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Ideological Messaging and the Role of Political Literature



Önder Çakırtaş

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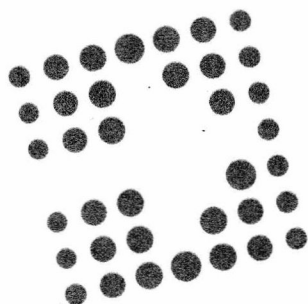
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Preface

All literature is political...

When, centuries ago, Aristotle pointed the orientation/management of individual or social will of persons with his eminent dictum 'man is a political animal', he never ignored the ongoing literary activities of people from the most primitive period till those that would be based upon his theories in modern era. On the contrary, he was proving that the art and literature were the most dynamic activities of the political expressions. Similarly, in *Poetics*, he defined the most experiential human echo via *mimesis* which provided the expression of movement and a core meaning of sometimes political and sometimes symbolic manifestation, thus constructing a living carrier of interpersonal communication. Accordingly, literature has often become the most apparent reflection of latent policies within interpersonal, social, governmental and cultural relations.

George Orwell once notoriously wrote that 'In our age there is no such thing as "keeping out of politics"'. Apparently, this discourse has been applicable till today. Politics encircles all of man's actions - financial, spiritual, artistic, official, military, and methodical - everything, undeniably, that has an effect on the life of human being. Literature is itself correspondingly all-inclusive. From Aristotle onwards writers have embraced his dictum that 'man is a political animal'. With this stimulus, it is the aim of this compilation to outline the interlinking of politics and literature, to illustrate by well-judged reference and annotations how those essentially working within an assortment of parts of human doings controlled/impacted and were controlled/impacted by those who were writing the novels, poems and plays within the numerous epochs. An endeavour has been made to demonstrate the unique role that such writers take to the understanding of their era by good worth of their uncharacteristic ingenious sense for their focus and the strongly individual viewpoint from which they monitor the ideological and political trends that afford their encouragement and come up to their artistic visualization. In its turn, the political verification, besides and beyond its fundamental value, provides to situate the inspired witness of the writers.

Defined as 'the art of governance' in the simplest sense, politics is described as a pragmatic reflection of the ontological or epistemological value judgments or human mannerisms. Similarly, in Aristotle's *Politics*, politics is emphasized to be 'the idea of interest-oriented will of men'. Politics has become a major challenge in the spheres from social sciences and humanities to art and music; from positive sciences to space science; from the ancient city, which was dominated by *polis*, to the information age that we are in, in which the state of nationalist sentiment has gradually evolved into multinational being. Naturally, the dearth of political themes has not been probable in literature. As Paul A. Cantor writes in *Literature and Politics: Understanding the Regime*, "In the classical view, literature will tend to reflect the spirit of the regime under which it is written, the dominant opinions and constitutive political principles. Living under a tyrant, poets will sing the praises of tyranny and above all the specific despot in power. Even under a democracy, poets will cater to and reinforce the democratic prejudices of their audience". Indeed, this situation is observed in all literary genres. Writers reflect before and after (pre and post themes) of the period(s) in which they have lived in view of ideological discourses, political contrasts, and radical references with historiographical, biographical or autobiographical, structural, social, cultural, economic and ideological touches. Therefore, differing ideas create contrasts and contradictions of human nature signify not only ideological philosophies but also political backdrop(s) of any culture. That's all behind the preference of the title of *Ideological Messaging and the Role of Political Literature*.

In fact, there are differing reasons why we decide this as our book title. First, and foremost, it is unavoidable to put emphasis on the fact that every single author overwhelmingly wants to put into words his messages in his need to get in touch with and give pleasure to the readers. Second, literature is and will be the most vivid transporter of the ideas, facts, notes, and feelings. In each essay of that volume, the contributors feel something of their own culture, trying to correlate each famous name of their own cultural heritage with ideology, politics, power, governmental policies, religion and etc.

The authors of the several chapters in this book have hunted to amalgamate politics and literature in the sincerity that the study of each is improved by this means. They have been free to approve their own approach within the broad general pattern of the book. The chapters themselves have every now and then also a meticulous angle and weight. Annotations, for example, have had to be more thorough in some chapters than in others. All the contributors to the book are in agreement, however, in the credence that literature is the construction of real men and women, in fact breathing in an particular set of political state of affairs, themselves both the designs and the designers of their times.

1. WRITING AS IDEOLOGICAL MESSAGING

In the first chapter, for instance, Daniel Bristow revisits the events of the Rising that took place in Dublin in Easter week 1916, and its before and after, through the lenses of three literary works – James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), Sean O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), and W. B. Yeats' 'Easter, 1916' (1916, pub. 1921) – employing theorisations of temporality set out in Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993), and a concentration on hauntological ellipses and spectral insignias, to analyse the political periods in which the works are set, as well as mapping the potentials of the events, and their effects on the present day.

The chapter begins by enumerating recent resurgences of violence in Ireland since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and tackle them in relation to Francis Fukuyama's pronouncement on 'the end of history'; it will do so by employing Derrida's argument that there is no end to history, only to certain conceptions of history. It is from here that the essay will launch its interrogation of the three works within its remit. In relation to these works and the idea of hauntology that Derrida sets out in *Specters of Marx*, moments of ellipsis and omission will be looked for amongst them, as constituting as important significations in the texts as that which is explicitly said. Taking *Dubliners* as the first example, the unusual prevalence of ellipses in the characters' speech in its opening story will be looked at first, before moving onto an investigation of the text's spectral insignia, or indeed 'ideological messaging'; that is, what is said through the text, again less explicitly, by its use of colouration, for example, specifically in relation to the colours of the Irish tricolour flag, which is then discussed itself in its historical context.

As *Dubliners* is the earliest of the texts, it will be dealt with first individually, before bringing the three texts together towards the latter part of the essay. Next to be discussed is Yeats' 'Easter, 1916', primarily to establish the context of the Easter Rising, and then to look at in detail in relation to its treatment of violence, death and the martyrdom and hagiography that followed it, and how this was able to 'change utterly' relationships as previously formed, such as his own to John MacBride – the insurrectionary husband of his true love Maud Gonne – who was shot as a leader of the Rising. Third, O'Casey's *The Shadow of Gunman* will be discussed in terms of shadow and shadowiness, which is similar to omission in keeping things hidden, in omitting truths, the consequences of which are seen to their end in the play, when the lead character, Donal Davoren, plays up to his mistaken identity as a gunman, and fatally endangers his love interest, Minnie Powell. It is this consequentiality which will be put through the lens of Derrida's disquisitions on temporality in *Specters of Marx*, as it is in effect the future that effects the past to make the present in O'Casey's play, the mechanisms of which will be explained in the play's analysis.

The next section in the essay, subtitled 'Vast elliptical egressive and reentrant orbits', after a line from Joyce's *Ulysses*, will demonstrate the presence felt through omission in the interactions between the three authors here under scrutiny. For example, Joyce notably left out excessive mention of Yeats from his works, whereas others are mockingly referred to often within his texts; Yeats had turned down O'Casey's first play *The Silver Tassie*, a fact which goes unsaid in O'Casey's works but not forgotten; and O'Casey was mistakenly taken to be author of *Finnegans Wake* in the *Irish Times*, which annoyed Joyce greatly. The politics of these interactions between these luminaries thus add another layer of intrigue to the analysis of their works within the essay. This very presence of omission between the writers will then be looked for in the texts under discussion themselves and it will be shown how politics within the works rears itself, but is also quashed by the negotiatory methods of the texts themselves and the characters at large within them. The traumatic kernel of politics is thus shown to operate by bringing characters close to political realities, which they are often seen wishing to distance themselves from thereafter, in O'Casey and Joyce especially.

To conclude the essay, the three writers' works will be matched against three Hegelian modes of history taken from his *The Philosophy of History*, 'Original', 'Reflective', and 'Philosophical', and this will attempt to show how differing encounters with history and spectrality go to constitute the present and the future. This will lead into a discussion of the revolutionary potential of Easter, 1916 – by engaging with existing critique on this matter, notably from Catherine Belsey – and a discussion of how this has been subsequently realised. It will argue that in terms of temporality: 'Whilst it is historical hauntology and violent spectrality – coming from the future, effecting the past – that will make of our present utterly what it is, to act in that present, decisively (that is, within the present's inherent undecidability) – with words or deeds, and to know that they will take effect – is the only way to ensure the coming of 'that which has not yet arrived', the 'arrivant' – as Derrida calls it – history, itself. To not act, on the other hand, would perhaps be to forgo possibility – the possibility of possibility, the decision of undecidability, politics – itself. In that case, not only would the revolution not be televised, in Gil Scott-Heron's words, but there would be no chance of it being rerun...'

Eddie Campos Jr., in the second chapter of the book, touches upon Orwellian thinking, and he correlates language and politics. The history of politics is one which finds itself inextricably interlaced with language. Through countless documents and speeches, the words chosen and their order have influenced the course of policy and life for every strata of society. One need look no further than the continuing debate over the *Second Amendment of the American Bill of Rights* to find an example of language in politics and its potential repercussions on not only the State but its citizens and their everyday lives. Every political election features not only the

constant stream of speechifying and euphemism from potential candidates, but an endless round of media and public attention dissecting the content of those speeches. In our modern era of 24-hour news cycles and the ease of communication provided by the internet this observation is especially true. However, we can find examples of such thought going back thousands of years and from a multitude of philosophical viewpoints. Since World War II – a war synonymous with the manipulation of an entire nation for the purposes of war and the commission of atrocities – the study of language and politics has found itself focused on the ways in which language can be exercised as an effective means of large-scale control. Of course, like any important philosophical debate, the relationship between politics and language has found itself the subject of literary works as well as works of nonfiction.

Chief among writers who have tackled the topic in fiction, George Orwell created the concept for an entire language rooted in the sort of fascist authoritarianism he witnessed as a journalist in the Second World War. The language, “Newspeak,” encapsulates the fundamental ability of language to control a population, molding and eliminating free thought. The construction of this fictional language stands as one of Orwell’s chief accomplishments, embodying the horror of the dystopian government explored in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. However, Newspeak becomes problematic as an application of Orwell’s linguistic philosophy when compared to his influential essay, *Politics and the English Language*. The short-comings of, and dangers to, the English language which Orwell describes in his essay seem at-odds with the language which he would shortly produce in his vision of the bleak, fascist future. My proposed chapter seeks to explore Newspeak and Orwell’s philosophy of language in order to either track the development away from one thought to the other, or to bring in line the theory present in *Politics and the English Language* with Newspeak, the assumed action precipitated by that theory. This examination begins with a discussion of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and the language of Newspeak itself. For example, in an appendix which appears at the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, titled “The Principles of Newspeak,” an unknown narrator describes the structure of our constructed, dystopian language in great detail. The lexicon of Newspeak is split into three categories: the A, B, and C vocabularies. The A vocabulary consists of simple words, words which are required to function in everyday life such as “eat,” “drink,” and “work.” The author of this appendix describes the new lexicon as a sanitized shell of its former self, with words stripped of all but one, concrete meaning. In an example, the author claims that it would no longer be possible to state that one were “drinking in his surroundings,” the secondary meaning of the word “drink” having been abolished. Already we begin to see more clearly the control at work in this language. Our language relies heavily on invention and reappropriation for metaphors, idioms, and other poetic expressions. When “drink” can only mean “drink” in the most literal sense, when all words contain within themselves a singular,

unimpeachable meaning, the ability to transmit abstract thought becomes intensely difficult, if not impossible.

Campos' study continues on in its survey of Newspeak including its propensity for compounding and Germanic lexicon before returning to the question of "Politics and the English Language". Specifically, an examination of Newspeak which backgrounds itself in the "Politics" essay may have trouble viewing the creation of this new language as a continuation of the philosophy espoused in the essay. Contrary to Orwell's description of "Bad English" as heavily Latinate, overwrought, and metaphorical, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* posits the ultimate language of control as Germanic, staccato, and utilitarian.

However, *Politics and the English Language*, says a great deal more about Orwell's political and philosophical beliefs than it may seem at its Prescriptivist surface. Rather than simply complain about the aesthetic or structural deficiencies of overly-Latinate phrases or bad metaphors, what Orwell truly fears is the idea of Bad English working as a tool for dominance in the wrong hands. The error in Bad English arises not from its ugliness but rather from its inherent laziness. Orwell describes the effect of Bad English on the psyche as follows:

You can shirk [the trouble of creative thought] by simply throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you – even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent – and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connection between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear. (Orwell, 1946, p. 165)

Thus we find the true center of Orwell's philosophy on language, the power of language as both tool for thought and weapon of control. The actual claim made here by Orwell deserves some attention as its ramifications can be seen throughout this essay and beyond. The creative drive, the will to make oneself clearly and completely understood, is here referred to as "trouble." Plainly, Orwell does not believe that such work is troublesome but, rather, necessary for an intellectually fulfilling life. The incendiary language here acts as a call-to-action, a challenge to the reader who does not wish to be seen as shirking the responsibility of free thought. Following this observation, Orwell makes the controversial claim that "ready-made phrases" can begin to think for you, "concealing your meaning even from yourself." This statement ties together the entirety of "Politics and the English Language." The danger of Bad English lies in its ease of use, its siren-call which beckons the lazy speaker or writer to repeat rather than compose.

Though he never mentions it by name, Orwell is here referring to a version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, a controversial theory which claims that one's native

language has an immense effect on their thought and very perception of reality. Ultimately, it is this theory which Orwell espouses in both his essay and the creation of Newspeak. In this chapter, I will further reconcile Orwell's theory of political language with the creation of Newspeak by exposing the constructed language's role as a successor to "Bad English," an unavoidable final step and ultimate warning which, rather than negating Orwell's warnings in "Politics," acts as its biggest support.

The ideological and political usage of language is concurrently addressed by Hüseyin Rzaev and Aygün Hassanova in the third chapter. With their title, Aziz Nesin's *"An Ass the Prime Vezier" as a Mirror of Inequality*, the contributors aim to study how and to what extent the language used by the representatives of different social groups in a Turkish author's (Aziz Nesin's) story is not simply a mere means of communication but a system of existing conventions the nature of which has historically stemmed from the power relations and inequality in the life of the nation. Aziz Nesin's sensitivity about the highly distinctive styles applied by different characters prove the clearest cases of predictable correlations between features of language and social status of the language society members, which also updates the context, the organization of which depends not only on the character of interaction, but also on such components as who the communicants are, what social group members they represent, the circumstance they are communicating in, the objective of the discussion and other possible reasons which influence this or that model and manner of communication process. The aim of the story has directly found its reflection in the functional design of the events; the text opening background information functions as a constraint providing a vital clue as to the character as well as ordering of the events in the story. The paper also examines how Nesin, "introducing the commonest type of the background information", in fact, warns us about how the rules of seemingly quiet way of life will be "violated" by the clash of the "worlds" of the representatives of different social groups. Without attempting to retell the ordering of the events and the prose styles of the characters, we catalogue various lexical expressions, and grammatical constructions of "power" and "inequality", contrasting the richness, cruelty and roughness of the padishah and the villager, rebelling because of being despised without any reason, on the one hand, and behavior of the palace people like a real pest and the padishah's wildness and foaming at the mouth, on the other. Hence, in the relational sense power applies only where there is both conflict and inequality between the interacting subjects. For Nesin, such kind of relational conflicts are typical (and will be found) where interests fundamentally collide. Under this constraint, "power is conceived as something that is necessarily wielded against those over whom it is exercised" (Rigstad 2006:111). In this sense, interconnectedness of power/inequality and the use of language by different social groups are central to Nesin's story.

The argumentative structure of this approach claims to investigate the foundations of the “social seeing of the case with Nesin’s eyes” as a sequence of the following steps:

1. Positioning/designing the events of the text as a key element for its appropriate comprehension (a historically relevance principle combining the past with the present showing to everlasting social inequality).
2. Demonstrating and interpreting the interdependence between the textual and social characteristics of the story by means of examples. Hence, systemic describing of “how social inequality shapes the language” as well as “how language reflects and can shape/change the social situation”.

In this paper, the contributors are also exploring how Nesin’s “An Ass the Prime Vezier” adopts conventions of realism to critique the discourse of inequality applying the triadic foundations of discursive operations of textuality (in its broadest sense), reality (to unmask and construct the essential fictional character of inequality) and the visible (as evidence of the visual intelligibility of the world and the meaningfulness of the visible, and in the rhetorical power of textual appeals to visible reality) (Kanzler, 2009; Brooks, 2005, p. 3; Barthes, 2006, p. 234).

Maria Luisa Di Martino, on the other hand, aims to explore the debate on development in the literary production of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, by reading hidden ideological and political messages across relevant works of Latin-American and Anglophone authors. This chapter is structured in three main parts: the first part draws an itinerary across the debate about development and the analysis of its historical stages, including a conceptualization of the topic. Arturo Escobar’s plot and the Dependency Theory are the main conceptual frameworks. The second part concerns the main aspects of the debate on development/underdevelopment, and new definition proposals, such as the new/post-development(s) approaches. In the third part, the author explores the relation between political and ideological positions in the literary production across the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. Indeed, this relation is an important reference to understand the origin of the development theory throughout history. In the conclusions, the author shows the most relevant elements which reveal the existing link of the ideological debates on the development topics in the literature.

There seems to be a strong connection between the western myth of modernization and the myth of development across history and literature. This link is hidden in the authors’ texts and discourses, as well as it is implicit in their characters’ voices. Therefore, it is possible to define both of them from different approaches of the current debate on development.

On the other hand, it is possible to disclose the evolution of these myths from different standpoints through literature. Actually, they can be identified in Latin-American literature in the dichotomic categories of “civilization” and “barbarism”. This dichotomy can be found in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s work *Facundo* (1845). Nevertheless, whilst in this work “civilization” and “barbarism” debate lies on a material level, those categories have been progressed on a spiritual and symbolic level in Rómulo Gallegos’ *Doña Bárbara* (1929), in which the debate on development was framed as the struggle between “progress” and “underdevelopment”. Furthermore, other political and ideological categories are present in José Martí’s work *Nuestra América* (1891), for example, in terms of conflict between “man” and “Nature”. On the other side, the Anglophone literary production illustrates the criticism on the imperialistic vision of London City in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925); or in Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1815), with a subtle postcolonial criticism through the text. In those works and visions, separating ideological messages from historical events and literary production is impossible, since they are subjacent in the scenario of their criticism to the existing society.

It is evident that in western literary production the main pretension has been to stigmatize the “alien”, the “other” as different and inferior, thereby to justify western’s inappropriate acts of exploitation of natural and human resources in the colonies. In addition, the western hegemonic discourse of cultural superiority in the literature has been constructed to justify western’s “barbarism” as a strategic action of supremacy establishment. Thus, asymmetrical power relationships are reflected in the literary production in the same way.

As Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen do, authors such as Edward Said suggest a critic to the western colonial and imperialistic system. Actually, Said in his work *Orientalism* (1978) shows that the “situated” language is the creator of images of the world. Thus, languages and literatures are vehicles of specific realities, narrated from a specific cultural hegemony’s perspective.

Another important witness of socio-political and historical realities is the Shakespearean influence present in José Enrique Rodó’s *Ariel* (1900), representing the school of thought “arielism”. It symbolizes, indeed, the main critic to the alienation of the western societies implicated in the development process, versus the genuine vision and human integrity of the underdeveloped Latin-American countries. Therefore, his work has been considered the manifest of Latin American struggle supporting the genuine life and spiritual values, against the materialistic and imperialistic values of the United States of America. In these examples, the literary production throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, speaks and shows clearly to the lectors the problem of the “location” of knowledge, from where the world is strategically defined and labelled, in order to feed conflictive representations of the “other” cultures for a specific hegemonic benefit. In addition, in the current debate

on knowledge location, it is also important to stress that asymmetrical power of the literary voices is also translated to the publication power, gender relations, and the range of dissemination that “located” literary production has to face.

In relation to the post-colonial African literary production, Doris Lessing’s works, such as *The Grass is Singing* (1950), and *The Golden Notebook* (1962), are also strong vehicles of historical and ideological messages, hidden throughout the texts. Moreover, the best voices of African anti-apartheid literature are authors such as J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer. Principally, Gordimer is the highest symbols of the ethical struggle against apartheid. Indeed, African post-colonial literature is a very important example of the social and moral complaint nature of literary production, which is linked to a specific political and ideological background; consequently, it is marginalized within the global literary production. Inequality, due to race and ethnicity, as well as several level of violence (direct, indirect, and symbolic violence) are both stressed in the African authors’ work. Moreover, in western literature an individual perspective is predominant; by contrast, in post-colonial literary production the authors embody a purer community voice. In conclusion, the author would explore some important factors, which should be taken into consideration in the analysis of the debate on Development in the literary production, as well as in the analysis of the relation between political-ideological messages and literature, as follow: a) the representation of the rupture between communitarian traditional models (indigenous, for example) and the western society models, resulting from the modernity process; b) the notion of time, which is different from Europe to Latin-America. Western countries have a clock and a timetable, while the other traditional groups, such as the indigenous or Afro-American communities, have “several times”, as to say a notion of time far from industrialization, markets, and modernization processes; c) the notion of social space, in which territory influences the human development, as the visions of the world are constructed on systemic relationship among several actors in the symbolic territory of the social space. In that sense, the local empowerment is also reflected in the literary production of the three last centuries, took into account; d) the asymmetrical relations of power, which are also reflected in the analyzed authors’ works.

Finally, literature seems to hide a debate on development, characterized by the same dichotomous thinking which is parallel to the process of solving the dilemma in the development theory between the 80s and 90s. In 1991 the death of the development was declared in Geneva, when the term “post-development” was used for first time. Nevertheless, its spirit is still alive in literary production, academic, and philosophical works (such as in the Latin-American Liberation Philosophy), as well as in official reports. In contemporary literature, terms as risk, precariat, challenges, and new developments are used in order to reflect new realities, new relation systems, and ideologies. New methodologies of information and communication technologies,

as well as new categories and approaches, such as intersectionality and gender mainstreaming, are involved in the literary production. Thus, the main question is: what is the next step in rethinking the development debate in the literature?

Some ideas are analyzed as new re-definitions of the development in contemporary literature, enriched by the globalization and neoliberal process, breaking up with the categories of North and South, or with the concept of separate realities coexisting in the reality, as in fact, these are interconnected, and do work together in a systemic way. There is an inter-categorical play to explore among categories such as race, nationality, gender, and class, in the literary production with direct or indirect ideological baggage. This play is focused through the intersectional approach and mainstreaming. New categories are leading, actually, with the concept of liquid identity in the contemporary literary production, hand in hand with the work of positive thinking literature.

Lastly, in this section, Maximiliano Korstanje, with his title *The Roots of Evilness and Biblical Literature*, revolves around the concept of evil and its recival in Christianity. The revolt commanded by Lucifer in the heaven marked a start in the cosmology of Christianity. Although scholars agree the problem of evilness as one of the most vivid contradictions of Catholic Church, it is clear that God forgives its life. Unlike other traditions or mythologies where the Gods kill the dissidents or inflict unbearable torments, Judaism and Christianity continue the dialectic relations between goodness and evilness by the introduction of forgiveness. That way, these cosmologies neglect the possibility of dying, creating the desire to embrace the life. The riot of Lucifer exhibits our ancient panic to the offspring death.

2. GENDER, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS

What makes this book different is its all-inclusive call to undertake the central role of political literary writing. For that reason, the book comprises some chapters of exclusively gender, identity and the related politics to address many challenging topics. For instance, Hannah Slough and David Anderson address the history of the female voice in literature, and specifically the limitations on the expressive agency of women.

Political agenda framing and promotion depend on public voice as an important medium for ideological messaging (Rheingold, 2008). Public voice is a “potential source for influence or even power” and can refer to the recitation of a speech, publishing of a poem or even posting of a status on a social media platform (Levine, 2006). As women take on more prominent roles in politics and social discourse, it is critical to understand the gendered nature of public voice within this ideological messaging process. The nature of expression in the public sphere is gendered based