



A STUDY OF POEMS THAT EMPHASISES AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

English

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ABSTRACT

The literature permit eloquence to the writers for jot down in the respect of class, race, religion, culture and wealth. Although, it is also a dedication of a literature to elevate the darker side of society in their compositions to spears awareness, motivation, humanity to victims and encouragement to the survivors. Feminism and women's right has been controversial and revolutionary subject in every corner of the world since long. This paper will throw a light on the three poems of the twenty first century arguing with the issue of domestic violence (also named domestic abuse and family violence) by analysing them, which are named as- 'Domestic Violence' by Eavan Boland, 'The Last Time' by Rachel McKibbens and 'Pioneers, First Women in Construction' by Susan Eisenberg. As there has been scarcity of works especially in the manner of poetry, which talked and raised the issues sexual, emotional, spiritual, physical harassment on victims by their own family or loved ones. The present article deals with reading the themes of helplessness and loneliness along with the theme of a rebelliousness. With the end, this paper depicts that how the poets boosted their voices for becoming a survivor rather than a victim.

KEYWORDS

Feminism, Literature, Gender Studies, Domestic Violence

INTRODUCTION

On the daily basis in life women experience conflicting emotions such as fear, anger, shame, sadness and powerless without any doubt reason could be men in most societies are seen as breadwinner while women are restricted to being a good daughter, good mother and a good house maker who should always heed to her superior power (men of her life-father, husband). As societies entered the world of modernisation, women yet grappling not only with their human and basic right like against sexism, gender inequality and in favour of right to education and vote but also grappling for a safer and peaceful environment to live, free from sexual, physical, emotional and mental violence(for example forced and child marriage, domestic abuse, acid throwing, rape, abduction, sex-selective abortion, forced prostitution and numerous)In 1920s 'Domestic abuse' treated as crime against the community rather than against the individual. However, only since the 1970s has the criminal justice system begun to treat domestic violence as a serious crime, not as a private family matter. To spread awareness and unify the million of victims affected, National Domestic Violence Awareness month was established in 1987. There are multitudinous writers in English literature who raised feminist issue like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Simone De Beauvoir, Alice Walker and others, but it is bizarre to mention that works have been scare discussed this fatal and non- fatal crime against women. These three poems-

- 1) 'Domestic Violence' from poetry collection 'Domestic Violence' (2007) by Eavan Boland.
- 2) The Last Time' from poetry collection 'Pink Elephant' (2009) by Rachel McKibbens.
- 3) Pioneers, First Women Construction' from poetry collection -'Stanley's Girl(2018) by Susan Eisenberg.

Eavan Aisling Boland (24 September-27 April 2020) was an Irish poet and author. She also devoted herself to a professor at Stanford university from 1996. Born in Dublin, when she was six, Boland's father was Irish brand ambassador to the United Kingdom might be this is the reason for her works deals, Irish national identity and the role of women. She was honoured with Lannan Literature Award for poetry.

Rachel McKibbens is and American poet, playwright and activist. Best known for her slam poetry, short stories, essays and non- fictions; which have been featured in numerous well-known journals and blogs, including the Los Angeles Review, The London Magazine, The Best American Poetry Blog, World Literature Today. She taught poetry and creative writing and give lectures across the country as an advocate for mental illness, gender-equality, victims of violence and domestic abuse. The rumps wrote of 'Pink Elephant'-

"McKibbens awakens and hunts with selfless honesty."

Susan Eisenberg is a long-term activist, poet, oral historian visual artist from Boston, along with that she teaches writing and theatre.

Eisenberg, nationally speaks on gender issues, a plethora of her articles and essays have published in Digital digest like nation- UTNE readers, working mother. Her works have theme of the recollection of everyday life and Juxtaposition.

DISCUSSION

'Domestic violence' is a poem divided into four parts (each part containing two to four paragraphs) composed by Evan Boland. The poem is written in a free-verse style. This was published in Boland's Poetry collection 'Domestic Violence' (2007). Here she presents the dilemma of an Irish woman who feels despondent from her married life and at the same time assuming everything to be fine. The first part of the poem illustrates that it was the winter season when she got married in the village (it might be their first meeting after marriage). She described him as a 'butcher' as she is making an effort to say that she got married to a brutal and cruel person, which she got an indication at the first meeting.

"Pleased to meet you meat to please you
said the butcher's sign in the window in the village."

According to the poet, her peace of her life turned into quarrelled nights within a year after they moved "suburbs" from the village. It could be possible that it was a love marriage as their nights witnessed dissension with high and sharp voices.

"Their voices high, sharp:
nothing is ever entirely
right in the lives of those
who love each other"

Next, she describes that their married life suddenly turns into gloomy and sorrowful tears as she used the line 'island broke out is old sores' as it assumed that she said that her married life which started with love but after nearly twelve years it turned into the darkness of 'domestic violence.' Her expectation, desire, wish with her husband and marriage were faded but she never raised a voice against the physical and emotional harassment. Rather, she attempting to evaluate the matter in their lives with silence. In the third part of the poem, the poet tries to evaluate the inner voice of the victim where she also, offend her old days to remember the 'provenance'- where all turbulence of her life has been turned on. She also gave a glimpse of the patriarchy mentality of society who thinks a wife should always be in kitchen, as lines 'spring light in that kitchen' depicts as a safe place for her if she devoted her life to household chores. And still asking herself as well as to the man.

"What else could we have done"

In the last part, the poet blames on time for her failed marriage. The helplessness has been clearly shown in this portion where she gives an account of excuses for non-existence of happiness in her married life.

“We failed our moment or our moment failed us.”

It seems that she has been accepted the sore, unhappiness and loneliness of her life. She convinced herself that one day her children moved out to begin their new beginnings and after that one day she and her husband, also gone forever, (demise).

‘The Last Time’ is a short poem that illustrates the story of fighting back against an abusive father, composed by Rachel McKinnens. This was published in McKinnens's poetry collection-‘Pink Elephant’(2009). The poem begins with the first-person pronoun “I”. As she did all by herself whether the last lines focus on “US” that shows how she did this to defend not only herself but her sibling also. The poem unfolds the extremely sensitive experience of the poet herself where she standing up to the abuser instead of being tortured of physical harassment.

“I did it alone,
without leaving.”

The poem splits into five stanzas, each measuring between two and six lines. The poet uses the free verse style and the poetic technique of enjambment (across the lines flowing uninterrupted reflecting her movement down the stairs). By addressing the word ‘alone’ the poet creates a suspenseful atmosphere which portrayed the idea that what McKinnens is doing must be done by herself without any help or support. There has been an injury suggested by ‘welt on my face is still hot’ which depicts the sense of pain and helplessness from an abusive father. McKinnens wanted to show her willingness to rebel by suggesting the-

“Pried open the toolbox
And grabbed the hammer
With his initials burned deep
Into the handle”

Furthermore, the poetry reflects that the poet is about take about these steps in her self-defence and to protect her innocent ‘brother’ too, who ‘slept upstairs’ form their cruel and brutal father who is watching over him (her brother). In the following stanza poet shows how she took a bravery step without letting him know (abusive father) that she aboaches by suggesting of ‘I turned the knob slowly. Here she relates ‘hammer’ as a symbol of her revolution and limit of tolerance power and her keen sensitiveness to freedom is very evident from the poem. The poet wanted to establish the victory of innocence and childhood over the darkness of harassment and cruelty by focuses directly on stood, over my father's body’. With closing lines, the poem's mature compounding the threat and reflects the tolerance limit of her against violence, in a simple sentence which is also a waring by mentioning-

“If you ever touch us again,
I will kill you.”

‘Pioneers, First Women in Construction’ is poem written by Susan Eisenberg. This was published in a poetry collection- ‘Stanley's Girl’ (2008). In this poem, Eisenberg is doing creatively that she holds multiple perspectives, in the life of a woman. The title of the poem has been taken or inspired from the title of her earlier poetry collection named ‘Pioneering: poems from the construction site’ published in 1998 in which she narrated her interest in a construction site. Although, the poet illustrates the same interest for being working women or being independent. The poem gives an idea that she wants a career rather than being a victim of sexual and physical abuse by her love(husband). This part depicts the prestige of being self-dependent and being the first woman (in her family) to establish her own identity in the patriarchal society.

“We wanted the career.
Not just skills and money,
But structure, focus, printed plans,
the rowdy order of raising building
that years later would still stand
right where you left them.”

However, the poet becomes a pioneer in her family, the first female to rebel against domestic violence. The poem begins with a stanza in which the poet illustrates the tragic demise of females of her life (her mother, sister and daughter). Term ‘found bludgeoned in the trunk’

gives an account that her sister would have murdered by someone knowledgeable. Next, it is clearly described that her mother was an alcoholic and end up her own life by committing suicide it seems she wanted to get detached from torture of her pale life. On the other hand, her daughter was ‘killed by an uncle’. Poet is the one who fights back in her defence from domestic torture. The term ‘raped’ and ‘love punched her face’ provides an idea of ‘marital rape’ and ‘physical violence’. It might be possible that she took a fatal action on husband in her defence. So, she is alive and spend rest of her life in a prison.

In the end, Eisenberg portrayed her thoughts by giving an assertion statement that women make themselves get habitual to these tough periods. And here she compares harsh period by the term ‘winter’. Here she is saying that we taught ourselves to been dominated and tortured by men (who thinks that they have supremacy over women and behaved toward women as an object to use instead of the treated them as the member of family and community who deserves equality).

“We taught ourselves to disarm booby traps,
shared hand- drawn maps, and prepared for a long winter.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, after analysing the poems without any doubt it can be said that even in the modern era women is neither safe outside the house nor inside the house. The convicts were familiar faces in all the poems. Furthermore, the hidden meaning of poems is that domestic violence is not just about physical harassment it also includes sexual, emotional and spiritual torture against the individual (against women in the majority of cases). Additionally, the works depict the importance of a career for women and give the idea of a fightback in case of self-defence is needed.

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