

CONCRETE DYNAMISM IN WOMEN'S LITERATURE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT--*The paper discusses the impact of female authors in the nineteenth-century who used literature as a medium to incite changes in the unjust position of women in the society. External factors such as author gender, author nationality, and date of publication affect both the choice of literary themes in novels and the expression of those themes, but the extent of this association is difficult to quantify. The full and equal political participation of women is a prerequisite for democratic governance. However, globally, girls and women continue to be marginalized from the political sphere due to restrictive laws and institutional barriers, discriminatory cultural practices, and disproportionately low access to quality education, healthcare, and resources. Yet reversing discriminatory policies and practices is possible and has been done. Over the last two decades, but particularly in the last ten years, research into sex, gender and politics has become an established sub-field of political science. This article opens with some reflections on the position of 'women and politics' scholars and research within the British political science community. It then moves on to reflect upon the burgeoning literature on women's political representation. In particular, it questions the way in which the relationship between women's descriptive and substantive representation has been operationalised and investigated in empirical research, namely through the concept of critical mass. Seeking to reframe these debates, the article suggests that future research should focus not on the question of when women make a difference, but on how the substantive representation of women occurs.*

Keywords--*Politics, Women Empowerment, Literature, 19th century.*

I. INTRODUCTION

When the nineteenth-century emerged, female authors were outnumbered by patronizing male authors who thought that women had no adequate intellectual skills to produce a quality literary work worth competing with. However, the beginning of the century brought tremendous changes in politics, economics, and the social hierarchy, which provided a better education for women, and an opportunity to escape the confines of domestic fiction. The new, modern changes raised women's awareness of gender inequality, and their oppressed role and position in the nineteenth-century society. In order to step on the male-dominated literary stage and stand alongside the men, female authors had to use male pseudonyms or write anonymously to avoid the condescending judgments of critics. As the century progressed, women tried to break the social, political, and legal constraints which society imposed on them. Various social reform movements led by women who demanded equal rights for men and women served as an inspiration for their literary output. They wanted to provoke the necessary changes through literature, and make an impact on the society to accept women as beings with equal rights as men to freedom, independence, and self-expression. It was the beginning of the gender consciousness and feminist attitudes. Towards the end of

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the century, female authors explored the themes of love and sexuality through the feminist context of independence and equality, thus making women's literature appealing to all readers regardless of their gender.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Katzenstein (1998) has argued that this necessary condition when applied to women's movements has led social movement scholars and others to equate growing use of conventional means to challenge authority, a sign of the decline of the women's movement and feminism. She contends that the assumption that only protest in the streets challenges power does not apply to the women's movement:

Mahmud et al. (2012) conceptualize empowerment as a dynamic, multi-dimensional process that is strongly influenced by resources and settings, measured by the four determinants: age (demographic status); household wealth (economic status); women's schooling (social status); and media exposure to TV or radio. These result in four dimensions of empowerment: self-esteem; control of resources; decision-making; and mobility (although not simultaneously). The authors note that empowerment processes are not directly observable, but that indicators or proxies can be used, which need to be relevant to the particular context. In rural Bangladesh, the authors conducted a study with 3,500 women in 128 villages. They found that women are most likely to feel empowered when they have a say in decisions and one of the two self-esteem indicators are present (women's perception of the number of areas in which they should have a say and whether beating is justified in different occasions). Interestingly, at the same time, women may feel less empowered because of limited access to cash ("control of resources"), and least likely to be empowered with respect to their limited freedom of mobility.

Kumar (1995), while Islamic feminism uses the Qu'ran to challenge the patriarchal elements of Shar'ia law. Combining ideas, aspirations, and goals for liberation from oppressions due to race and gender is the hallmark of Black feminist discourse. None of these are "official" feminisms that can be applied by researchers; they are the findings of empirical research projects. Thus, researchers must look in the contexts of their own research goals and venues for those ideas developed from within the women's movement that reveal connections with the secondary-level dimensions of feminist discourse and not assume any particular content or analysis a priori.

III. THE RISE AND RECEPTION OF FEMALE AUTHORS

Nowadays it is completely normal for a woman to choose whether she wants to be a role model housewife or perhaps a successful business woman completely oriented on her career; however, that was not the case during the Victorian Era in Industrial Britain. A woman had only one role, and that was to stay at home, take care of her family and maintain a comfortable atmosphere in the home for her husband to relax and rest after a strenuous day of earning money in business ventures. It was the Victorian ideology of "separate spheres" according to which women belong to the "domestic sphere" and men to the "public sphere," and that those two were never to be confused. Such a set of established non-written rules in nineteenth-century society brought rigid gender roles that oppressed women, confined them to the domestic activities, and prevented them from being equal to men in all aspects of life. This discriminating ideology stirred feminist attitudes, and caused women to start demanding their rights, whether legal, political or social. Until then, women were treated as their husband's property: "the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during her

marriage, or at least is incorporated or consolidated into that of her husband, under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything”. Due to such restrictive rights, moreover, due to the lack of existential rights that grant freedom in every sense, women were limited in expressing dissatisfaction with the prescribed gender roles. They sought for a way to make their voices heard and they found it in the literature. Literature became a medium that best conveyed the unexplored, complex lives of women in the nineteenth-century society.

Women’s empowerment has been a feature of development assistance since the 1990s. Given the continued resistance to ‘gender issues’ in some parts of the development community, this alone is an achievement. At the same time, feminists worldwide have made a sustained critique of the dominant approach to women’s empowerment.

IV. METHODOLOGY

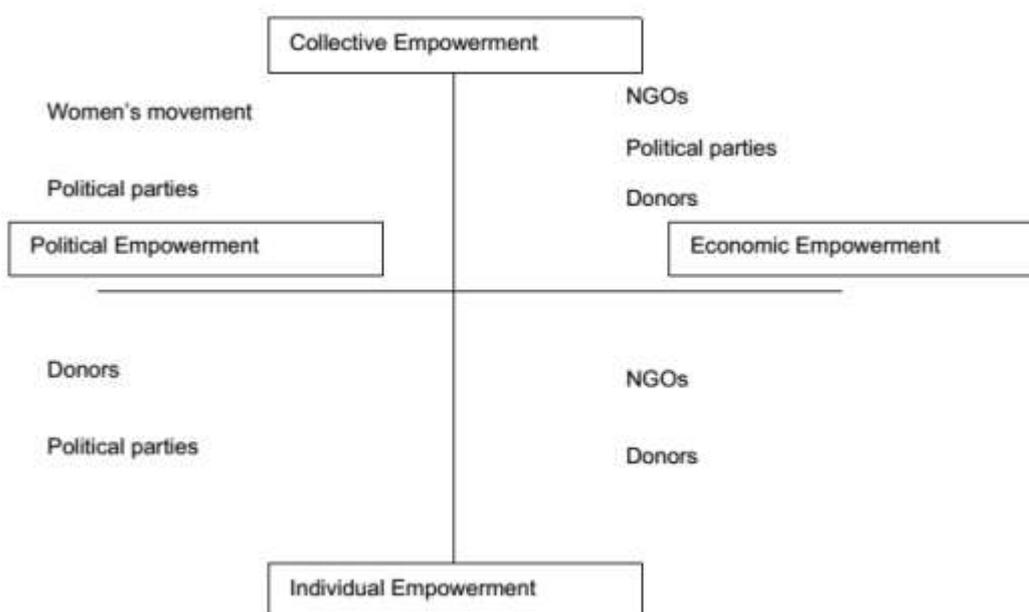


Figure 1: Double continuum of women’s empowerment

LEVELS OF EMPOWERMENT	DESCRIPTION
CONTROL ↑	Women and men have equal control over factors of production and distribution of benefits, without dominance or subordination.
PARTICIPATION ↑	Women have equal participation in decision-making in all programs and policies.
CONSCIENTIZATION ↑	Women believe that gender roles can be changed and gender equality is possible.
ACCESS ↑	Women gain access to resources such as land, labor, credit, training, marketing facilities, public services, and benefits on an equal basis with men. Reforms of law and practice may be prerequisites for such access.
WELFARE ↑	Women’s material needs, such as food, income, and medical care, are met.

Figure 2: The Women’s Empowerment Framework

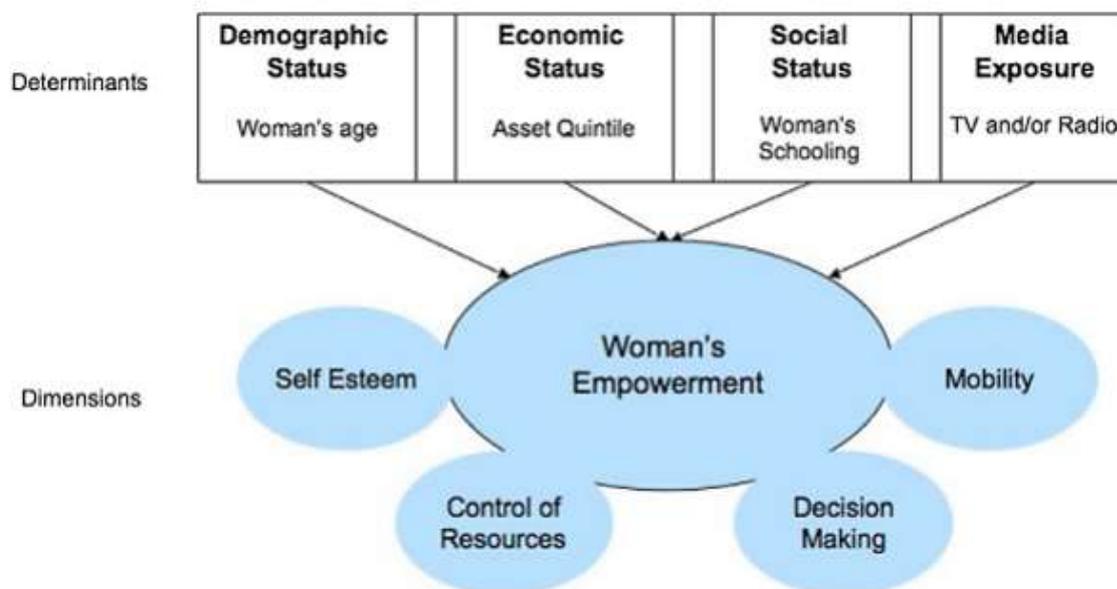


Figure 3: Determinants and dimensions to measure women's empowerment

The simplest approach to statistical analysis of literature is to count words. But if we use word counts to draw conclusions about the thematic tendencies within different classes of authors, we risk making mistakes because words are sparse, variable, and ambiguous. Sparsity arises because vocabularies are large and most words occur infrequently. Variability contributes to this problem; authors often have a choice of several synonyms. In order to make claims about thematic tendencies, we would have to summarize the results of hundreds of word/gender associations, most of which would be poorly estimated due to small sample sizes and because there is no clear way to decide which words out of thousands of words should be considered. Ambiguity adds further complications: if we count the occurrence of a single word, we may inadvertently conflate multiple meanings of that word.

Statistical topic models, such as latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA), use contextual clues to group related words and distinguish between uses of ambiguous words. They reduce the dimensionality of a corpus to several hundred clusters or topics, represented as distributions over the full vocabulary. This level of complexity is rich enough to express much of the variability of the corpus, but small enough to be browsable by humans. Because topics group many words together, they are less vulnerable to small sample sizes than individual word frequencies.

V. RESULTS

We begin by asking whether the different thematic values observed for each gender facets (i.e. male, female, unknown) are an accurate representation of the relative usage of those themes in those facet categories. In other words, are women really using certain themes more than men? We can provide a simple answer to this question.

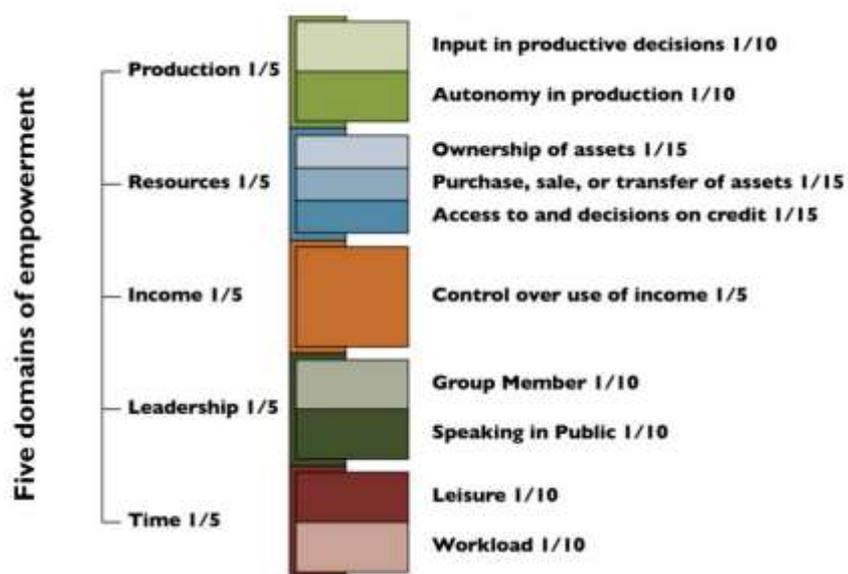


Figure 4: Five domains of the Women’s Empowerment

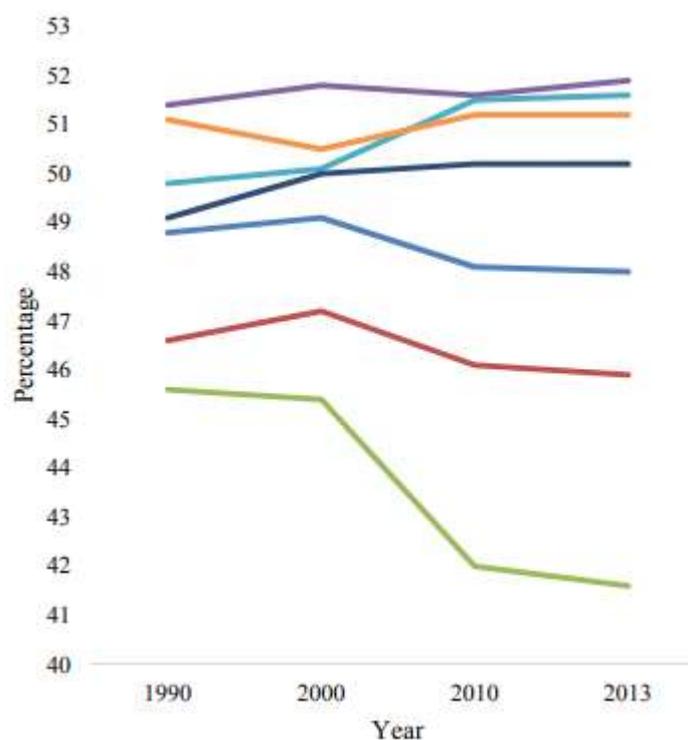


Figure 5: Politics Changed Women’s Literature year wise from 19th century

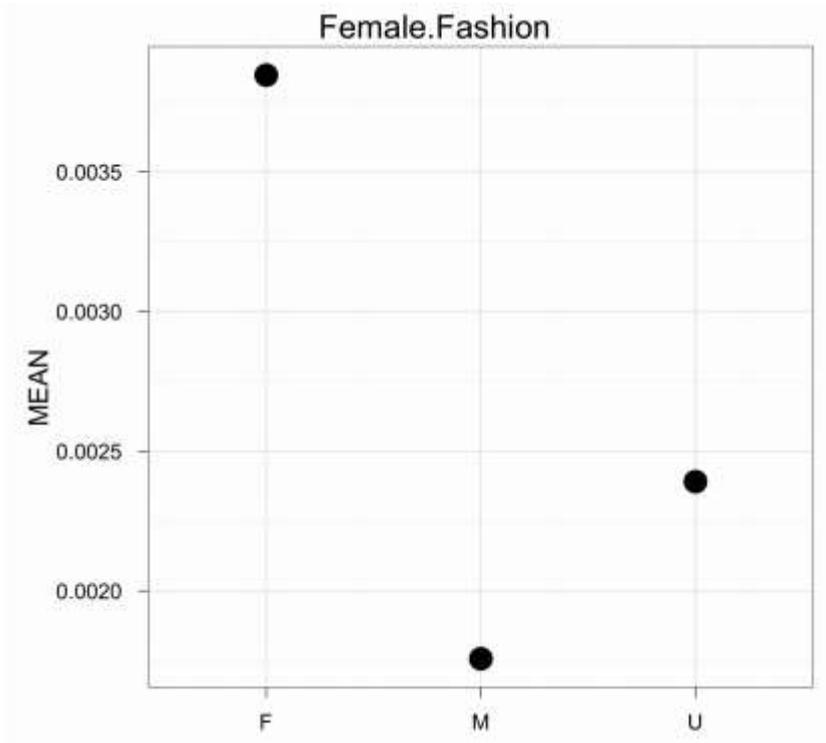


Figure 6: Mean proportion of “female fashion” theme distributed by gender

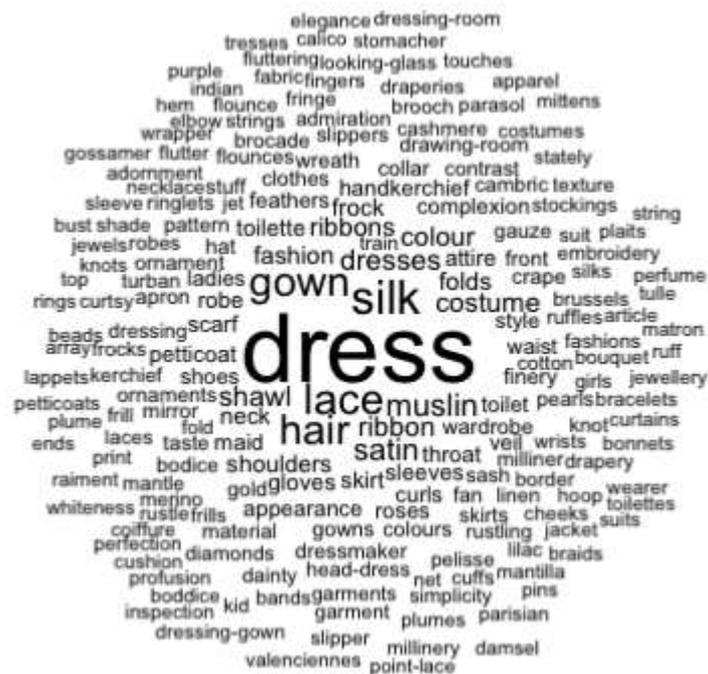


Figure 7: Word cloud of topic labelled “Female Fashion”

Figure 7 suggests that female authors are more than twice as likely to write about women’s clothing or “fashion” than men. However, we can only say that an observed difference in proportions is significant if we know something about the range of proportions we might expect if there were no real distinction between two groups of authors. This assumption--that there is no distinction between groups--is called the null hypothesis. Estimating the

probability of an observed difference in proportion under the null hypothesis is the central task of statistical testing. We cannot recognize pattern without an understanding of randomness.

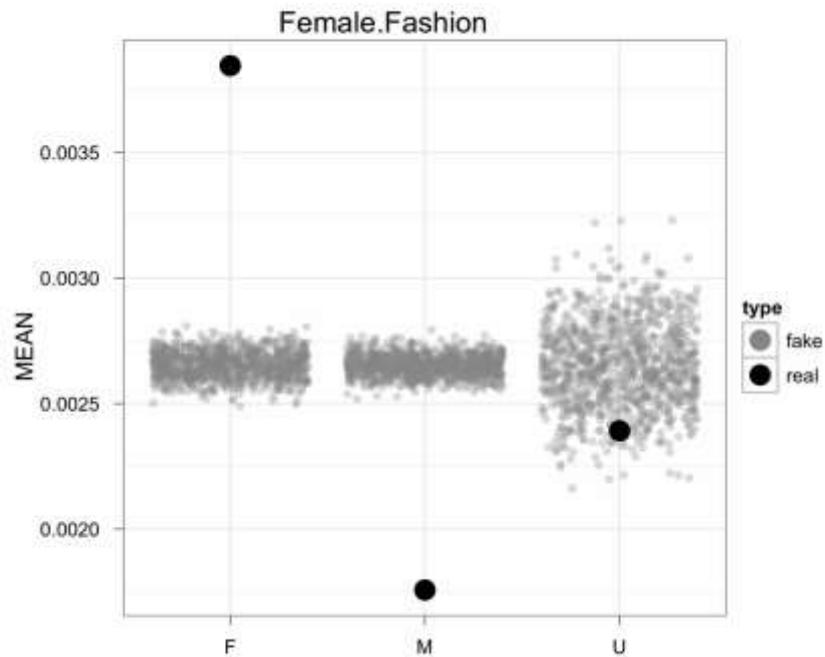


Figure 8: Permutation plot of Female Fashion

Figure 8 provides a graphical representation of running such a test over the data pertaining to the theme of “female fashion.” The “real” data is represented by three large black dots, as before. For each replication, we sample an alternative universe of author genders and add three small gray dots (one in each vertical column of the graph), representing where the mean values would be in that universe. We have added random “jitter” to the position of the gray dots on the x-axis in order to reduce overlapping of points and make the plot easier to read.

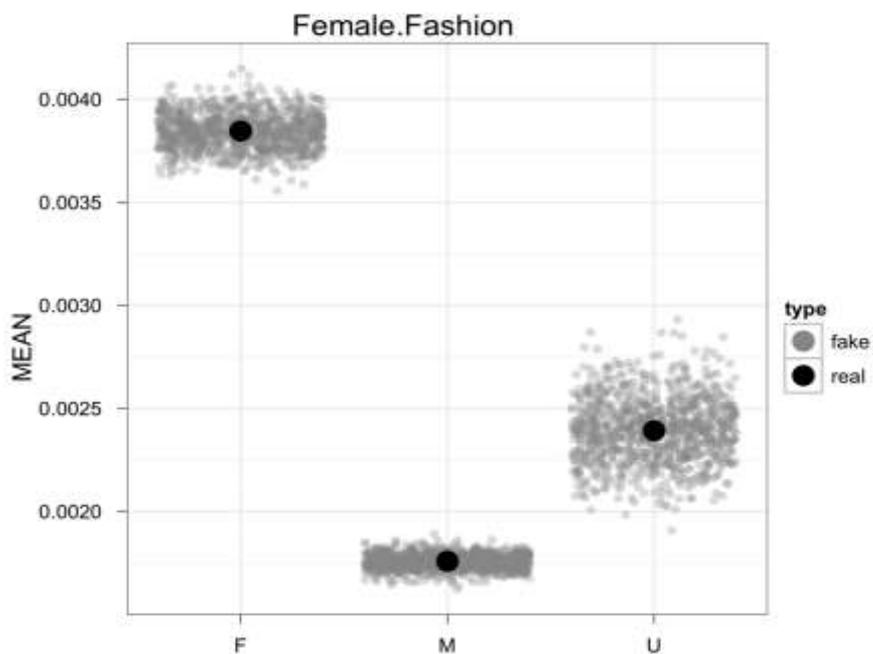


Figure 9: Bootstrap plot of “Female Fashion”

Figure 9 shows the results of a bootstrap experiment on each of the three categories for the topic “Female Fashion.” Unlike the randomization test, the real values are in the exact middle of the fake data values. Because we are only sampling from within the actual category, and not mixing between categories, the regions of greatest density are not aligned at the overall mean value. Again, we find that there is relatively little variability in the male and female categories, but more variability in the smaller unknown category

VI. CONCLUSION

The path towards female independence and gender equality was not an easy one for women in the nineteenth-century. Legal, social, and political constraints imposed on them by society prevented them from having freedom of thought, choice, and self-expression. However, the ability to educate themselves provided women with knowledge and confidence to openly address issues concerning women’s unjust position in the oppressive nineteenth-century society. Female authors who used this opportunity to expose the narrow-mindedness and rigidity of the society had to hide behind their pen names or write anonymously to avoid negative critics based solely on their sex. Topic women’s modelling is useful in analyzing literature, but, as our work here suggests, it must be applied with care and within the context of statistical tests that can measure confidence in results. Topic models can identify broad themes in literature. We can use such models as a means of detecting and measuring differences in the concentration of themes from one section of a corpus to another. These measurements by themselves, however, do not provide a full picture: some measured differences are meaningful, others are not. Getting quantified results from models can be deceptively, seductively easy.

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