his sexual movements he can melt her with his hot erotic desires.

3.5. How do the french feminists recall on the psychoanalytic theory and the Bbsexual writing in literature?

Psychoanalytic Theory by Sigmund Freud is a sort of sexual repression over the society;

Among the instinctive force thus utilized, the sexual impulses play a sexual goals and directed to ends socially higher and no longer sexual. But this result is unstable. The sexual instincts are poorly tamed. Each individual who wishes to ally himself with the achievements of civilization is exposed to the danger of having his sexual conceive of no more serious menace to its civilization than would arise through the satisfying of the sexual instincts by their redirection toward their original goal. (Freud, S. 1920: 16)

In line with Freud, the individual is forced to repress their desire of sexuality. As a matter of fact, the desire of sex is an action of inhumanities. On one hand, the sexual desire has informed unconsciously into the brains of the male, and on the other hand, it has been forced to be tamed to be repressed. Especially men have the passion to use his organ as he wishes for. He cannot control his desire for sexual satisfaction. If he is not served whatever he wants,

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as he has learnt from the society, he will get it by force. Freud claims that this expression of *repression* of his sexual desire and pleasure is created by his *id*.

From the ancient Greek philosophers, Aristotle considers the approach of feminism in his theories in the same way as many other philosophers;

[I]t seems to fly in the face of reason to say that men, who neither gestates, bears, nor lactates, possesses reproductive capacities superior to those of women. Yet this is exactly what Aristotle did... Furthermore, he argued that woman's role in reproduction... [is] the cause of her intellectual inferiority to man. (Lee, W. L. 2007: 77)

Aristotle has examined femininity with the other creatures on the Earth, by comparing and contrasting them. Aristotle mentions *creatures on the Earth*; he refers to the human beings with animals and the plants. He identifies the importance of the female in nature. He claims that nature is the *motherland* which refers to the females. Nature is gendered as a female because of her ability of reproduction. Moreover, Aristotle counterclaims the reproduction of nature is rather a positive skill for the female. Because of her natural skills, she is capable to deal with any situation surrounding her. Therefore, the female is not an object; she creates, gives birth to new lives, investigates and fights for a living. Therefore, she is intelligent and active just alike the male.

3.6. How does discourses analysis work in feminists literature?

Literature deals with other concepts investigations as *discourse* analysis. Discourse in literature examines the female body through the figures of speech of *fragmentation*:

The technique of “fragmenting” the female body in pornographic literature has been widely noted (see especially Kappeler, 1986). This has two primary affects. First, the body is Imdepersonalized, objectified, reduced to its parts. Second, since the female protagonist is not represented as a unified conscious physical being. The scene cannot be focalized from her perspective – effectively, her experience is written out of the text fragmentation of the female is therefore associated with male focalization. The female represented as an object, a collection of objects, for the male gaze.

Representations of women fragmented into anatomical elements occur for more frequently than do such representations of men – this is true not only of pornographic material, but advertising images, romances and love poetry, amongst other genres. We should also remember that there are different legal restrictions on the representation of male and females, so that females may be photographed in great detail and in sexuality provocative possess, the camera focusing on their sexual characteristics, whereas male sex organs may be represented only if they are not erect, that is, if they are specially not sexual. (Sara M. 2005: 133)

As Sara Mills interprets her stylistics at the level of discourse, she remarks the technique of fragmentation. In this technique, it refers to the pornographic literature where men view

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women just like as a sexual object. Just like the journalists who are willing to sell a new product. They take the male customers attention by using a woman`s physical appearance. The journalist takes pornographic photographs of a woman and places it in a poster advertisement. With this tactic, his product will be the best seller.

4.0. Anaysis and findings

Hélène Cixous opens her speech by telling her listeners that women should write to her self. The women should put herself into a text, this way she can get away from the pressure of the masculine dominance.

I shall speak about women`s writing: about *what will I do*. Women must write her self: must write about women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Women must put herself into the text as into the world and into history by own movement. (Cixous, H. 1975:1)

Cixous is a representative guidance to all the females on the world. The of her personal life experience, she becomes an assistant to her listeners. Referring to some advice such as; women should not remain silent they should write with pride throwing out their passionate feminine expressions, they should protest masculine dominance without fear and pressure.

Towards the end of Cixous' speech, she asks questions about castration using metaphors:

Which castration do you prefer? Whose degrading do you like better; the father's or the mother's? Oh, what pweety eyes, your pweety little girl. Here, buy my glasses and you'll see the Truth – Me – Myself tell you everything you should know. Put them on your nose and take a fetishist's look (you are me, the other analyst – that's what I'm telling you) at your body and the body of the other. You see? No? Wait, you'll have everything explained to you and you'll know at least which sort of neurosis you're related to. Hold still, we're going to do your portrait, so that you can begin looking like it right away. (Cixous, H. 1975: 21)

Cixous is telling the young girls to look through her eyes – by buying her glasses – as a metaphor – and to look through her point of view and to see the truth. Cixous in her speech is referring to the young girls. Her aim is to help the young female on their decisions about their future, so they can decide for their own. They are women; they should classify their knowledge from the history and choose the correct path for herself. They should awaken themselves and stop the endless male dominance empowering them. Cixous is telling her audience to keep calm and patient, they should build hope for freedom and equal rights for women too.

Cixous in her speech brings in the mother concept by saying:

You don't build walls around yourself. You don't forego pleasure as "wisely" as he. Even if

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phallic mystification has generally contaminated good relationships, a woman is never far from "mother." (I mean outside her role functions: the "mother" as nonname and as source of goods). There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk she writes in white ink. (Cixous, H. 1975: 9)

Cixous claims that being a mother may have to include some limited functions that she has to follow through her marriage. She has to give pleasure to her only husband, feed and look after her children. Even though, the male has trapped her into walls, blocked her inside a small and dark room in their house, her feminine ability could not be pulled off her. Cixous, uses the

females ability of becoming a *mother* and her *milking her baby with pure white milk* is her breasts. Milk from a mother contains healthy nutrition and energy for her new-born child. The mother is strong, natural, and mature; she has the ability to look after her child without the help of its father. She is also talented in literature, because she can write. She writes with *white ink*, which represents her purity of her lovely sense of humour.

Cixous, in her speech carries on saying that the woman is no object, or reproducer to the male:

Women be unafraid of any other place, of any same, or any other. My eyes, my tongue, my ears, my nose, my skin, my mouth, my body – for- (the) other not that I long for it in order to fill up a hole, to provide against some defeat of mine, or because, as fate would have it. I'm spurred on the feminine 1 "jealousy" not because I've been dragged into the whole. Claim of substitutions that brings that which is substituted back to its ultimate object, that sort of thing you would expect to come straight out of "Tom Thumb," out of the *penisneid* whispered to us by old grandmother ogresses, servants to their muster up some self – importance, if they really need to believe that we're dying of desire for their penis – that's their immemorial business... In the child it's not that famous bit of skin around which every man gravitates. Pregnancy cannot be tracked back, expect, to some form of state to those mechanical substations brought about by the unconscious of some external "jealousy woman, not to penis envies, and not to narcissism or to some part of homosexuality linked to the ever present mother! Begetting a child doesn't mean that the woman or the man must fall ineluctably into patterns or must recharge the circuit of reproduction. (Cixous, H. 1975: 19)

Cixous tends to say that a woman additionally has parts of her body; however, indeed she has a lack of the penis. However, this biological difference does not make her jealous of the opposite sex. Besides, nowadays even if she desires to have her own child, she has no need for a male for reproduction. Referencing to sexuality, either any of the female is heterosexual whether homosexual, they can become a mother. Therefore, this means the power of the male phallus is losing its strength.

Cixous, in her speech directly brings in Freud's psychoanalysis theory:

Freud and his followers note, by a fear of being a women! For, if psychoanalysis was constituted from woman, to repress femininity (and not so successful a repression at that –

men have it clear), its account of masculine sexuality is now hardly refutable; as with all the “human” sciences, it reproduces the masculine view, of which it is one of the effects. (Cixous, H. 1975: 12)

When the “represses,” of their culture and their society returns, it’s an explosive, *utterly* destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions. For when the phallic period comes to end, women will have been either annihilated or borne up to the highest and most violent incandescence. Muffled throughout their history, they have lived in dream, in bodies (though muted), in silences, in aphonic revolts. (Cixous, H. 1975: 14)

According to Cixous, Freud’s Theory is another reason why the male think that they are dominant. However, today Freud’s theory has been interpreted as only a concept on some kind of pressure made upon women. The theory suffocates women and gives pleasure to men. It is now dying; with the challenges of feminist. The culture and the society have been repressed with pressure of Freud’s theory where everyone once believed and trusted him. However, now everything is changing, women are not treated as a creature or as a sexual production for men. Women are equal as men, the phallic period which Freud said was left in the past; it has come to an end. The women nowadays are not going to suffer any violence by men. The phallic period was a dream which was dreamed once upon a time by the male, and women had put up with it through their silence.

Cixous, proclaims to her listeners that Medusa is a symbol for a revolution to change the past through her feminine passion.

Too bad from if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren’t men, or that the mother doesn’t have one. But isn’t this fear convenient from them? Wouldn’t the worst be, isn’t the worst, in truth, that women aren’t castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful, and she’s laughing. (Cixous, H. 1995: 13)

According to Cixous, it is possible to stop listening to the past stereotyped habits. The history can change; women have the power to change it. If the listeners read the myth of Medusa, they will understand that Medusa is still alive. Medusa is still beautiful and she is laughing at the men who were trying to attack her. Medusa being admired by Cixous` audience, they will keep on feeling beautiful, and powerful – just like dear Medusa. The listeners will turn round

and laugh at the history as well as Medusa. Women have been torn up in the past through the masculinity concept, but they could come against it, stop it continuing through works of the beauty of art and literature. Now, it is possible to shoot men with works of art from the beauty

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of hearts of beautiful young women.

5. 0. Conclusion

In the interior study; a content analysis with a feminist challenge speech *The Laugh of the Medusa* by Hélène Cixous. Recalls to an audience on an approach where both gender representation should be equal. Her speech is to have a revolution, a change over the struggle on the women from the past. She draws in samples from the Ancient Greek Mythology: *Medusa* and Michel Foucault: *History of Sexuality*. Additionally, she has used many figures of speech in her speech of literacy. Now Cixous has hope perhaps, she can change the new societies view among the ideas of “Feminism.” As feminism is a strike against the patriarchal society. It aims to create equality for both genders. If the community occurs to an awareness of equal rights, then the females will feel free to deliver their passion identically to the male in the society.

5.1. Suggestions for further studies

As for the studies, coming to an awareness of equal rights for both genders, having a desire for the society arriving to an awareness of all the struggles that women had to face for decades. Every person should be treated with equal standards in this world.

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