FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY AND GENDER STUDIES

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Abstract. *This article examines the development, theoretical foundations, and methodological approaches of feminist literary theory and gender studies. The study aims to identify the major approaches to feminist criticism, including the representation of women in literary texts, the study of women as producers of literature, the interpretation of gender as a socio-cultural construct, and the application of intersectional analysis. The research employs historical-comparative, critical-discursive, and theoretical analytical methods.*

Key Words: *feminist critique / gynocriticism, the resisting reader, anxiety of authorship, angel and monster, écriture feminine, abjection, performativity, intersectionality, womanism.*

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqolada feministik adabiy nazariya va gender tadqiqotlarining shakllanishi, nazariy asoslari hamda metodologik yo‘nalishlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi feministik tanqidning asosiy yondashuvlarini, xususan, badiiy matnlarda ayol obrazining ifodalanishi, ayol ijodkorlar adabiy merosi, genderning ijtimoiy-madaniy konstruksiya sifatidagi talqini va kesishuvchi identifikatsiyalar (interseksionallik) doirasidagi tahlil imkoniyatlarini yoritishdan iborat. Tadqiqotda tarixiy-qiyosiy, tanqidiy-diskursiv va nazariy tahlil metodlaridan foydalaniladi.*

Kalit so‘zlar. *feministik tanqid / ginokritika, qarshilik ko‘rsatuvchi, mualliflik havotiri, farishta va mahluq, ayollarga hos yozish uslubi (écriture féminine), tubanlik (abjection), performativlik, kesishuvchanlik (intersectionality), vumanizm (womanism).*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматриваются становление, теоретические основы и методологические направления феминистской литературной теории и гендерных исследований. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении основных подходов феминистской критики, включая анализ репрезентации женских образов в художественной литературе, изучение литературного*

наследия женщин-писательниц, интерпретацию гендера как социально-культурного конструкта и применение принципа интерсекциональности. В исследовании используются историко-сравнительный, критико-дискурсивный и теоретико-аналитический методы.

Ключевые слова: *феминистская критика / гинокритика, «сопротивляющийся читатель», тревога авторства, «ангел и монстр», женское письмо (écriture féminine), абъекция, перформативность, интерсекциональность, вуманизм.*

Introduction. Feminist criticism is not a single method but a family of them, and the first task in teaching it is to make students able to say which one they are using. Four broad operations may be distinguished: the critique of women as represented in texts by men; gynocriticism, the study of women as producers of literature; theoretical work that treats gender itself as a constructed category; and intersectional analysis, which refuses to treat gender as separable from race, class and sexuality. The four are historically successive but not superseded; a strong essay usually combines at least two.

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Precursors. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* (1792) argued that the apparent inferiority of women was an artefact of their education.[1] Virginia Woolf's "*A Room of One's Own"* (1929) converted the argument into literary history by asking a material question – what conditions does writing require? – and answering it with money, privacy and a lock on the door; her invented Judith Shakespeare, equally gifted and wholly destroyed, remains the most economical demonstration of how a canon is produced by exclusion rather than by merit.[2] Simone de Beauvoir's "*Le Deuxième Sexe"* (1949) supplied the philosophical formulation on which the second

[1] Wollstonecraft M. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. – London: J. Johnson, 1792. – 452 p.
[2] Woolf V. A Room of One's Own. – London: The Hogarth Press, 1929. – 172 p.

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Second-wave criticism. Kate Millett's "*Sexual Politics"* (1970) inaugurated the modern practice by reading Lawrence, Miller and Mailer against their own grain, treating sexual description as a record of power rather than of desire.[7] Judith Fetterley generalised the reading position: the woman reader of the American canon is required to identify against herself, and criticism's first move is to refuse.[8] Elaine Showalter then turned from critique to recovery, mapping a female literary tradition in three phases – Feminine, Feminist and Female – and naming the study of women's writing **gynocritics**.[9] The decisive work of this phase is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's "*The Madwoman in the Attic"* (1979). Against Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence, they posit an **anxiety of authorship**: where the male poet fears his precursors, the woman writer confronts the prior question of whether she may write at all. The nineteenth century offered her two images, angel and monster, and the result is the recurrent structure in which a heroine is shadowed by a double who enacts the rage the heroine may not – Bertha Mason for Jane Eyre.[10] The pattern will be directly useful in 10.2.

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[3] Beauvoir S. de. The Second Sex / transl. by C. Borde, S. Malovany-Chevallier. – New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. – P. 283.

[4] Wollstonecraft M. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. – London: J. Johnson, 1792. – 452 p.

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[6] Beauvoir S. de. The Second Sex / transl. by C. Borde, S. Malovany-Chevallier. – New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. – P. 283.

[7] Millett K. Sexual Politics. – Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970. – 393 p.

[8] Fetterley J. The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction. – Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978. – P. xi–xxvi.

[9] Showalter E. A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing. – Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977. – P. 3–36; Showalter E. Toward a Feminist Poetics // Women Writing and Writing about Women / ed. by M. Jacobus. – London: Croom Helm, 1979. – P. 22–41.

[10] Gilbert S. M., Gubar S. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. – New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. – P. 45–92.

Theory. French feminism moved the question to language. Hélène Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975) calls for an *écriture féminine* that would write the body and escape binary logic[11]; Julia Kristeva's account of **abjection** – what a subject must expel in order to be a subject, and which returns to threaten the boundary – has proved indispensable to the analysis of trauma narrative and will be used in 10.3.[12] Judith Butler's "*Gender Trouble"* (1990) then removed the ground from under the whole enterprise in a productive way, arguing that gender has no interior essence that acts are expressions of: it is **performative**, constituted by the very repetitions taken to express it, and there is no doer behind the deed.[13]

Conclusion. The most consequential correction came from Black feminist criticism, which observed that "women" in the second wave frequently meant white middle-class women and that "Black" frequently meant men. The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977) and Barbara Smith's essay of the same year set the terms[14]; Alice Walker proposed **womanism** as a category rooted in Black women's own practice[15]; and Kimberlé Crenshaw supplied the analytic name, showing that a woman positioned at the intersection of two systems is not doubly disadvantaged but differently so, in a way neither system's vocabulary can describe.[16] Gayatri Spivak extended the problem to the colonial archive: where the record is entirely produced by others, the question is not whether the subaltern speaks but whether any speech from that position can register.[17]

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