
A CHARACTER STUDY OF INGE- AN ANARCHA-FEMINIST IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S WRITTEN ON THE BODY

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Abstract: Inge, a Dutch woman is the ungendered narrator's one amongst the many lovers, that include women as well as men. But she is the weirdest and funniest in the lot. What catches the readers' attention is her anarchy-feminist ideology. She though appears for a brief period of time, leaves lasting impression on the readers' mind. Her plan and execution to blow up male urinals, "a symbol or patriarchy" or her teary outburst to Pierre-Auguste Renoir's nudes as she feels, the models used in the paintings were exploited give glimpses of her affiliation with anarchy-feminist ideology. Her lover, the narrator endures all of her idiosyncrasies, but when she asked to use pigeons for communication, as postal service is "run by despots who exploited non-union labour" and telephones are for the "receptionist, woman without status", the narrator calls it a quit. To summarise, this paper studies the ideology of anarchy-feminism in the context of Inge's character.

Keywords: Feminism, Anarchist, Character Sketch, Patriarchy, Gender Roles, Radicalism.

Introduction: Anarchism, in the words of Woodcock, is "a cluster of doctrines and attitudes centred on the belief that government is both harmful and unnecessary." Further, Woodcock explains,

Anarchists also took up issues related to feminism and developed a rich body of work, known as anarchy-feminism, that applied anarchist principles to the analysis of women's oppression, arguing that the state is inherently patriarchal and that women's experience as nurturers and care-givers reflects the anarchist ideals of mutuality and the rejection of hierarchy and authority.

Lisa Hofmann-Kuroda opines,

Anarchy-feminists do not see the goals of feminism as distinct from anarchism—rather, they see feminism (in its true form) as a kind of anarchism, and vice versa. For anarchy-feminists, the struggle against patriarchy is an inherent part of the struggle to abolish the state and abolish capitalism, since the state itself is a patriarchal structure.

Inge, a minor character who is in a short-lived relationship with the ungendered narrator of Jeanette Winterson's novel *Written on the Body* (1992) is described as "a committed romantic and an anarchy-feminist" (16). Hence, she hesitates in blowing up Eiffel tower which is a famous symbol of love as well as phallic architecture representing patriarchy. To quote Jan Willem Geerinck,

Scholars of anthropology, sociology, and feminism have pointed out the symbolic nature of phallic architecture, especially large skyscrapers which dominate the landscape as symbols of masculinity, male domination, political authority, power, and violence, as a clear metaphorical statement of male power.

Inge also hates French artist Pierre-Auguste Renoir's artwork because in her opinion the model he employed for to draw his sketches were significantly underpaid. Particularly noticeable is her emotional outburst when she sights Renoir's painting *La Boulangere*. Her revelation of the tool that the artist had used for painting is shocking. She confides to the narrator, "Don't you know that Renoir claimed he painted with his penis" (Winterson 17)? In her opinion, a male phallus commonly used for sexual assault of women folk in literal sense had been figuratively used in the past to exploit "naked, abused and exposed" (Winterson 17) bodies of the model. Inge gets so angry that she feels the urge to "rip the canvases from their frames and go to prison crying 'Vive la resistance'" (Winterson 17).

Her anarchy-feminist ideology displays prominently when she hatches a plan to blow up male urinals with Semtex. She reasons, "[A] urinal is symbols of patriarchy and must be destroyed" (Winterson 18). With the help of the narrator, she accomplishes her target. The resultant explosion is described as "beautiful", "splendid" and "much too good" (Winterson 18). Upon research, it is found that there have been stray protests against this patriarchal structure. For instance, the headline of an article published in the *Women in the World* reads, "Public urinals, already controversial, targeted by protesters who denounced them as sexist" (WITW Staff). Further, the report mentions: "Two recently installed public urinals in Paris have been vandalized with cement and protest stickers complaining about sexist double standards, and has prompted a fierce debate over whether the city prioritizes the needs of men over those of women in their urban planning" (WITW Staff). The poster put up by the protesters at the dismantled urinal site, read "Women who expose their breasts to breastfeed are asked to hide themselves — men who take out their genitals to urinate are subsidized by City Hall" (WITW Staff). The report also cites city planning committee founder Chris Blache's view. She does not deny the patriarchal undertone attached to the urinals. She is quoted saying,

This kind of urinal, clearly, can only be used by men — and not any kind of man either, because a child, a little boy can't use them. And I'm not sure that an elderly man would be comfortable using them either. So there is an unfairness in the perception of what is authorized or not authorized to do in public. (WITW Staff)

The narrator owing to Inge's belief in the controversial ideology finds hard to deal with her. Hence, their relationship does not last long. The final nail in the coffin was Inge's insistence on using pigeon for communication when she decides to shift to Holland, as she is against the use of telephone or postal service. The former she believes, "[are] for Receptionists, that is, women without status" and the latter "[is] run by despots who exploit[s] non-union labour" (Winterson 19). The narrator unsuccessfully attempts to communicate by means of pigeon. And that marks the ends of their short but eventful relationship.

To conclude, Inge's character borders on radical and militant feminism, that uses unfair and violent means to achieve "equality." The belief that feminism stands for achieving superior status for women by pushing their counterpart males behind has spread among the people. Such misconception hurts the feminist movement that aims for equal opportunities for women in economical, social and political fields. They certainly do not espouse Inge's idea of destroying male urinals and Eiffel tower in the name of equality.

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