



Arts and Humanities: Mapping the Multitudes

Edited by

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CHAPTER I

A Feminist Deconstruction of the Corporeal View: Representation of Disability in Aphra Behn's "The Dumb Virgin"

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Abstract

During the Restoration age, the prevalent medical practice was to isolate and sequester the mentally disabled, the indigent and marginalized by producing asylums for these groups. The misogynist tradition of the seventeenth century viewed the female sexual difference itself as defective and monstrous. In such a restrictive age, being born a woman itself was considered a deformity; women already faced specific barriers to equality and full participation due to discriminatory factors and being a physically handicapped woman meant double disability. It is in this light that a reader finds powerful female characters Belvideera and Maria, with deviant characteristics and disabilities in Aphra Behn's *The Dumb Virgin or The Force of Imagination* (1700). The paper focuses on the representation of disability in this novel through a feminist lens. Behn has redefined the threshold of female identity which has been bound to the corporeal concept since ages in a tenable fashion.

Keywords: Restoration, Misogyny, Marginalisation, Disability and Empowerment

Arts and humanities are imagined as inseparable and integrated activities. Both challenge and enlarge our basic human capacities for interpretation and evaluation. In the arena of literary studies, there is a growing academic interest for the study of Arts and Humanities across the world. What may rightfully be expected of art is to depend on the nature of the entity itself. Understanding possible applications of art helps to determine its identity. The recent pursuit for mapping the mosaics including that of literary and culture studies makes it interesting to interrogate transnational cultures formation of canons and deconstruction of stereotypes. The book is designed as a series of articles, spanning to 15 numbers by academicians, critics and creative writers, whose works reflect on ground-breaking genres, themes and techniques that define the field of Art and Humanities. From the time of Renaissance until the early twentieth century little is said about humanism as being a part of art. Although it is common in literary appreciation to read back to the text from notions about what art is supposed to do the research papers in this book turns on the aesthetic dimension that points to the power of art and its promising functionality in fostering a common humanity. Despite the onslaught of pandemic and its apparent limitations, the book provides critiques in expanding artistic and humanistic view points to the readers..

NOTION PRESS
April 2021

Price Rs 650.00
ISBN 978-1-63886-018-1



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