

## PROFITIOUS MULTIPLICITY OR SPLIT AND CONFRONTATION? TWO RADICAL FEMINIST READINGS OF *THE STORM* BY MCKNIGHT MALMAR

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### ABSTRACT

Whether Looked at as a heaven-sent privilege bestowed on feminism as multiplicity, or a many-headed monster within, that incarnates as a widening gap that wastes feminists' enormous energies in confronting each other, diversity and difference appear as an indispensable element deeply rooted in feminism. The long standing titles as liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, Psychoanalytic feminism, echo-feminism and Postfeminism, to mention only some out of a longer list, can attest to the diversity. It Permeates the feminist space so inclusively that it leaves almost no recess intact, splitting, among others, postfeminism into postmodern and third-wave feminisms, and radical feminism into the hardly reconcilable offshoots" of radical-Libertarian feminism and radical-cultural feminism. Focusing on two antithetical readings of *the storm*, this article attempts to show how radical-libertarian and radical cultural feminisms diverge in their encounter with a wide range of phenomena covering from sex and gender through family to literary criticism.

**KEYWORDS:** radical feminism, radical-libertarian feminism, radical-cultural feminism, literature, the storm

### INTRODUCTION

Umbrella terms can hardly contain the rich diversity that continues to live, grow and develop underneath, almost indifferent to, and sometimes even, unconscious of the attempts made and energies spent to impose unity, homogeneity and sameness. Diversity seems to be everywhere, and multiplicity feeding on diversity and difference, is as omnipresent. It penetrates deep down the schools, isms, outlooks, policies and agendas for action. Religions are not immune to its influence, philosophies cannot duck its glaring gaze and approaches cannot stand its forking advances.

Feminism for one harbours a rainbow of principles, assumptions, concepts, terms, guidelines, descriptions, definitions, positions and finally, labels. Essentialist feminism, anti-essentialist feminism, liberal feminism, radical-libertarian feminism, radical cultural feminism, black feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, multicultural feminism, global feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, postmodern feminism, third-wave feminism which also drags behind

such labels as first-wave and second-wave feminism, as well as pre feminism, care-focused feminism, ecofeminism and finally posfeminism all serve as labels that are devised by diverse feminist thinkers and critics to shed light on an aspect of feminism interconnected to the other aspects as it may be, refuses total identification with them. In her *Feminist Thought*, Rosemarie Tong, well aware of the diversity and multiplicity enveloping the feminist space, asserts that,

Since writing my first introduction to feminist thought nearly two decades ago, I have become increasingly convinced that feminist thought resists categorization into tidy schools of thought. Interdisciplinary, intersectional, and interlocking are the kind of adjectives that best describe the way we feminists think. There is a certain breathlessness in the way we move from one topic to the next, revising our thoughts in midstream. (Tong, 2009:1)

The multiplicity discernible at the heart of feminism is neither limited to, nor stops at the level of, the categories listed above. It further divides each category into conflicting branches. Ecofeminism, as an interdisciplinary aspect of feminism moves further into other three branches of spiritual ecofeminism, transformative ecofeminism and global ecofeminism. So is radical feminism. Defining its borders against liberal feminism's emphasis on "eliminate[ing] discriminatory educational, legal and economic policies" (Hole and Levine, 1971:81), and laying emphasis, instead, on uprooting family and organized religion as powerful means in the hands of the patriarchal system to oppress women, radical feminism appears to be a unified body of theory and practice. However, that is only a mirage. Further investigation into the nature of radical feminism proves that it is deeply divided within. The gap between the two main branches of radical feminism, namely radical-libertarian and radical cultural feminism is so wide over such core concepts as sex, gender, reproduction and motherhood that reconciliation between the two is hardly in perspective.

True that the proper domain of feminist activity and theorizing is social, political, economic and natural life; however, none of these aspects of life can dispense with literature. Neither can literature manage without them. Hence, the feminist tackling of life questions will bear its implications on literature, just as its interaction with literature will both reflect its view of social and political life and leave behind its imprints on them.

*The storm* by Kathleen M. Monroe engages in questions like sex, gender and family which prove to be fundamental questions to both branches of radical feminism and the ground on which most of the controversy and heated debates between the two branches occur. Thus, reading the story from their viewpoints can pinpoint the bones of contention, the points of departure and the multiplicity that lurks behind the mirage of unity. The comparison and contrast will hopefully show how each branch constructs its version of truth; how and why disagreements arise between the two, and how the storm can metaphorically represent real life situations and question that of interest though they are to the practitioners of branches, illicit conflicting responses and answers from them. Arguments offered by outstanding radical feminists such as Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, Marilyn French, Mary Daly, Margaret Atwood and Adrienne Rich serve as the ground in which this article embeds its assertions.