

# We Can Do It!







WILL WOMEN SHARING POLITICAL POWER  
EQUALLY WITH MEN  
CHANGE THE WAY WE LIVE?

- Literary creativity - associated with  
**Political and Social movements** - (French  
Revolution, Dalith movements, Feminist)
- Inseparably intertwined
- Interact with each other
- Two planes of the expression of an age

- Women's movements - since its inception-
- Given birth to a profusion of literary works
- And has been spurred (encouraged) and popularized by the literature associated with it.

- Compare to other movements in society-
- The struggle of women relies heavily on literature

- Literature is the only available vehicle for their self expression
- So there is a closer affinity between women's movements and the literature
- T V Reed elaborates: p.54

- Their protest, at bottom, is against the underlying ideology of society
- As a result - destined to face open hostility

- The trajectory of the growth of feminism is discussed in **Waves**
- Individual voices of protest were ....
- Before the organized struggle



- The poetry of a **Latin American nun**
- Who was keenly aware of the repressive impact of the patriarchal structure of society
- Started the first **expression of rebellion**

- According to the Latin American nun...
- Continual **subjection of women to male** authority and the **resultant acceptance of passivity** as their destined role **blighted** (ruin) **female potential and creativity** and made their life one of miseries

- Her own life illustrated the condition of women
- Her writing was perceived as libelous (harmful) writing - provoked the orthodox society
- Forced to remain dumb for the rest of her life

- Feminism is a collection of **movements and ideologies** that share a common goal:
- to define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women.

- This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment.
- A **feminist advocates or supports** the rights and equality of women.

- 
- Feminist Movements started in the West in the late 19th century and its development has three ways of evolution.



- **Mary Wollstonecraft** - regarded - one of the forerunners of the women's agitation for liberation

- The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
- A seminal literary repertoire (collection) of the movement
- **Plain out cry against** the exclusion of women from the domain of rights

- **Against the discrimination** they are to subjected to
- Above all - against the **suppression of their talent by confining them within the stifling (suffocate) sphere of domestic life**

- Observer of TV channel - she was **aware of happenings across the channel**
- **Responded actively** to the debates taking place in the wake of the revolution on a **wide variety of issues**

- She points out - **the injustice and absurdity of pushing women** to the margins of social life.

- What happened in France -?

- France fed on the philosophy of the Enlightenment -

- 

- Such a differential treatment of women is grossly (extremely, obviously) unfair



- **recognized the worth of the human being and his or her role to the enjoyment of natural rights**
- **differential treatment of women is grossly unfair**

- She refers to the **humanist ideal** of all human beings being born free
- Still.....

- The masculine bias, **deeply entrenched** (deeply ingrained, established) **in the psyche of a society**, is seen operating unchallenged in virtually all aspects of society.

- Report on Education - submitted by
- Perigord Talleyrand to the **National Assembly of France**
- Shows the deep rooted prejudice: p.55

- The Vindication is dedicated to the formidable<sub>(inspiring fear, intimidating)</sub> French clergymen
- With the hope that they will pay due attention to it

- At present- Denied women opportunities of self-fulfilment
- Deprived benefits of education
- Something so frightening- fraught(filled) with danger



- Training them frivolous occupations like - singing and sewing as though they are incapable of more serious pursuits
- Would cripple the progress of humanity.

- It amounts to **encouraging them to look upon themselves as ornaments**, adding felicity (enjoyment) to domestic life

- Her roles are flippant (frivolous, not serious)- which women are destined fulfil
- The so called female concern with trivialities (unimportance, insignificant) is the result of such indirect social persuasions
- At home, too she is not expected to move out of the established roles

- She is either a wife or a mother, never treated as an intellectual companions to man.
- Entrusting women who, it is argued, are unfit to receive education with the task of bringing up children, is illogical

- It would be a **blatant** (bleitnt-obvious) **instance of inhumanity** to deny a segment of society the privilege of rights





# First Wave Feminism

## Historical Content

Women widely are considered to be:

- Intellectually inferior
- Physically weak
- Emotional, intuitive, irrational
- Suited to the role of wife and mother
- Women could not vote
- They were not educated at school/universities and could only work in manual jobs.
- A married women's property and salary were owned by her husband

# First Wave Feminism

- Rape and physical abuse are legal within marriage
- Divorce available to men but far more difficult to women
- Women had no right to their children if they left a marriage
- Abortion was illegal.

# First Wave Feminism

- First-wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activity during the 19th and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.
- The key concerns of First Wave Feminists were education, employment, the marriage laws, and the plight of intelligent middle-class single women.

# First Wave Feminism

- Over all goal: to improve the legal position for women in particular to gain women the vote.
- Basic assumption:  
Men and women have separate, biologically determined roles and duties in society.  
Women work in the private sphere (the home), men in the public sphere.
- Active until the First World War I



# Second Wave Feminism

## Historical Background

- Women could attend school and university
- Women did not receive equal pay for the same work
- It was easier to gain a divorce but socially frowned upon
- Rape and physical abuse within marriage were illegal but husbands were rarely convicted
- Abortion was still illegal
- Women's bodies were objectified in advertising

# Second Wave Feminism

Basic assumptions:

- Society is patriarchal
- Women may have legal rights but they are still treated as inferior.
- Women should be equal to men in all respects.

# Second Wave Feminism

- The second wave of feminism which occurred in 1960-1980, came as a response to the experiences of women after World War II.
- It dealt with inequality of laws and pioneered by Betty Friedan.
- Women achieved championed abortion rights, reproductive freedom, and other women's health issues.

# Second-Wave Feminism



RAF020204-2/2/60-GREENSBORO, N.C.: A group of Negro students from North Carolina A&T College, who were refused service at a luncheon counter reserved for white customers, staged a sit-down strike at the F.W. Woolworth store in Greensboro 2/2. Ronald Martin, Robert Patterson and Mark Martin are shown as they stayed seated throughout the day. The white woman at left came to the counter for lunch but decided not to sit down. UPI TELEPHOTO fwb









Women's Strike for Peace, est. 1961. Here, WSP members protest during the Cuban Missile Crisis

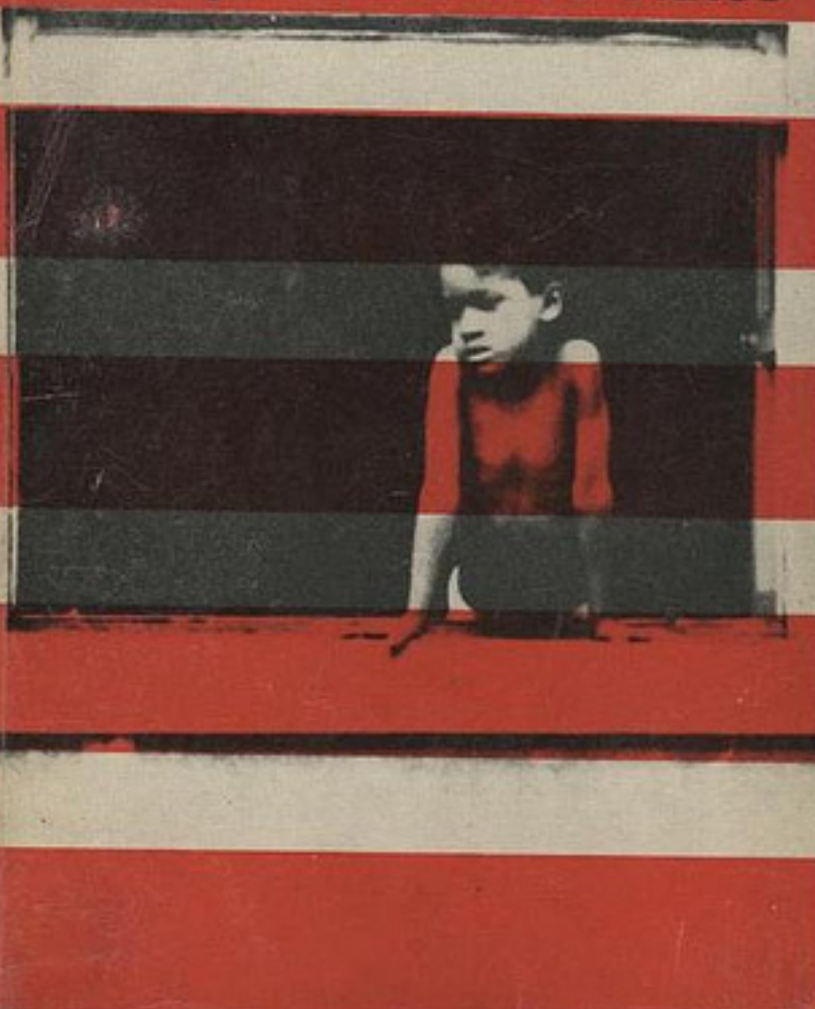
Michael Harrington



a Penguin Special 3/6

# The Other America

## Poverty in the United States



# Feminism re-emerges

- demographic shift begins in 1957
- women respond to civil rights movement
- early sign of dissent: Kennedy's President's Commission on the Status of Women (1961) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)





Dr. Wedel, second from left, with Eleanor Roosevelt (center) and President Kennedy at the appointment of the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women

THE YEAR'S MOST  
CONTROVERSIAL  
❧ BESTSELLER ❧

The  
Feminine  
Mystique  
BETTY FRIEDAN

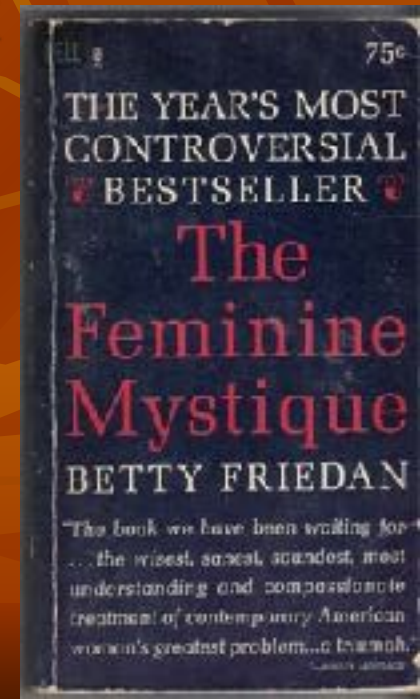
*"The book we have been waiting for  
... the wisest, sanest, soundest, most  
understanding and compassionate  
treatment of contemporary American  
woman's greatest problem...a triumph."*

—ASHLEY MONTAGU



# 1963

- [Betty Friedan](#) publishes her highly influential book *The Feminine Mystique*, which describes the dissatisfaction felt by middle-class American housewives with the narrow role imposed on them by society. The book becomes a best-seller and galvanizes the modern women's rights movement.



# The Feminine Mystique

- The problem that has no name
- Typical day of a women
  - Stay indoors
  - Take care of the family and household
  - Have dinner ready for their husband

If a woman had a problem in the 1950's and 1960's, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. What kind of a woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor? **She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it. If she tried to tell her husband, he didn't understand what she was talking about. She did not really understand it herself.**

But on an April morning in 1959, I heard a mother of four, having coffee with four other mothers in a suburban development fifteen miles from New York, say in a tone of quiet desperation, "the problem." And the others knew, without words, that she was not talking about a problem with her husband, or her children, or her home. Suddenly they realized they all shared the same problem, the problem that has no name. They began, hesitantly, to talk about it. Later, after they had picked up their children at nursery school and taken them home to nap, two of the women cried, in sheer relief, just to know they were not alone.

# 1964

- Title VII of the [Civil Rights Act](#) bars discrimination in employment on the basis of race and sex. At the same time it establishes the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC) to investigate complaints and impose penalties.



President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964





**National  
Organization  
for Women**

# 1966

- The National Organization for Women (NOW) is founded by a group of feminists including Betty Friedan. The largest women's rights group in the U.S.,
- NOW seeks to end sexual discrimination, especially in the workplace, by means of legislative lobbying, litigation, and public demonstrations.



# Betty Friedan



Activist  
Local Hero  
Friend

# Women's History

- Women earn the right to vote
  - 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- Women rally and march on several cities.



# Sixty-sixth Congress of the United States of America;

## At the First Session,

Begun and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the nineteenth day of May,  
one thousand nine hundred and nineteen.

---

### JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution extending the right of suffrage  
to women.

---

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States  
of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein),  
That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution,  
which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when  
ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States.*

"ARTICLE ———.

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or  
abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

"Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate  
legislation."

*F. H. Lilette*

*Speaker of the House of Representatives.*

*Thos. R. Marshall*

*Vice President of the United States and*

*President of the Senate.*



# Women during WWII



- NOW's stated purpose:
  - "To take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship thereof in truly equal partnership with men."

# Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon

The following represents a compilation and expansion of text, notes and comments from a talk Kathie Sarachild gave on consciousness-raising to the First National Conference of Stewardesses for Women's Rights in New York City, March 12, 1971.

Sarachild outlined the original program for "Radical Feminist Consciousness-Raising," which was presented at the First National Women's Liberation Conference outside Chicago, November 27, 1968.

## Kathie Sarachild

### THE IDEA

To be able to understand what feminist consciousness-raising is all about, it is important to see where it first began as a program among women who all considered themselves radicals.

Before we go any further, let's examine the word "radical." It is a word that is often used to suggest extremist, but actually it doesn't mean that. The dictionary says radical means root, coming from the Latin word for root. And that is what we meant by calling ourselves radicals. We were interested in getting to the roots of problems in society. You might say we wanted to pull up weeds in the garden by their roots, not just pick off the leaves at the top to make things look good momentarily. Women's Liberation was started by women who considered themselves radical in this sense.

Our aim in forming a women's liberation group was to start a mass movement of women to put an end to the

system of segregation and discrimination based on sex. We knew radical thinking and radical action would be necessary to do this. We also believed it necessary to form Women's Liberation groups which excluded men from their meetings.

In order to have a radical approach, to get to the root, it seemed logical that we had to study the situation of women, not just take random action. How best to do this came up in the women's liberation group I was in—New York Radical Women, one of the first in the country—shortly after the group had formed. We were planning our





# WOMEN UNITE!!



Friedan leading a strike in  
Manhattan in 1970.



EQUALITY NOW!!





# EQUALITY





**Betty Friedan**

**February 4, 1921-  
February 4, 2006**

**Consciousness-raising** -- studying the whole gamut of women's lives, starting with the full reality of one's own -- would also be a way of keeping the movement radical by preventing it from getting sidetracked into single issue reforms and single issue organizing.

Whole areas of women's lives were declared off limits to discussion. The topics we were talking about in our groups were dismissed as "petty" or "not political." Often these were the key areas in terms of how women are oppressed as a particular group -- like housework, childcare and sex. Everybody from Republicans to Communists said that they agreed that equal pay for equal work was a valid issue and deserved support.

But when women wanted to try to figure out why we weren't getting equal pay for equal work anywhere, and wanted to take a look in these areas, then what we were doing wasn't politics, economic or even study at all, but "therapy," something that women had to work out for themselves individually.

## Scenes from the Miss America Protest:







Copyright© by Jo Freeman





Copyright© by Jo Freeman



Copyright© by Jo Freeman

# Varieties of Second-Wave Feminism

- Liberal feminism
- Radical feminism
- Cultural feminism
- Socialist feminism



- Kate Millet-
- another luminary -
- greater theorist of radical feminism -
- She even surpasses Simone de Beauvoir
- Very Humble beginning- nothing remarkable

- Kate Millet-
- Started her career as a English teacher
- Self-discovery- led her to train herself as a painter and sculptor
- Organized exhibition of her artistic creations - Japan - America

- Later when she became active in politics
- she merged art and politics for a greater advantage

She started her public life in the early sixties where the feminist movement also became visible

Her book- *Sexual politics*- was a sensation -  
it gave a new dimension to feminist  
theory

Especially focusing on the relations of  
power between man and woman.



- The book is her doctoral thesis - examines the ramifications (implications) of politics in man woman relationships
- The focus of Simone de Beauvoir's work - patriarchal denial of woman's identity

- But Millet's concern - ubiquitous  
(everywhere) presence of power which is  
manipulated in such a way as to subjugate  
women

- When one group rules another, the relationship between the two is political.
- When such an arrangement is carried out over a long period of time it develops an ideology.
- Ex- feudalism, racism....

- All historical civilizations are patriarchies: their ideology is male supremacy” (sexual Politics)
- She made this unambiguously - clearly

- Sexual politics **openly denounces the misogynistic aspects** of Freudianism
- and **analyses the portrayal of women** in fiction authored by men.

- Triggered by the bitter consequences of unfair practice of power is seen - in her study of the torture and murder of an Indiana girl reported in the papers in 1965
- This girl symbolized the condition of womanhood

- The victimization of women recurs (reappear) as the **theme of much of her sculpture** -
- She also made **documentary films** to illuminate the nuances (shade) of power in the intimate private life of people

- Shulamith Firestone - *The Dialectic of Sex*
  - another major political statement of the women's movement
- She argued - “Basic division, the most profound oppression, in society was not class but sex; she hoped for a ‘true feminist revolution...”





- Germanine Greer - Australian - another influential writer
- Work- *The Female Eunuch* - published 1970-  
or natural dependence under which challenged  
the sense of inferiority h women lived.

- There are chapters on the middle-class myth of love and marriage;
- on why being ‘an abject (hopeless) of male fantasy’ actually desexualizes women...

- ...and on the way ‘cooking, clothes, beauty and housekeeping can become compulsive, anxiety- producing activities

- Sheila Rowbotham's - *Liberation and the New Politics*
- Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate*
- Even though they made some achievements of absolute rights - as a result of their first conflagration - (inferno)
- .

- **Their aim** and concentration focused more on liberation from all kinds of discrimination, cultural as well as political.

- There was persistent demand for equality across the board, in education, at the work place , and at home.

- Demonstrations organized by Robin Morgan against Miss America pageant (parade)- 1968 illustrate the focal shift of the movement.
- The pageant, the protesters alleged, was sexist (chauvinist) and racist (racially prejudiced)



- The term Women's Liberation acquired currency and was in popular parlance (manner of speaking) in the sixties
- Several associations for liberation sprang up-
- Chicago Women's Liberation Union-1969

- Sisterhood is powerful - The personal is Political” a more revolutionary outfit - with catchy slogans
- They disrupted the proceedings of the New York Legislature- demand for the repeal of abortion laws

- The Question of Essentialism

# S. de Beauvoir and J.P. Sartre



# The Second Sex

- Woman as the second sex
- The second sex derived from the first sex
- Women in the position of the “other”
- What does it mean to be an “other”?
- I and the other
- We and the other

# The Second Sex (1949)

- Women as the second sex
- The second sex as derived from the first sex
- Women have been defined as secondary to men who have been seen as the primary sex

# Duality of the sexes

- Duality of sexes in the history of ideas
- The male and the female acc. to traditional understanding that goes back to ancient philosophy

# Duality of the sexes

- The male is the rational being, the female deviates from the male
- Thomas Aquinas: “The female is an imperfect male”



# Traditional understanding of duality of the sexes

- Male
  - Rationality
  - Culture
  - Mind, soul
  - The role of men is to be pater familias and govern society
- Female
  - Body
  - Nature
  - Emotions
  - The role of women is to bear and rear children

# Women according to traditional duality of the sexes

- Women are “dangerous” in the public sphere because they are “unpredictable” as they are determined by their emotions (Hegel)

# Women according to traditional duality of the sexes

- Women should not to be allowed to take part in politics
- Women should keep silent in the church  
(Apostle Paul)

# Traditional duality of the sexes and Essentialism

- According to traditional dualistic theories about sexual difference:
- Sexual difference is understood to be based on different anatomy of the sexes
- The anatomy of women predestines them to fulfill certain roles

# Traditional duality of the sexes and Essentialism

- Women are thus “essentially” different from men
- Old believe that there is a women’s nature or essence
- This belief is the basis of traditional ideas about the division of sexual roles in society

# Essentialism about sexual difference

- Women's essence = women have certain attributes, all women and everywhere and at all times
- This is biological essentialism

# Essentialism about sexual difference

- According to it women have biological basis that makes them cognitively and morally different from men (less rational and less morally accountable)

# Essentialism

- Essentialism about sexual difference is therefore a very much criticized doctrine



# Beauvoir

- Are there really women? asks Beauvoir
- She means, is there a woman's essence?
- Their differences are determined by historical, social circumstances, and also different bodies
- That does not have to lead to biological essentialism

# Sex and gender

- To avoid essentialism about sexual difference  
anglo-american feminists make the distinction  
between
- Sex and Gender
- Sex is biological sex
- Gender has to do with the social, historical  
determinates of the difference of men and women

- ESSENTIALISM

- Women as a class unified by the possession of certain unique qualities
- First wave- emphasized - equality with men

- Early activists believed- it is the unjust social system that discriminated against women- kept them subservient to men
- What is the cause? Nobody knows
- Difference of status between men and women

- Wollstonecraft's book of defense for women is the inherent equality of all human beings
- Irrationality of depriving women of the rights enjoyed by men

- Many critics raised voice against the unfairness of subordination
- Writers like- Bentham and JS Mill
- Unfairness of subordinating women to men

- This was also a stage - marked - men bringing about legislation in favour of women
- There are some essential difference - many are aware of it

- Suffragists pleaded this essential difference as the rationale for **enfranchisement**
- Even the beginning of the twentieth century- the position of women - on this question remained vague



- Paradoxical claim made by a leading suffragist
- Harriet Burton Laidlaw- “Feminist Theory and Feminist Movements” -

- “...insofar as women were like men they deserved the same rights, and insofar as they differed they ought to represent themselves”

- Simone de Beauvoir - was a greatest anti-essentialists
- Her reasoning is based upon principles of existentialism

- Philosophy emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice.
- It is the view that humans define their own meaning in life
- and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe.

- Existentialists assume -
- the existence precedes (to go before) essence and that each individual creates himself or herself or fulfills his/her existence in unique way.

- So there is no any great difference  
between sexes

- But her examination of history of humankind shows -
- There is an ideology - against the interests of women

- Gender being largely the creation of society, women have to fight against this insidious (danger) projection of a false image, and thereby achieve equality with men.



Shulamith Firestone - joined hands with  
Simone de- and found  
that **reproductive function** to be the  
greatest hindrance for women in the  
struggle to free themselves from the  
shackles of patriarchal tradition.

Biological weakness that is exploited for the  
exercise of male power over women

She also viewed- maternity itself as an  
artificial construct -

Ascribed to neutrality to sex divisions

- Recourse to modern technology would liberate women from the disadvantages of biological peculiarities.

- Thus she advocates abortion, and the use of contraceptives
- Communal child rearing also would help shatter the myth of maternity

- This was not accepted by many-
- The concept of freedom as an adoption of masculine ways of looking upon the world by...

- ...a wholesale rejection of essential female attributes, did not find favour with the radical feminists of the sixties.

- Some of the writers felt-
- being inducted into the world of males, merely sharing space with them did not constitute true liberation

- Instead, it would a validation  
(legalization) and perpetuation  
(continuation) of the typically masculine  
attitude to life



- Women should first learn to overcome their sense of inferiority-
- to assert their felinity instead of shying away from their fundamentally female nature

- Not an entry into the rational world of patriarchy, but the creation of a female space
- Establishment of an essentially female culture

- But the anti-essentialists believed - social space dominated by men - to which they had no access, was in itself not reprehensible, if only they could be welcomed into it.

- They were arguing against the exclusivist, unethical nature of this domain of culture
- The end of feminist struggle is to expand this domain to include women

- Here is where we find the difference between essentialists and anti-essentialists appear conspicuous -

- According to the latter - the end of the movement is not merely the extension of this space to include them, but a deconstruction of this splendid structure of values to find acceptance of their femaleness and dignity in society.

- Rhetoric of Kate Millet: inimical

## Third Wave Feminism

- Third wave feminism was a continuation and response to the perceived failures of the second wave.
- The movement that called as young feminist emphasizing collective action to effect changes and embrace the diversity represented by various feminisms.
- They focused on a multicultural emphasis and strived to address problems stemming from sexism, racism, social class inequality and homophobia.



# Third Wave Feminism

## Historical Content

- Women seem to be more equal to men
- Women are no longer obligated to marry or have children, and marriage is more equal.
- The legal system is better at protecting women's right.

# Third Wave Feminism

- Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it seems the second wave's "essentialist" definitions of femininity, which often assumed a universal female identity and over-emphasized the experiences of upper-middle-class white women.
- Third-wave feminists such as Elle Green often focus on "micro-politics", and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for women.

- One of the charges directed against the second wavers - it addressed - an audience composed of “white, middle class, heterosexual” women

- Ignored- “women who do not inhabit what is relatively privileged social position” (Susan Gubar)

- Common feeling- their problems among women of various classes and races were unique and were sidetracked under the supposition of a common essence

- As a result they questioned patriarchal interventions of binaries - such as male/female, culture/nature

- During the second wave - interests - criticized - the focus began to undergo a shift towards micro-politics
- Many leaders felt - even those who rooted in the theories of the middle phase -

- Gloria Anzaldua, Bell Hooks- felt the need for a new subjectivity in the feminist voice



- Till now the voice heard was of the privileged class of women
- Witnessed a proliferation of critical and theoretical work

- Diana Fuss- focused on issues dealing with people other than those belonging to the white, heterosexual, middle class

- Concern - ways of representing the experiences of minorities -
- So far been ignored or glossed over
-

- 1981 anthology - **This Bridge Called My Back:**
- *Writings by Radical Women of Color* (poem)
- Provides a glimpse into the new ideology
- One of the essayists in the collection express her dislike of white women quite frankly:

- Increasing opposition to essentialist  
arguments
- It is not possible to conceive a common  
experience of oppression-

- By doing that - outweigh other forms of tyranny
- The question is whether a black woman has more in common with white women of the upper middle class or with black men

- Another pitfall of essentialism - tendency to accentuate the structures of male dominance in society

- Hence the deconstruction of the binaries  
is central to the third wave feminists
- Amy Schriefer clarifies the position of the  
third wavers:





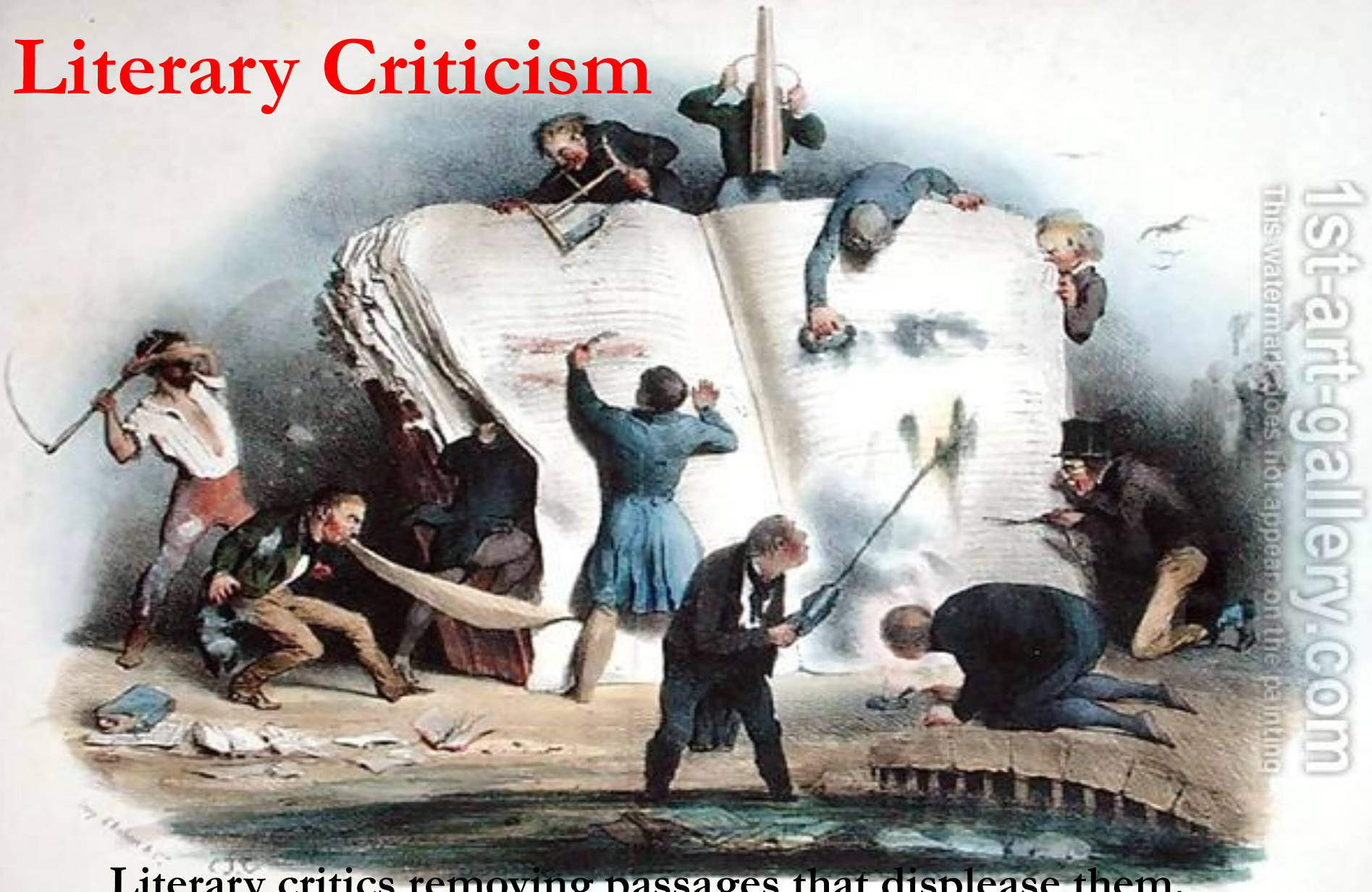


# Feminist Criticism

- Feminist criticism is the literary and critical theory that explores the bias in favor of the male gender in literature, and which reexamines all literature from a feminist point of view.



# Literary Criticism



Literary critics removing passages that displease them.  
By Charles Joseph Travies de Villiers in 1830



# Feminist Criticism

FC has two basic premises:

1. Women presented in literature by male writers from male point of view.
2. Women presented in writing of female writers from female point of view.

FC aims to understand the nature of inequality and focus on analyzing gender equality and the promotion of women's right.

- Phallogentric Literature
- Phallogentric criticism- practice of reading work of male authors from a feminist perspective
- Re-readings of canonized writers were so popular
- Simone de Beauvoir - pioneered - in her influential work- *The Second Sex*

- This was to expose “a pattern of female subordination”
- This is not merely the bias of individual writers, but attitudes towards woman deeply entrenched in the patriarchal system
- Literature - constructed and perpetuated an image and women were expected to conform to the construct

- Female readers were also expected to adopt this male point of view - while reading
- As a result - woman would internalize their own inferiority
- Questioning the “naturalness” of such representation of women was part of the project of feminist critics

- Elaine Showalter Explains-



- De Beauvoir - deconstructs the image of women - in the works of some well-known authors
- Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* - carried this line of criticism
- Politics of the relations between sexes
- These relationships operate in a matrix of power

- The subordination of women was ensured
  - variety of ways-
- Women - Practically **excluded** from the domain of **open politics**
- This would make them dependent
- **Biological inferiority** was proved by the biological sciences

- Patriarchal society covertly devised ways of keeping male ascendancy over women
- It is in the family, the smallest unit of society, that the political equations of power manifested themselves in their most rigid form

- The life of woman was destined to follow a course predetermined by unalterable assumptions.

- Physically ill-treatment conspired with cultural practices to tame, subjugate women, to condition them in accordance with the false construct of the feminine.

- For **Millet, literature** was an effective tool for the propagation of the political ideology
- The replication(duplication) of the ideology, its consolidation and dissemination (distribution) were the function of literary creations

- Re-reading the works - necessary
- D. H Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* -  
Millet

- Significance of feminist point of view -  
women characters become too bold -
- Transgression of norms and disaster -  
popular theme of fiction



- Fiction of this type serves to strengthen the artificial stereotypes constructed by patriarchy.

- Many examples -
- Weak submission to authority leads to felicity and comfort.

- The story of Catherine - **Wuthering Heights**
- She takes decisions against her powerful instincts- is a kind of reconciliation with accepted forms of civilized life

- Feminists were in general **critical of psychoanalysis** at this stage.
- Repressed desires in dreams

# Psychoanalytic Criticism

- Analyzes literature to reveal insights about the way the human mind works.
- Is based on the work of Sigmund Freud and his disciples.
- Works well as a method of analyzing characters' actions and motivations.

# Psychoanalytic Criticism

- Analyzes literature to reveal insights about the way the human mind works.
- Is based on the work of Sigmund Freud and his disciples.
- Works well as a method of analyzing characters' actions and motivations.

# Basic Freudian Concepts

- All actions are influenced by the unconscious.
- Human beings must repress many of their desires to live peacefully with others.
- Repressed desires often surface in the unconscious, motivating actions.

# Basic Freudian Concepts

- The mind has three major areas of activity:
  - **Id:** Area in the unconscious that works for gratification through the pleasure principle
  - **Superego:** An internal censor bringing social pressures to bear on the id.
  - **Ego:** Area in the consciousness that mediates among demands of social pressure, the id, and the superego.



- Millet uses some of the concepts of Freud's theory to explain the findings of her feminist readings- similar to Freud's interpretation of dreams. -

- The authors were not deliberate in the distorted representation of felinity.
- The distortions intruded into their narratives without their being aware of them- much like the surfacing of repressed desires in dreams.

- Germaine Greer - continued - critical approach to literature- in her *The Female Eunuch*

- According to Germaine - popular culture was as instrumental as great literary works in embedding the biased notions of felinity in the psyche of a society

- She clubbed - mixing up high and low art
- She sought to highlight a thread of common mythology in the cultural products of a society.

# The Woman as Writer or Gynocritics (la gynocritique)

- In contrast to [an] angry or loving fixation on male literature, the program of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories.
- Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture.

# Gynocriticism: key aspects

- Gynocritics is not “on a pilgrimage to the promised land in which gender would lose its power, in which all texts would be sexless and equal, like angels”.
- Rather gynocritics aims to understand the specificity of women’s writing not as a product of sexism but as a fundamental aspect of female reality.
- Its prime concern is to see ‘woman as producer of textual meaning, with the history themes, genres, and structures of literature by women’.

# The Problem: Otherness of Language

- Showalter acknowledges the difficulty of “[d]efining the unique difference of women’s writing” which she says is “a slippery and demanding task” in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness”.
- Julia Kristeva: Otherness of Language (Catherine Besley)



# Gynocriticism: women as writers

- Distinctive feminine motifs and themes
- Distinctive female tradition - a new canon
- Distinctive feminine subjectivity: female ways of thinking, feeling, perceiving, speaking, writing, and valuing

- Showalter says:

- According to Showalter- there is **feminine phase in women's writing**- period from 1840-1880
- Marked by competitive spirit
- To match the intellectual achievement of men
- Adopting men's aesthetic criteria-
- **Imitative phase**

- Imitative phase
- Generally wrote - pseudonyms-
- George Eliot, Currer, Ellis and Action Bell

- Second phase - vehement unleashing of protest against social injustices towards women

- Popular male notions of femininity- rejected
- A radical affirmative position - taken
- Criticism and creative writing became more polemical (controversial) and political (taking sides)

- Formation of societies -
- Importance was given to female experience

- **The Debates on Theory**
- Two groups
- French Feminists -
- England and America- as their counter part



- Leading French feminists- Luce Irigaray,  
Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous -

- - grounded in recent linguistic explorations, post-structuralist studies, and psychoanalysis and questions of subjectivity and representation in relation to the advances made in these fields

- But the Anglo- American version of feminism - tends to be more political and is sceptical of the influence of postmodern theories

- **Patricia Waugh-** in spite of its several points of contact with postmodernism, feminism “... cannot repudiate entirely the framework of Enlightened modernity without perhaps fatally undermining itself as an emancipatory politics” (emancipation is an effort to procure economic and social rights, political rights or

- Emancipatory discourse - emancipation declaration - Abraham Lincoln - Kings speech- 5score years we got a check-condition is same - they belong to different class
- Cannot implement
- Because local practices -
- French ideology cannot implement as such in American context

- Lyotard- observes- “emancipatory discourses are no longer possible because there can no longer be a belief in privileged metadiscourse which transcend local and contingent conditions in order to ground the truths of all first order discourses”

- (a theory that tries to give a totalizing, comprehensive account to various historical events, experiences, and social, cultural phenomena based upon the appeal to universal truth or universal values.)

- **Helena Cixous**
- Novelist
- Critics and theorist
- Her preoccupations: western dualistic thought process



- Culture/ nature
- Head/heart
- Form/ matter
- Speaking/ writing

- These are not innocent pairing of opposites
- One of the terms in each of these oppositions is privileged
- And the other is repressed
- She applies this binary structuring of western philosophy to the man woman relationship

- There is a **hierarchy in this relationship** and also in the case of above mentioned cases
- Yet there is dialectic in operation between the terms

- They are interlinked by a relationship of dependence
- Cixous makes the analogy of slave/master relationship

- The subject requires an **Other** for self-definition and at the same time finds it threatening to its security

- Hence the subject represses the other for reasons of security after the validation of his or her selfhood
- Woman serves the function of the slave to help determine the identity of man

- To prove her argument - she explores myths
- She proves the murder of **Clytemnestra** by **Orestes (son of cly and aga)** is justified
- while **Clytemnestra's** murder of **Agamemnon** (son of King Atreus, husband of Clytemnestra) is reprehensible (guilty)

- An instance of the perpetuation  
(maintenance) of matricide in Western  
culture



- She also criticize Freudian and Lacanian models of sexual difference - both condemn women to negativity

- She does not reject sexual difference, but tentatively suggests the possibility of bisexuality, male and females exhibiting traits of both the sexes

- Writing provides a site for such explorations for non-hierarchical bisexuality
- She uses the term ‘economy’ to suggest the motive for doing things

- **Masculine economy** is based on return for investment
- Fixity, stability, control - features of masculine conception of selfhood

- How do you achieve this?
- This is achieved at the expense of everything that does not fit into masculine rationalism

- Cixous therefore associates language and writing with the body- the repressed term of the mind- body dichotomy
- Thus writing becomes a creative engagement with the archaic and the repressed

- **Luce Irigaray**
- Prominent French feminist
- Argues- western culture is basically monosexual
- A great scholar- done considerable work on psychoanalysis, linguistics and philosophy

- She points out - exclusion of women as a sex from meaningful social life
- It means- women participate in social life, but not as independent, acknowledged subjects
- Often forced to appropriate a male subjectivity to gain recognition



- Her project involves the exposition (exhibition) of the foundations of patriarchy
- She also defines female identity - equally important for her
- She thinks - women have not been considered worthy of the values of Enlightenment-

- **Reason** - is considered as one of the enlightenment characteristics
- But the **faith in reason has resulted in the underestimation** of everything that is non-rational
- Western thought has tried to manipulate, control, and destroy the non-rational elements of culture

- The male rationality of this Western culture is organized by the **principle of identity**, (each thing is the same with itself and different from other”)

- Aristotle's Law of Identity - Everything that exists has a specific nature - Each entity exists as something in particular and it has characteristics that are a part of what it is

- Ex- this leaf is red, solid, dry, rough and flammable- its entity is explained with specific identity, the particular type of identity

- the **principle of non-contradiction** (it states that contradictory statements cannot be both true in the same sense at the same time)
- -and **binarism**
- According to the last one - binary - everything has to be one thing or other

- This culture which admits only one sex
- does not consider women as belonging to a different sex
- Instead it views women as ‘lesser men’ - inferior or defective

- Even though she criticize the rationalism of the dominant culture - she does not go the other extreme of identifying women with irrationality -



- She suggests- a **conceptualization** - the male does not repress or split off the female/unconscious, but **acknowledge and integrates** with it.

- She also criticize psychoanalysis - it is historically determined
- still phallogentric values are projected as universal values

- Another defect - It also neglects - mother
- Thirdly - psychoanalysis sets out to interpret fantasies - but in the process of perpetuates the dominate fantasies of the culture of the west

- Her work is a kind of psychoanalysis of Western culture - seeking the repressed, unconscious of that culture

- The mother is required for the process of the male imaginary but she is not represented
- She calls it as matricide
- To cover up this matricide there are various resistance and defenses - she looks all these things in her analysis

- Very often mother - daughter relationship is unsymbolized compared to father son attachment
- This accounts for the lack of identity for women in the symbolic order

- Women have difficulty in separating from their mothers because they have a tendency to merge their identity with the other -
- She says - it is because of the lack of access to society and culture

- She also takes myths - to show how patriarchy succeeds in denying identity to women
- She interprets the myth of the cavern in Plato's Republic -
- To show how access to the world of ideas entails the leaving of the mother.



- Julia Kristeva
- Luce Irigaray and Kristeva have many things in common
- Intimate familiarity with the work of Freud and Lacan
- Both opposed - to Lacan's advocacy of the primacy of language in psychic life

- And understanding of the necessarily sexualized position of the subject in the symbolic phase
- Both of them focus on mother child relationship (mother daughter - in Irigaray)
- Both affirm the archaic force of the pre-Oedipal and argue that it is preserved in spite of being repressed

- Lacan - unconscious is structured like lang
- There are only negative - meaning differential - negative terms
- Black- against white-
- Black is not black- a word - sound- meaning is understood - other sounds

- The key observation of Lacan's essay concerns the behaviour of infants between the ages of 6 and 18 months.
- At this age, Lacan notes, children become capable of recognizing their mirror image. This is not a dispassionate experience, either.

- It is a recognition that brings the child great pleasure.
- For Lacan, we can only explain this "jubilation" as a testimony to how, in the recognition of its mirror-image, the child is having its first anticipation of itself as a unified and separate individual.

- Before this time, Lacan contends, the child is little more than a "body in bits and pieces," unable to clearly separate I and Other, and wholly dependant for its survival (for a length of time unique in the animal kingdom) upon its first nurturers.
- The implications of this observation on the mirror stage, in Lacan's reckoning, are far-reaching.

- Fraud - natural process- dev- stage
- Lancelot- symbolic stage-
- Obsession with its own body- need
- And desire-
- Reality and real= it absorbs values
- Unconscious -
- Phallogocentric world- values of phallogocentric -

- Values are supplied by - interactions- meaning
  - Superior values
- 
- Female is outside- imbibes phalocentric
  - Values
  - Pre Oedipal stage - part of mother
  - Obsession with mother-
  - Oedipal stage- father- anxiety
  - Pre Oedipal stage - can be carried over- not that it is fixed-



- Preedipal- mother child
- Visual register- what the child sees - what we see- element of control - expected to behave this way- we are being controlled

- Signs are always open-
- Christian - symbolism - male dominated -
- Sexualized subject- male child-
- Boy is able to recognize - himself as superior-
- He feels superior - sexualized
- Pre Oedipal- mother child

- Mirror phase-
- Imaginary -
- Symbolic - child - sees- pre oedipal -
- Imaginary - first phase
- Symbolic- transference - in Lacan - complete  
-
- Nothing like complete termination- it is  
never- terminated

- The Semiotic and the Symbolic
- Semiotic is the pre-Oedipal - and is associated with the maternal
- Symbolic stage - representing the law and authority of the father

- The **pre-oedipal situation** is a two-person psychology -- between **mother and child**.
- There are certain **developmental tasks** that take place during this time period and within this relationship.

- 

Then there is the oedipal situation -- a three-person psychology between mother-father-child.

- There are certain developmental tasks here too within this period of maturation and within the context of this triangulated position.

- Symbolic stage-
- The child's thinking during this **stage** is pre (before) operations.
- This means the child cannot use logic or transform, combine or separate ideas (Piaget, 1951, 1952). ...

- Symbolic stage-
- During the end of this **stage** children can mentally represent events and objects (the semiotic function), and engage in **symbolic play**.



- The semiotic (pre-oedipal) is tamed, repressed and controlled by the logic and rationalism of the symbolic order
- It overflows its boundaries and encroaches on the domain of order and regularity

- The semiotic is rhythmic, energetic and is the raw material for the symbolic just as the mother rather than the father is the prominent influence in the pre-Oedipal stage.

- Upon the child's entry into the symbolic it identifies with the law of the father, and this process will wipe out the last traces of its dependence on the body of the mother.

- However, if the subject chooses to identify with the mother, the pre-Oedipal phase are intensified.
- Kristeva Comments

- The semiotic and the symbolic constitute these aspects
- Peter Barry - “the symbolic is the orderly surface realm of strict distinctions and laid-down structures through which language works.... But **ever present is the linguistic ‘unconscious’**, a realm of floating signifiers, random connections, improvisations approximations, accidents and slippage

- Because of the close association of this dimension of language with the maternal, it is looked upon as an alternative to the male language of writing.



















# How did Betty Friedan change the world?

- Write a one page summary about how the world would be different if Betty Friedan was not a part of the feminist movement.
  - Include: facts, dates, and, most importantly, YOUR OPINIONS!!