“表現と性形成”

フェミニスト運動の英語に対する強襲

ジェーン・マック

Genderspeak: The Feminist Movement's Assault on the English Language

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In the last several years feminists have exerted a marked influence on the English language. Whether this influence has been positive —— in terms of style and accuracy —— is, however, open to debate. The feminist movement, in its zeal to eradicate sexual “inequality” in the language, has declared certain words unacceptable and substituted in their place others which are not only affected, but also stylistically wanting or inaccurate.

Words With Feminine Suffixes

One category of words which the feminists find particularly offensive

is all nouns which have feminine suffixes such as "-ess", "-ette" and "-ine". These suffixes are added to masculine or common gender nouns, producing forms such as "actress," "stewardess," "poetess," "waitress," "majorette," "heroine," and "comedienne."

The suffix "-ess" developed from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, and "-ette" and "-ine" first appeared as gender related in the twentieth century.[1] Feminists and others who subscribe to their view argue that such words, because they derive from the masculine, are of secondary or inferior status. " …… the act of suffixation serves not to create a balanced gender pair but an unbalanced one, since it implies the derivation of one of the terms from the other."[2]

Why, however, is derivation assumed to be unbalanced or sexually discriminating? The German language, for example, has the "-in" ending to designate females in all possible situation: *Freundin,* a female friend, *Lehrerin,* a female teacher, or *Aerztin,* a female physician. Such words have never been considered patronizing in German-speaking countries; they simply provide useful information. In the case of *Aerztin,* it is often useful for a woman when, for example, she wants to say in a concise manner that she would prefer a female doctor.[3]

As noted above, however, the feminists consider such parallel endings in English taboo. Instead of "actress," for example, they prefer "female actor." The distinction between "actor" and "actress," they assert, is not a distinction between male and female, but rather the difference between the standard and a deviation.[4]

If we say "female actor," however, it is not only a contradiction in terms (the "-or" ending is masculine), but also confusing. Do we mean a male

impersonating a woman on stage, or perhaps an effeminate performer? The feminists want clarity and accuracy in language, but these qualities are also served by succinctness. "Actress" will always be shorter and clearer than "female actor.[5]

Stewardess" is another word which is considered sexually discriminating. It has now been supplanted by "flight attendant." All Nippon Airways, for example, recently announced that its cabin crew will be referred to as "cabin attendants." (Japan Airlines, however, is retaining the designation "stewardess" to describe its female cabin crew.) Yet what was wrong with the designations "steward" and "stewardess"? Steward" was ostensibly acceptable but, before the advent of "flight attendant", "female steward" was favored by the feminists —— with the same questionable implications as "famale actor."

Poetess" is also considered degrading (even though the 1983 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* lists the word, along with "authoress.") Yet the designation "poetess" can be extremely useful, as in the case of Stevie Smith, a woman. If we referred to her as a "poet," her identity, because of her masculine forename, is nebulous.

Still another example of an "-ess" suffix word which is frowned upon by the feminist movement is "waitress." But if we are served in a restaurant by a woman and we ask for the "waiter," we invite confusion. Moreover, asking for the "female waiter" is so affected that it cannot be taken seriously.

The linguists Casey Miller and Kate Swift state that "few women are asking to be called men, but more women than anyone has bothered to count are asking that they *not* be called men."[6] Yet, as they recommend,

if we call a waitress a waiter, an actress an actor, or a poetess a poet we are calling these women men. And therein lies the essential contradiction in terms and inconsistency of the feminists' remolding of the English language.

To extricate themselves from this dilemma is not easy, but one suggestion for the waiter-waitress problem was the word "waitron" (waiter + "on"),an option adopted by the proprietresses ("proprietrons") of a Boston restaurant.[7] If we follow this example, however, we would have to refer to an empress as an "empron" or a governess as a "governon."

The feminist movement also asserts that words with the suffix "-et(te)" carry a negative connotation. With the word "starlet" this may be true, as it often conjures up the image of a would-be movie star who sleeps with the producer so she will be cast in a film. At any rate, the word has fallen into relative non-use. "Majorette," however, is a word without any pejorative connotation whatsoever. It simply refers to a female (drum) major.

Words with an "-ine" suffix have been traditionally used in a sense of having the quality of masculine, feminine, feline. The feminine sense of the suffix however, is restricted to just a few words.[8] Still, many feminists object to a word such as "heroine" as sexually biased! If we refer to the heroine of a play it is in no sense pejorative; on the contrary it carries a positive connotation. If we carry the objections of the feminist movement in this instance to their logical extreme, we would also have to do away with names such as Caroline, Ernestine and Josephine.

Words Containing "Man"

The feminists also take issue with traditional generic words containing "man," such as "mankind or "chairman." Although the use of "man" is acknowledged by many linguists to be proverbial or literary, the feminists argue that "human" or "person" should be used instead. Indeed, they also reject most words containing "woman," such as "chairwoman" or saleswoman." (Ironically, they do not reject "congresswoman" or, for that matter, "senator" ——an interesing inconsistency.)

Linguists who appear to sympathize with this feminist view perceive the common dictionary definitions of "woman" and its derivitives as a "derogation or trivialization of the feminine,....."[9] such as "the fair sex" or the "softer sex." Indeed, Miller and Swift "argue that the word *womanly* means a woman is not courageous, strong, and resolute."[10] It would seem, however, that this is rather presumptive. It can also be argued that "womanly" suggests very positive qualities such as maturity, gracefulness....." and a sense of security and relaxation in being a woman."[11]

Moreover, the feminist movement also objects to the use of the word "girl" as demeaning and discriminatory. We may also fairly assume that the use of such literary words as "damsel," "lass" or "maiden" are also unacceptable. Yet all of these words are not pejorative; rather they suggest innocence and beauty. A good example is Humbert Wolfe's poem "Ilion" which ends with the line "Girl, there were girls like you in Ilion." The lyric concerns Trojan girls "who hoarded their loveliness, while Helen spent it as any beautiful woman might have."[12]

As noted above the feminists advocate the use of "person" or "human"

in place of "man". Unfortunately, in terms of literary usage, this view has gained enormous acceptance —— and use —— by the general public. "Mankind" is now "humankind" (or "genkind" as Miller and Swift propose[13]) and "chairman" is "chairperson" —— or worse —— "chair," suggesting some inanimate object. Ironically, the neutrality of "chairperson" has been challenged, chiefly for two reasons: its association with the feminist cause and its status as a euphemism for "chairwoman," i. e., a "chairperson" is assumed to be a woman.[14]

Miller and Swift also favor "personhood" instead of "man-hood" or "womanhood," and "people" instead of "persons" in the plural, i.e., "chairpeople," "salespeople" or "gentlepeople" —— the latter designation for ladies and gentlemen. Bobbye Sorrels goes even further and advocates the elimination of all words suggesting the generic "-man," preferring instead "humanslaughter" or "personslaughter" for "manslaughter." Moreover, she would substitute "great-" or "best work" for "masterpiece," "expert" for "maestro" and even "president" for "king" in chess, checkers or cards![15]

Richard Mitchell, the "Underground Grammarian," writes a fitting commentary on these excesses: " [It is the Christmas season] and we really wanted.....to simply wish for peace on earth to men of good will.l [This] proved wrong....., so we changed it to *persons* of good will..... that proved wrong, for it was sure to offend a substantial and much maligned minority which should be appreciated and related to rather than demeaned by exclusion from our prayers. [We were] reminded....., and just in time, that persons of ill will have feelings too, you know. And rights."[16]

At the feminists behest, compound words containing "-person" have also come into use such as "anchorperson," "businessperson" and "councilperson." When the use of "-person," however, is unbridled the results are humorous and underline the term's essential absurdity when taken to an extreme. In 1973 the newspaper columnist Russell Baker devised over forty examples of "nopersonclature," including "police-person,": "doorperson," "milkperson," "everyperson," "personners" (manners), "persontle" (mantle), "personipulating" (manipulating) and "aperson" (amen).[17] On a more laconic note, Stuart Berg Flexner remarked that several words containing -man do not "neutralize" very well, such as "man (person) hole," "man (person) slaughter" and "(person) -at -arms."[18]

As we have seen, the feminists avoid the the use of "-man" in its generic sense, but also eschew "lady" when referring to women because it is regarded as "trivializing or derogatory, and bars women from true equality with men."[19] Ironically, up until recently, it was universally considered more polite to refer to women as ladies. Yet feminists such as Miller and Swift assert that "lady" implies a lesser valuation. They recommend "woman" as "the most useful all-around word for referring to adult female people."[20]

Ironically, though, beauty contest organizers —— in their "desire to appear non-sexist —— now eschew the word "Miss" (as in Miss World) in favor of "Lady" (as in Lady World). And even now, men in general seem to still prefer "lady" when referring to a woman, especially in more formal or polite contexts.[21] (Perhaps most men still believe that, while all ladies are women, all women are not ladies.)

In addition to rejecting the use of "lady," the feminist movement also avoids —— as we all know —— the distinction between "Miss" and "Mrs." when referring to unmarried women. Surprisingly though, it was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that the distinction was made. Until then, the words were used interchangeably.[22] Moreover, the title "Ms." was not invented by the feminists; rather, it is well over fifty years old, and first appeared on a gravestone in 1767![23] "Ms.," though, is perhaps favored more by unmarried women than married, and thus is a euphemism for "Miss".

The Generic Masculine

Still another area of linguistic concern for the feminist movement is the generic masculine "he" (as in "Everyone loves himself."). One of the most common ways of getting around the generic masculine is through the use of "they","their" or "them" as singular pronouns (as in "Everyone loves themselves."). The glaring breach of grammar is rationalized by citing great writers who have used this form, e.g., George Bernard Shaw ("It's enough to drive one out of their senses.") or F. Scott Fitzgerald ("Nobody likes a mind quicker than their own.").[24]

Indeed, the use of "they" and "their" as singular pronouns is becoming more and more pronounced in colloquial speech. It is argued that the singular "they" is "widely used in speech and writing and, despite the stigma of ungrammaticality that has become attached to it since the eighteenth century, the construction shows no signs of dying out."[25]

Although "one" has been advocated as a substitute for "he" or "his" (as in "Everyone does one's best."), such usage has never caught on,

especially in American English,because it is considered excessively pedantic and affected. Nevertheless, the use of "their" as a singular pronoun is ungrammatical and as such is of questionable use. A "one" is not a "many" and "someone" cannot be "they."

As we have seen from the ezamples above, the feminist movement has exerted a marked influence on the English language in recent years. The changes which have been advocated have, in large measure, come into general use. Whether this development has been positive, however, is open to question. It has been at the sacrifice of style and accuracy, and as such is lamentable. The critic John Simon says it best: "Equal job opportunities, salaries, and recognition are what will [give] women [sexual equality] , something to be achieved not by meddling with language but by political action. Yet woe betide if this is accomplished at the cost of sacrificing womanliness in women and manliness in men. Men and women must continue to attract each other through characteristics peculiar to their respective sexualities and sexes; a world in which we cease to be sexually fascinating to one another through certain differences will be a world well lost. And this may be a very real danger to —— not mankind, not womankind, and certainly not genkind. To humankind."[26]

NOTES

1 .Dennis Baron, *Grammar and Gender,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.116

2 .Baron, pp.115-116.

3 .John Simon, *Paradigms Lost,* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc. /

Publishers, 1980), p.35.

4 .Casey Miller & Kate Swift, *Words and Women: New Language in New Times,* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p.46.

5 .Miller & Swift, p.126.

7 .As quoted in Baron, p.136.

8 .Baron, p.126.

9 .Baron, p.141.

10 . Simon, p.37.

11 . Simon, p.37.

12 . Simon, p.25.

13 . Miller & Swift, *in passim.*

14 . Baron, p.179.

15 . As quoted in Baron, p.183.

16 . Richard Mitchell, *The Leaning Tower of Babel,* (Boston: Little. Brown and Co., 1984), p.225.

17 . Russell Baker, “Nopersonclature,” New York *Times,* March 4, 1973, sec. 4, p.13.

18 . Baron, p.180.

19 . Baron, p.155.

20 . Casey Miller & Kate Swift, *The Handbook of Non-Sexist Writing,* (New York: Lippincott & Cromwell, 1980), pp.74-77.

21 . Bobbye D. Sorrels, *The Non-Sexist Communicator: Solving the Problems of Gender and Awkwardness in English,* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p.139.

22 . Baron, p.164.

23 . Baron, p.167.

24 . Miller & Swift, *Words and Women,* pp.135-136.

25 . Baron, p.193.

26 . Simon, p.38.

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