The Emotional Unraveling of Women In Selected American Western Narratives Fact and Fiction

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Abstract
This paper is divided into three sections. The initial portion of this project looks to scholarly historians and literary critics for insight into western women’s stereotypes and those elements that contribute to women’s disillusionment, betrayal and ultimate crisis. I investigate those environmental factors integral to the western landscape: the climate and natural phenomena that add to the difficulties women run up against in this place. Finally I examine theorists’ and historians’ perspectives on creativity and the western woman as a means of coping with the strains of living in the West. The second section of the project offers analysis of B. M. Bower’s Lonesome. Landand her protagonist, Valeria Peyson Fleetwood, and then turns to the papers of Pearl Unglesbee Danniel, a homesteader to eastern Montana in the early 1900s. The final component of the paper is memoir: the story of my mother’s western experience as seen through my eyes. One wonders about truth or validity in such a narrative and I can only answer—it is my truth. It is how I witnessed and interpreted happenings as a young child, until now. My mother’s experience varies from the others as it doesn’t exactly follow the script of the traditional western woman, but it is no less valuable and no less disturbing. It is a love story gone wrong and all that follows. This thesis invites the reader to rethink and redefine the “frail western woman” so as to validate her experience and her frailty, in fact and fiction.

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The West Africans, especially the women, also made Delano uncomfortable, though he couldn’t say why. There were nearly 30 females on board, among them older women, young girls, and about nine mothers with suckling infants. Benito Cereno is one of the bleakest pieces of writing in American literature. Published in installments in late 1855, midway between the commercial and critical failure of Moby-Dick and the start of the Civil War, the novella reads like a devil’s edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, which had appeared a few years earlier. His life encapsulated not the exhaustion of the American Revolution, as Melville experienced it in the 1850s, but the revolution’s openness and sense of possibility. “Fiction” is defined as any imaginative re-creation of life in prose narrative form. All fiction is a falsehood of sorts because it relates events that never actually happened to people (characters) who never existed, at least not in the manner portrayed in the stories. However, fiction writers aim at creating “legitimate untruths,” since they seek to demonstrate meaningful insights into the human condition.