

Maria Luisa Bombal and Depression

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Abstract

Maria Luisa Bombal was a literature and philosophy scholar whose works of literature largely portrayed women as an unlucky lot who suffer a lot of depression as a result of male chauvinism. Bombal used female characters in her artistic work to give a reflection of the plight of women which; to her; has a great relation to the way the society is structured. According to Bombal, the depression that women suffer results from cultural forces, family relations, social mores and religion which impede women's self realization efforts. This discussion looks at Bombal's perception over depression.

Key words: depression, patriarchal society



MARIA LUISA BOMBAL AND DEPRESSION

Introduction

Maria Luisa Bombal Anthes was a Chilean author, who studied Philosophy and Literature at Paris University. Bombal returned from Paris to South America and got married to Eulogio Sanchez who did not reciprocate the commitment that Bombal had to their marriage relationship. The relationship between Bombal and Sanchez failed. This had a profound and long-term impact on Bombal. The destiny of the relationship had a significant effect on Bombal's understanding and perception on inter-gender relationships. The break-up between Bombal and the husband largely depressed her to the extent that she attempted to commit suicide by shooting herself. Fortunately, her attempt was not successful as she only injured her shoulder. The magnitude of the depression was so much that Bombal later shot Sanchez eight years after their separation.

Tomkins (2001) observes that loneliness and depression overwhelmed Bombal such that she resorted to alcohol as a way of consoling herself. She became a prey to long bouts of depression that kept on luring her to alcoholism. She suffered a lot of denial despite the widespread recognition of her literary work. Such denials like the failure to be awarded the National Price in Literature worsened Bombal's situation. She became a great addict to alcohol as a way of withdrawing herself from a state of depression. The decision that Bombal took to get into alcoholism was unhealthy as she later suffered ill health. Her liver function begun to deteriorate, and it led to her death. Bombal argues that the depression that women suffer is a factor of the cultural forces, family relations, social mores and religion which impede their self realization and largely alienate them from the constricting environment. She mentions that such conditions often lead women to great emotional disturbance from which they can hardly withdraw themselves. Bombal is on the opinion that there are phalocentric powers that place women in



subaltern positions. The kind of depression that women suffer is linked to societal prescriptions of their status as the society dictates that they have to be submissive to their male counterparts (Bombal, 1948).

Bombal's literary work was centered on the plight of female protagonists who suffered unbearable depression due to their inability to find fulfillment in the male dominated world. She portrays women as a population which is intuitive and that has a high connection to nature, realms of imagination and dream. On the contrary, Bombal presents men to be materialistic and as objects of civilization, who are ruled by the dictates of logic. She shows that there is a great difference in the way women and their men counterparts are treated by the society. To her, this void surrenders women to unbearable depression. Most of her female characters in her literary work are presented to undergo a lot of depression and they passively accept their destinies. Thus, they withdraw to imaginative regions in search for consolation. She shows that women have very little to do to save themselves from depression because they can hardly exert any change and are forced to remain imprisoned by the society that fails to show concern for their needs (Tomkins, 2001).

Conclusion

I am on the opinion that Bombal's work rightly portrays the plight of women who live in a patriarchal society and who suffer great depression due to male chauvinism. The unsatisfactory lifestyles that women are subjected to are a major cause of their unsatisfactory life which makes them to resort to dangerous lifestyles. The society has a contribution in the plight of women and it exposes them to depression. The society has defined roles that are seen as a reserve for men and those that are left for men. In as much as women try to save themselves from this situation, their efforts are often futile because the society states that men are to remain superior. This perception largely subjects women to great instances of depression.



References

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