

More specific than the foils of apocalyptic and demonic imagery, much of the climactic action of the story takes place during night, and often during autumn. For Jung, night and autumn pose strong symbolic representations of death as well as uncertainty. Night lies outside of the daylight hours when most common stories occur, and autumn lies on the twilight of the seasons, just before the earth plunges into the full wasteland of winter. Neither night nor autumn connect to the concepts of day (light) and spring (life) that are traditionally privileged, and both display mythic properties of limbo and tension. The deaths of Ligeia and Rowena occur in the shadowy realm of night: Rowena's illness is described specifically as occurring "one night, near the closing of September," and the final death of Rowena and rebirth of Ligeia "must have been close to midnight." Such symbols represent the deep unknown of the psyche and open the way for the final tension between anima and reality. These clashes of imagery in the settings—between apocalyptic and demonic imagery as well as the climax of night and autumnal setting—point to the psychic turmoil also apparent within the story.

Although Poe's horror tales evoke strong psychological responses within readers, more meaningful psychological concepts present themselves in the deeper layers of Poe's illusions. "Ligeia" is no exception. Pervading the whole of the story is the contrast of the inner anima of the psyche and the conflicting reality of the outer world. These two opposing forces of the mind find external symbols through the characters of Ligeia and Rowena. The tension between the two also surfaces through the symbolically apocalyptic and demonic settings. In addition, the struggle of the psyche is depicted through the symbolic cycles of death and rebirth. Through the archetypal symbols in "Ligeia," Poe creates not only a fascinating story of the gothic macabre but also a tale full of the struggle found in every psyche: the necessary struggle for reconciliation with the world, lest insanity overcomes the mind.

BRANDON W. HAWK

7

FEMINISM

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949)

In the inaugural edition of one of the earliest American newspapers owned and operated by women, the *Woman's Chronicle* of Little Rock, Arkansas, Kate Cunningham, the editor, penned and published these words on Saturday, March 24, 1888:

No one is so well calculated to think for woman kind as woman herself. In the province of administering to the wants of her sex, no one can be so well adapted as she. Her advancement is in no better way proven than by her progress in medicine and literature, to say nothing of the reform movements which she is steadily carrying on for the benefit of her sex.

More than 100 years later, another Arkansas woman and "first lady" of both Arkansas and the United States of America, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York, spoke these words in September 2005 at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China: "It is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights." That Senator Clinton voiced these words more than a century after Cunningham's newspaper proclamation is indeed telling. Were not Cunningham's words embraced by Americans in the latter part of the 1800s? And why need Clinton be assuring women of the twenty-first century that their rights and the rights of all humanity are one in the same? Are not twenty-first century women and men equal in all respects? Feminist studies, feminist theorists, and feminist critics all answer in one accord: No!

As one of the most significant developments in literary studies in the second half of the twentieth century, feminist literary criticism advocates equal rights for all women (indeed, all peoples) in all areas of life: socially, politically, professionally, personally, economically, aesthetically, and psychologically. Emerging in the 1960s, feminist criticism is one strand of feminist studies. Informed by feminist literary theory and scholarship, **feminist criticism** is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches to culture and literature that are of particular interest to women. Central to the diverse aims and methods of feminist criticism is its focus on **patriarchy**, the rule of society and culture by

men. In her 1980 essay titled "Dancing through the Minefield"—one of the first works to articulate the theoretical assumptions of feminist theory and to survey its methodology—Annette Kolodny, a contemporary feminist critic, articulates feminist criticism's chief tenet:

What unites and repeatedly invigorates feminist literary criticism . . . is neither dogma nor method but an acute and impassioned attentiveness to the ways in which primarily male structures of power are inscribed or (encoded) within our literary inheritance [and] the consequences of that encoding for women—as characters, as readers, and as writers.

These male structures of power embrace **phallogentrism**, the belief that identifies the **phallus** as the source of power in culture and literature, with its accompanying male-centered and male-dominated patriarchal assumptions. In her landmark essay "Feminist Literary Criticism," Toril Moi, another leading feminist theorist and critic, defines feminist criticism as "a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism." According to Moi, one of feminist criticism's chief aims is to challenge and critique this patriarchal vision established in both culture and literature, denouncing and rejecting all phallogentric assumptions. Judith Fetterley, another leading feminist theorist and critic, agrees with Moi's definition. In the introduction to Fetterley's seminal text *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*, Fetterley asserts that "feminist criticism is [also] a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but to change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read." According to Fetterley, the first act of a feminist critic is "to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader and, by this refusal to assent, to begin the process of exorcising the male mind that has been implanted in us."

How has the male mind, with its accompanying phallogentric belief system, been implanted in us? Through its literature and its acclaimed writers, philosophers, and scholars, most of whom are male. A brief historical survey of comments made and beliefs held by canonical male writers lends support to feminist criticism's belief that a patriarchal vision has been established in the Western literary canon:

Do not let a woman with a sexy rump deceive you with wheedling and coaxing words; she is after your barn. The man who trusts a woman trusts a deceiver.

Hesiod, poet 8th century B.C.E.

Plato thanks the gods for two blessings: that he had not been born a slave and that he had not been born a woman.

Plato (c. 427–c. 347 B.C.E.)

Silence gives the proper grace to women.

Sophocles (497–406 B.C.E.)

The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled.

Woman "is matter, waiting to be formed by the active male principle. . . . Man consequently plays a major part in reproduction; the woman is merely the passive incubator of his seed."

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.)

Frailty, thy name is woman.

Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Most women have no character at all.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

Women, women! Cherished and deadly objects that nature has embellished to torture us . . . whose hatred and love are equally harmful, and whom we cannot either seek or flee with impunity.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1702–1778)

Mary Wollstonecraft is a "hyena in petticoats."

Horace Walpole, author of one of the earliest Gothic novels,
The Castle of Otranto (1717–1797)

Nature intended women to be our slaves. . . . They are our property. . . . What a mad idea to demand equality for women!

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821)

Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even any . . . recreation.

Robert Southey, poet laureate (1774–1843)

Woman is a slave whom we must be clever enough to set upon a throne.

Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850)

Jane Austen's novels are "vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention . . . without genius, wit or knowledge of the world. Never was life so pinched and narrow."

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Women writers are a "damned mob of scribbling women" who only write anything worth reading if the devil is in them.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864)

The woman author does not exist. She is a contradiction in terms. The role of the woman in letters is the same as in manufacturing; she is of use when genius is no longer required.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865)

Woman is natural, that is, abominable.

Charles-Pierre Baudelaire (1821–1867)

Jane Austen is entirely impossible to read. It seems a great pity that they allowed her to die a natural death.

Mark Twain (1835–1910)

The very idea of womanhood is a storm of hair . . . with a greedy little mouth somewhere behind the mirage of beauty.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)

An artist's most essential quality is "masterly execution, which is a kind of male gift, and especially marks off men from women, the begetting of one's thoughts on paper. . . . The male quality is the creative gift."

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)

Feminism is a political mistake. Feminism is a mistake made by women's intellect, a mistake which her instinct will recognize.

Valentine de Saint-Point (1875–1953)

Educating a woman is like pouring honey over a fine Swiss watch. It stops working.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922–)

Feminist literary criticism challenges such patriarchal statements with their accompanying male-dominated, philosophical assumptions and such gender-biased criticism. Feminist criticism argues that literature should be free from such biases because of race, class, or gender, and provides a variety of theoretical frameworks and approaches to interpretation that values each member of society.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

According to feminist criticism, the roots of prejudice against women have long been embedded in Western culture. The ancient Greeks abetted gender discrimination, declaring the male to be the superior and the female the inferior. Women, they maintained, lure men away from seeking after truth, preventing them from attaining their full potential. In the centuries that follow, other philosophers and scientists continue such gender discrimination. For example, in *The Descent of Man* (1871), Charles Darwin (1809–1882) announces that women are of a "characteristic of . . . a past and lower state of civilization." Such beings, he notes, are inferior to men, who are physically, intellectually, and artistically superior.

Century after century, male voices continue to articulate and determine the social role and cultural and personal significance of women. Some scholars believe that the first major work of feminist criticism challenging these male voices was that authored by Christine de Pisan in the fourteenth century, *Epistre au Dieu D'amours* (1399). In this work, Pisan critiques Jean de Meun's biased representation of the nature of woman in his text *Roman de La Rose*. In another work, *La Cite des Dames* (1405), Pisan declares that God created men and women as equal beings.

But it was not until the late 1700s that another voice arose in opposition to patriarchal beliefs and statements. Influenced by the French revolution and believing that women along with men should have a voice in the public arena, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) authored *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), the first major published work that acknowledges an awareness of women's struggles for equal rights. Women, she maintains, must define for themselves what it means to be a woman. Women themselves must take the lead and articulate who they are and what role they will play in society by rejecting the patriarchal assumption that women are inferior to men.

It was not until the Progressive Era of the early 1900s, however, that major concerns of feminist criticism took root. During this time, women gained the right to vote and became prominent activists in the social issues of the day, such as health care, education, politics, and literature, but equality with men in these arenas still remained outside their grasp.

Virginia Woolf

In 1919, the British scholar and teacher Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) developed and enlarged Mary Wollstonecraft's ideas, laying the foundation for present-day feminist criticism in her seminal work *A Room of One's Own* (1929). In this text, Woolf declares that men have and continue to treat women as inferiors. Men define what it means to be female and determine who controls the political, economic, social, and literary structures. Agreeing with Samuel T. Coleridge, one of the foremost nineteenth-century literary critics, that great minds possess both male and female characteristics, Woolf hypothesizes the existence of Shakespeare's sister, one who is equally as gifted a writer as Shakespeare himself. Shakespeare's sister's gender, however, prevents her from having "a room of her own." Because she is a woman, she cannot obtain an education or find profitable employment. Because she cannot economically afford a room of her own, her innate artistic talents will never flourish. Being able to afford her own room would symbolize the solitude and autonomy needed to seclude herself from the world and its social constraints in order to find time to think and write. In Woolf's text, Shakespeare's sister dies alone without any acknowledgment of her personal genius. Even her grave plot does not bear her name; she is buried in an unmarked grave because she is female.

Such a loss of artistic talent and personal worth, argues Woolf, is the result of society's opinion of women: They are seen as intellectually inferior to men. Women, Woolf declares, must reject the social construct of femaleness and establish and define for themselves their own identity. To do so, they must challenge the prevailing, false cultural notions about their gender identity and develop a female discourse that will accurately portray their relationship "to the world of reality and not to the world of men." If women accept this challenge, Woolf believes that Shakespeare's sister can live once again in and through women living today, even those who may be "washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed" right now. Societal and world calamities such as the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s, however, changed the focus of humankind's attention and delayed the advancement of these feminist ideals.

Simone de Beauvoir

After World War II and the 1949 publication of *The Second Sex* by the French writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), feminist concerns once again surfaced. Heralded as the foundational work of twentieth-century feminism, Beauvoir's text asserts that French society (and Western societies in general) are **patriarchal**, controlled by men. Like Woolf before her, Beauvoir believes

that men define what it means to be human, including what it means to be female. Since the female is not male, Beauvoir maintains, she becomes the **Other**, an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male. Being subordinate to the male, the female discovers that she is a secondary or nonexistent player in the major social institutions of her culture, such as the church, government, and educational systems. Beauvoir believes that women must break the bonds of their patriarchal society and define themselves if they wish to become a significant human being in their own right, and they must defy male classification as the Other. Women must ask themselves, "What is a woman?" Beauvoir insists that a woman's answer must not be "mankind" because such a term once again allows men to define women. Beauvoir rejects this generic label, believing that such labeling assumes that "humanity is male and man defines woman not as herself but as relative to him."

Beauvoir insists that women must see themselves as autonomous beings. Women, she maintains, must reject the societal construct that men are the subject or the absolute and women are the Other. Embedded in this erroneous statement is the assumption that men have the power to control the dominant **discourse** and the power to define cultural terms and roles. Accordingly, women must define themselves, articulate their own social constructs of what it means to be a woman, and reject being labeled as the Other.

Kate Millett

With the advent of the 1960s and with its political activism and social concerns, feminist issues found new voices, such as Mary Ellmann (*Thinking About Women*, 1968) and Kate Millett. With Millett's publication of *Sexual Politics* in 1969, a new wave of feminism begins. Millett is one of the first to challenge the ideological characteristics of both the male and the female. She argues that a female is born, but a woman is created. In other words, one's sex is determined at birth, but one's gender is a social construct created by cultural norms. Consciously or unconsciously, women and men conform to the societal constructs established by society. Boys, for example, should be aggressive, self-assertive, and domineering, but girls should be passive, meek, and humble. Such cultural expectations are transmitted through media, including television, movies, songs, and literature. Conforming to these prescribed sex roles dictated by society is what Millett calls **sexual politics**, or the operations of power relations in society. In the West, institutional power rests with males, forcing the subordination of women. Women, Millett maintains, must disenfranchise the power center of their culture: male dominance. By so doing, women will be able to establish female social conventions as defined by females, not males,

and in the process, they themselves will shape and articulate female discourse, literary studies, and feminist theory.

FEMINISM IN THE 1960s, 1970s, AND 1980s

In 1963, two works help bring feminist concerns into the public arena: *American Women*, edited by Frances Bagley Kaplan and Margaret Mead, and *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. *American Women* was the culminating work of 2 years of investigation by the President's Commission on the Status of Women commissioned by President John F. Kennedy. This work details the great inequality between men and women in the workplace, education, and society as a whole. Armed with verifiable evidence of their inequality, women asserted political pressure in Congress and state legislative houses across America for reforms. As women began to enter the political arena and articulate their concerns, a freelance writer, Betty Friedan (1921–2006), published *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan articulated and helped popularize two central questions of feminist criticism that soon became popular: "A woman has got to be able to say, and not feel guilty, 'Who am I, and What do I want out of life?' She mustn't feel selfish and neurotic if she wants goals of her own, outside of husband and children." By 1966, Friedan was elected president of the newly formed National Organization for Women (NOW) whose platform argued for equal opportunity for women "under the law," including educational and employment reforms; the right of choice concerning abortion; and a host of other social, political, and personal issues.

During this time and throughout the 1970s, feminist theorists and critics began to examine the traditional literary canon, discovering copious examples of male dominance and prejudice that supported Beauvoir's and Millet's assertion that males consider the female "the Other." Stereotypes of women abounded in the canon: Women were sex maniacs, goddesses of beauty, mindless entities, or old spinsters. In addition, although Charles Dickens, William Wordsworth, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, and a host of other male authors found their way into the established canon, few female authors achieved such status. Those who did appear, such as Mary E. Wilkins Freeman or Sarah Orne Jewett, were referred to as "local color writers," implying their secondary or minor position in the canon. Similarly, the roles of female, fictionalized characters were often limited to minor characters whose chief traits reinforced the male's stereotypical image of women. Female theorists, critics, and scholars such as Woolf and de Beauvoir were simply ignored, their writings seldom, if ever, referred to by the male crafters of the literary canon.

Feminist theorists and critics of this era declared that male authors who created and enjoyed such a place of prominence within the canon had

assumed that their ideal readers were all men. Women reading such works could easily be duped into reading like a man. In addition, because most of the university professors were men, more frequently than not, female students were being trained to read literature as if they, too, were men. The feminist critics of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s announced the existence of a female ideal reader who was affronted by the male prejudices abounding in the canon. Questions now arose concerning the male *and* female qualities of literary form, style, voice, theme, and other aesthetic elements of texts.

Throughout the 1970s, books that defined women's writings in feminine terms flourished. Having successfully highlighted the importance of gender, feminist theorists uncovered and rediscovered a body of works authored by women that their male counterparts had deemed inferior and unworthy to be part of the canon. In America, for example, Kate Chopin's late nineteenth-century novel *The Awakening* (1899) served as the archetypal, rediscovered feminist text of this period. In England, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and in France, Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (1969) fulfilled these roles. Throughout the universities and in the reading populace, many readers now turned their attention to historical and current works authored by women. Simultaneously, works that helped define the feminine imagination, categorize and explain female literary history, and articulate a female aesthetic became the focus of feminist critics.

Feminist concerns were supported in print by the establishment of the Feminist Press in 1972 and journals such as *Signs*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and *Feminist Studies*, to name a few. Texts such as Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975); Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards's *The Authority of Experience* (1977); Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader* (1978); Nina Baym's *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and About Women in America, 1820–1870* (1978); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's edited work *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays in Women Poets* (1979); and Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) helped shape the ongoing concerns and direction of feminist theory and criticism, providing public venues for these discussions.

Elaine Showalter

A leading voice of feminist criticism throughout the late 1970s and through the next several decades is that of Elaine Showalter. In her text *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Showalter chronicles three historical phases of female writing: the **feminine phase** (1840–1880), the **feminist phase** (1880–1920), and the **female phase** (1970–present). During the "feminine" phase, writers such as Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and George Sand accepted the prevailing social constructs that defined women. Accordingly, these authors wrote under male pseudonyms so that their works, like their male counterparts, would first be published and then recognized for their intellectual and artistic achievements.

During the “feminist” or second phase, female writers helped dramatize the plight of the “slighted” woman, depicting the harsh and often cruel treatment of female characters at the hands of their more powerful male creations. In the third or “female” phase, female writers reject both the feminine social constructs prominent during the “feminine” phase and the secondary or minor position of female characters that dominated the “feminist” phase. Showalter observes that feminist theorists and critics now concerned themselves with developing a peculiarly female understanding of the female experience in art, including a feminine analysis of literary forms and techniques. Such a task necessarily includes the uncovering of **misogyny** in texts, a term Showalter uses to describe the male hatred of women.

Showalter believes that female writers were deliberately excluded from the literary canon by male professors who first established the canon itself. Writers such as Susan Warner (*The Wide, Wide World*, 1851), Emma D.N. Southworth (*The Hidden Hand*, 1888), and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (“A New England Nun,” 1891; *Pembroke*, 1894), by far the most popular authors of the second half of the nineteenth century in American fiction, were not deemed worthy to be included in the canon. Such exclusion, says Showalter, must cease. In her influential essay “Toward a Feminist Poetics” (1997), Showalter asserts that feminist theorists must “construct a female framework for analysis of women’s literature to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt to male models and theories,” a process she names **gynocriticism**. Through gynocriticism, Showalter exposes the false cultural assumptions and characteristics of women as depicted in canonical literature. By exposing these inaccurate pictures (often caricatures) of women, **gynocritics**—the name Showalter gives to those critics who “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 to male models and theories”—and gynocriticism provide critics with four models that address the nature of women’s writing: the biological, the linguistic, the psychoanalytic, and the cultural.

Each of Showalter’s models are sequential, subsuming and developing the preceding model or models. The **biological model** emphasizes how the female body marks itself upon a text by providing a host of literary images along with a personal, intimate tone. The **linguistic model** addresses the need for a female discourse, investigating the differences between how women and men use language. This model asserts that women create and write in a language peculiar to their gender and addresses the ways in which this female language can be used in their writings. The **psychoanalytic model** analyzes the female psyche and demonstrates how such an analysis affects the writing process, emphasizing the flux and fluidity of female writing as opposed to male writing’s rigidity and structure. The last of Showalter’s models, the **cultural model**, investigates how society shapes women’s goals, responses, and points of view.

Geographical Strains of Feminism

During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, no one critical theory of writing dominated feminist criticism because feminist theory and criticism highlighted the personal, allowing for diverse theories and approaches to textual analysis. Historically, geography played a significant role in determining the major interests of the various voices of feminist criticisms, with three somewhat distinct, geographical strains of feminism emerging: American, British, and French. These geographical divisions no longer serve as distinct theoretical or practical boundaries, but they remain important historical markers in feminism’s development. According to Showalter, American feminism at this time was essentially textual, stressing repression; British feminism was essentially Marxist, stressing oppression; and French feminism was essentially psychoanalytic, stressing repression. The aim of all groups was similar: to rescue women from being considered “the Other.”

American For American feminism, Kolodny announced feminism’s major concern: the restoration and inclusion of the writings of female writers to the literary canon. Believing that literary history is itself a fiction, Kolodny restores a realistic history of women so that they themselves can tell “herstory.” In order to tell and write “herstory,” female writers must find a means to gain their voice amid the dominating male voices clamoring for society’s attention. In *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975) and *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630–1860* (1984), Kolodny uses feminist-psychoanalytic theories and methodologies to assert that the American colonists attributed to the land feminine characteristics to soften and allay their fears concerning the land’s unknown but potential terrors. Whereas some males viewed the American frontier as a new Eden, female colonists often saw it as a home and a “familial human community.” In her latest work, *Failing the Future: A Dean Looks at Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century*, Kolodny provides evidence that women are still “outsiders” of American universities and in colleges campuses and documents the rising anti-feminist and anti-intellectual harassment occurring in higher education.

Similar to Kolodny, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, authors of *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), assert that the male voice has for too long been dominant. Because men have had the power of the pen and the press, they have been allowed not only to define but also to create images of women as they so chose in their texts. Gilbert and Gubar argue that this male power has caused “anxiety of authorship” in women, causing them to fear the act of literary creation itself along with and the act of writing. Some female writers believe that literary creation will isolate them from society, perhaps destroying them. Gilbert and Gubar’s solution is that women develop a “woman’s

sentence" that can encourage literary autonomy. By inventing such a sentence, a woman can in turn sentence male authors to isolation, fear, and literary banishment from the canon, just as for centuries men have been sentencing women. By formulating a woman's sentence, female writers can and will free themselves from being defined by men.

A woman's sentence, argue Gilbert and Gubar, will also free women from being reduced to the stereotypical images that appear in literature. They identify two such principal stereotypical images: "the angel in the house" and the "madwoman in the attic." When depicted as the angel in the house, a woman supposedly realizes that her physical and material comforts are gifts from her husband. Her goals in life are to please her husband, attend to his every comfort, and obey him. Through these supposedly selfless acts, she finds utmost contentment by serving both him and her children. When a female writer and her characters reject such a role, male critics dub her a "monster," the madwoman in the attic who is also "obviously" sexually fallen.

Gilbert and Gubar assert that both of these images—the angel or the madwoman—are unrealistic representations of women in society. The first image canonizes the woman, placing her simultaneously above and outside her socially constructed world, and the second image denigrates and demoralizes the woman, banishing her to the world of myths and the demonic while disavowing her rightful place in both literature and society. The message is clear: If you are not an angel, then you are a monster. These stereotypical, male-created images of women in literature, declare Gilbert and Gubar, must be uncovered, examined, debunked, and transcended if women are to achieve literary autonomy.

British Whereas American feminism emphasized repression, British feminism stressed oppression. Learning toward Marxist theory, British feminism saw art, literature, and life as inseparable. Some British feminists, although not all, viewed reading, writing, and publishing as facets of material reality. Being part of this material reality, literature, like one's job and one's social activities, is part of a great whole, with each part affecting the other. How a woman is depicted in literature directly affects how women will be treated in real life. Particularly in the West, patriarchal society exploits women not only through literature but also economically and socially. The traditional Western family structure, assert these feminist critics, subordinates women, causing them to be economically dependent. The West's literature reflects such dependency. British feminism of this era challenges the economic and social status of women, both in society and as depicted in the arts, especially in texts. For these critics, the goal of feminist criticism is to change society, not simply critique it.

French French Feminism, the third geographical division of feminism, stressed female oppression both in life and art, highlighting the repression of women. Often, including current feminist criticism, French feminism is

closely associated with the theoretical and practical applications of psychoanalysis and the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. At first, the association with psychoanalysis may be a bit puzzling because Freud and his patriarchal theories seemingly dominate psychoanalysis. Believing that phallus is power, Freud viewed women as incomplete males who possess penis envy, desiring to gain the male phallus and obtain power. In several ways, the French psychoanalytic critic Lacan rescues psychoanalysis from Freud's misogynistic theories. Lacan argues that language ultimately shapes and structures our conscious and unconscious minds, thereby shaping our self-identity. Language as it is structured and understood, he maintains, ultimately denies women the power of literature and writing.

Lacan posits that the human psyche consists of three parts, or what he calls orders: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. Each of these orders interacts with the others. From birth to age 6 months or so, we primarily function in the **imaginary order**, a preverbal state that contains our wishes, our fantasies, and our physical images. In this state, we are basically genderless because we are not yet capable of differentiating ourselves from our mothers. As soon as we have successfully navigated the Oedipal crisis, we pass from using a biological language to a socialized language and into the second of the Lacanian orders: the **symbolic order**. In this Lacanian phase, whereas the boy becomes dominate, particularly in the discourse of language, the girl is socialized into using a subordinated language. On entering this order, the father is the dominant image (the Law), with both the boy and the girl fearing castration by the father. For the boy, this fear of castration means obeying and becoming similar to the father while simultaneously repressing the imaginary order that is most closely associated with the female body. The imaginary order, with its pre-Oedipal boy, becomes a direct threat to the male in the third Lacanian order, the **real order**, or the actual world as perceived by the individual. For the girl, entrance into the symbolic order means submission to law of the father. Such submission brings subservience to males. Being socialized through and in the discourse of language, the girl becomes a second-class citizen. Because language, for Lacan, is a psychological, not a biological construct, he believes that women can learn the dominant discourse of both the symbolic and the real orders and become tools of social, political, and personal change.

French feminists such as Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous borrow and amend elements of Freud's and Lacan's theories to develop their own forms of feminist criticism. In works such as *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), *Desire in Language* (1980), and *Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva posits that the imaginary order is characterized by a continuous flow of fluidity or rhythm, which she calls **chora**. On entering the Lacanian symbolic order, both males and females are separated from chora and repress the feelings of fluidity and rhythm. Similar to a Freudian slip in which an unconscious thought breaks through the conscious mind, the chora can, at times, break through into the

real order and disturb the male-dominant discourse. Most recently, in works such as *Tales of Love*, Kristeva's concept of "motherhood" has informed much of her writing because she asks what she believes to be the central though complex question of feminist theory: "How can an enquiry into the nature of motherhood lead to a better understanding of the part played in love by the woman?" Kristeva argues that women must eventually "deal" with men, another woman, or perhaps a child. How does the rejection or acceptance of motherhood shape women?

Cixous explores a different mode of discourse that arises from the Lacan's symbolic, not the imaginary, order. Cixous maintains that words such as "feminine," "masculine," "femininity," and even "man" and "woman" should be exorcised from language. In works such as "Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), Cixous declares that there exists a particular kind of female writing that she calls *l'écriture féminine*, envisioned in terms of bisexuality. *L'écriture féminine* can best be understood, Cixous asserts, as "the ideal harmony, reached by few, which would be genital, assembling everything and being capable of generosity, of spending." This kind of female writing is the province of metaphor, not limited to written words but also "writing by the voice." Characterized by fluidity, such feminine discourse, when fully explored, says Cixous, will transform the social and cultural structures within literature by freeing both women and men from **phallogentrism**.

PRESENT-DAY FEMINIST CRITICISMS

Because contemporary feminist criticism is not composed of a single ideology, many subcategories or approaches have developed, each creating its own sphere of concern while often intersecting not only with other forms of feminist criticism but also with other schools of literary criticism, such as psychoanalysis, Marxism, and deconstruction. Some scholars categorize feminist criticism into four groups: **Anglo-American feminisms** (e.g., Virginia Woolf, Judith Fetterley, Annette Kolodny, Nina Baym, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar); **poststructuralist feminisms** (e.g., Luce Irigaray, Catherine Clément, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Monique Wittig, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Joan Scott, and others); **materialist feminisms** (e.g., Juliet Mitchell, Michèle Barrett, Jacqueline Rose, Rosalind Coward, Toril Moi, Catherine Belsey, Katie King, Donna Haraway); and **postmodern feminisms**, usually dating from 1990 to the present (e.g., Jane Gallop, Judith Butler, Diana Fuss, Chandra Mohanty, Uma Narayan, Mary Daly, Gloria Anzaldúa).

Other critics subdivide feminist criticism into a variety of subcategories, ranging in number from nine to more than 30. Some of these approaches include Amazon feminism, cultural feminism, ecofeminism, material feminism,

and separatists, to cite a few. **Amazon feminism** is dedicated to female images—either fictional or real—in literature and art that emphasize the physiques of female athletes and physical equality of both males and females. Opposed to gender roles and discrimination against women based on the false assumptions that females are physically weak and passive, amazon feminism argues that no mention of gender need arise, for example, when discussing such topics as occupations. Whereas some people are not physically capable of being a firefighter, others are likewise not capable of driving a snowplow. Gender is not an issue because there are no characteristics that are peculiarly masculine or feminine.

Sometimes referred to as radical feminism, **cultural feminism** asserts that personality and biological differences exist between men and women. According to cultural feminists such as Elizabeth Gould David (*The First Sex*), the main tenet of cultural feminism states that women are inherently and biologically "kinder and gentler" than men. Such women's ways should be highlighted and celebrated because in the eyes of many cultural feminists, women's ways are better than men's.

Ecofeminism (sometimes spelled eco-feminism) assumes that patriarchal societies are relatively new and that society's original condition (dubbed the feminist Eden) was matriarchal. Patriarchal societies, say ecofeminists, are detrimental to women, children, and nature. Whereas a patriarchal society dominates both women and nature, plundering and destroying our planet, a matriarchal society protects the environment, natural resources, and animal life and especially cares for women and children.

Authored by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Grand Domestic Revolution* highlights the concerns of **material feminism**. Developing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, material feminism aims to improve the material condition of women by unburdening them of the "traditional" female tasks such as housework, cooking, ironing clothes, and other domestic responsibilities. **Separatist feminism**, however, advocates separation from men, either total or partial. Although some separatists may be lesbians, it is inaccurate to assume that all separatists are lesbians. Separatists assume that women must first see themselves in a different context—separating themselves from men, at least for a while—before they can discover who they are as individuals. Such a separation, they maintain, is the necessary first step to achieving personal growth and individuality.

No matter what subcategory and theory they may espouse, feminist critics assert that they are on a journey of self-discovery that will lead them to a better understanding of themselves, their society, and the world at large. Seeking to understand themselves first as individuals, they believe that they will then be equipped to develop their own individual talents and fully participate in all aspects of their culture, including the arts.

ASSUMPTIONS

To onlookers, feminist theory and practice appear to be diffuse, a loosely connected body of criticism that is more divided than unified, more prone to internal disagreements than to unity among its adherents. Feminist criticism cannot claim nor indeed wants to claim any ultimate spokesperson because feminists believe in the personal, advocating for many different voices to be heard and respected. Not to be understood as homogeneous, feminist criticism should actually be dubbed feminist criticisms. Behind all these multi-voices, theories, and practices, however, rests a cooperative set of principles.

The core belief of feminist theory and criticism asserts that all people—women and men—are politically, socially, and economically equal. Although diverse in its social theories, values, and politics, feminist criticism chiefly advocates for the rights of women. Its adherents are women (and some men) who are struggling to discover who they are, how they arrived at their present situation, and where they are going. In their search, they value the individual person, validating and giving significance to the individual as opposed to the group. Their search at times is political because their aim is to discover and change both themselves and the world in which they live, a world that must learn to validate all individuals, all cultures, and all sub-cultures as creative, aesthetic, and rational people who can contribute to their societies and their world. Such a revisionist stance seeks to understand the place of women in society and to analyze every aspect that affects women as citizens and as writers in a male-dominated world. In this patriarchal world, man more frequently than not defines what it means to be human. Woman has become the Other, the “not-male.” Man is the subject, the one who defines meaning. Woman is the object, having her existence defined and determined by the male. Whereas the man is the significant (or **privileged**, using Derrida’s term) binary in the male/female relationship, the female is subordinate (or **unprivileged**).

By defining the female in relation to the male and simultaneously claiming the superiority of the male, Western society and many other cultures are, for the most part, patriarchal, decreeing that the female, by nature, is inferior. As soon as Western culture both consciously or unconsciously assimilated this belief into its social structures and allowed it to permeate all levels of society, females became an oppressed people, inferiors who must be suppressed least humankind fail to reach its maximum potential.

Feminist theorists and critics want to correct such erroneous ways of thinking. Women, they declare, are individuals, people in their own right; they are not incomplete or inferior men. Despite how frequently literature and society have fictionalized and stereotyped females as angels, bar maids, bitches, whores, brainless housewives, or old maids, women must define themselves and articulate their roles, values, aspirations, and place in society.

To do so, say feminist critics, women must analyze and challenge the established literary canon that has shaped such images of female inferiority and subordination. Women must contest the long-held patriarchal assumptions about their sex and gender, and they must marshal a variety of resources to assert, clarify, and finally implement their beliefs and values. Through a reexamination of the established literature in all disciplines, by defining and validating what it means to be a woman, and by establishing and creating feminist literary theories and criticisms, women can legitimize their responses to any text; to their own writing; and to their political, economic, and social positions in their culture.

METHODOLOGY

Because feminist theory and criticisms are polyphonic, a variety of feminist approaches to textual analysis exists. Some feminist critics debunk male superiority by exposing stereotypes of women in all literary periods. Women, they assert, cannot be simply depicted and classified as either angels or demons, saints or whores, brainless housewives or eccentric spinsters. Such characterizations must be continually identified and then challenged.

Other feminist critics continue to scrutinize the American, the English, or the non-Western literary canon, rediscovering works written by women. Still other feminist critics reread the canonical works of male authors from a female point of view. Such an analysis develops a uniquely female consciousness based on female experience rather than relying on the traditional male theories of reading, writing, and critiquing. Elaine Showalter’s gynocriticism with its multifaceted approach helps feminist critics in such an analysis.

Some feminist critics such as Luce Irigaray use the methodologies of philosophy and psychoanalysis to overturn patriarchy and its accompanying phallogocentrism. These critics’ aim is to expose the multiple ways that patriarchal discourses empower males while disenfranchising women. And critics such as Kristeva and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak employ the methodologies of linguistics, Marxism, deconstruction, and subaltern studies to overturn and provide alternatives to patriarchal discourse.

In similar fashion, critics such as Monique Wittig and Hélène Cixous propose a completely new, nonphallogocentric discourse. Wittig challenges not only patriarchal assumptions in culture but also in the very structure of language itself, experimenting and hoping to eliminate pronouns and nouns, for example, that reflect gender, a process she calls the **lesbianization of language**. Cixous’s feminist methodology embraces the creation of a female language, *l’écriture féminine*, to open phallogocentric discourse to both sexes. Providing models to challenge the dominant discourse is also a chief concern for both postcolonial feminism and the women of color feminists.

To use the various approaches to feminist criticisms, an in-depth understanding of each of the various theoretical positions and methodologies is essential.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

Whatever method of feminist criticisms we choose to apply to a text, we can begin such textual analysis by asking some general questions:

- Is the author male or female?
- Is the text narrated by a male or female?
- What types of roles do women have in the text?
- Are the female characters the protagonists or secondary and minor characters?
- Do any stereotypical characterizations of women appear?
- What are the attitudes toward women held by the male characters?
- What is the author's attitude toward women in society?
- How does the author's culture influence her or his attitude?
- Is feminine imagery used? If so, what is the significance of such imagery?
- Do the female characters speak differently than the male characters? In your investigation, compare the frequency of speech for the male characters to the frequency of speech for the female characters.

By applying any or all of these questions to a text, we can begin our journey in feminist criticism and simultaneously help ourselves to better understand ourselves as individuals and the world in which we live.

CRITIQUES AND RESPONSES

At the beginning of this chapter are a variety of quotations pronounced by men concerning women; now let us listen to the voices of females:

You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all the papers more than anybody else, in fact you have to have to be there all the time and see that they do not snow you under, if you are really going to get your reform realized.

Emmeline Pankhurst, British suffragist (1858–1928)

Feminism, like Boston, is a state of mind. It is the state of mind of women who realize that their whole position in the social order is antiquated, as a woman cooking over an open fire with heavy iron pots would know that her entire housekeeping was out of date.

Feminism never harmed anybody unless it was some feminists. The danger is that the study and contemplation of "ourselves" may become so absorbing that it builds by slow degrees a high wall that shuts out the great world of thought.

Rheta Childé Dorr, journalist (1866–1948)

Feminism is the radical notion that women are people.

Cheris Karamarae and Paula Treichler

The connections between and among women are the most feared, the most problematic, and the most potentially transforming force on the planet.

Adrienne Rich, poet (b. 1929)

Feminism is an entire world view or gestalt, not just a laundry list of women's issues.

Charolotte Bunch, editor, author (1944–)

It is important to remember that feminism is no longer a group of organizations or leaders. It is the expectations that parents have for their daughters, and their sons too. It is the way we talk about and treat one another. It is who makes the money and who makes the compromises and who makes the dinner. It is a state of mind. It is the way of life we live now.

Anna Quindlen, journalist/novelist (1945–)

Feminism is a political term and it must be recognized as such: it is political in women's terms. What are these terms? Essentially it means making connections: between personal power and economic power, between domestic oppression and labor exploitation, between plants and chemicals, feelings and theories; it means making connections between our inside worlds and the outside world.

Anica Vesel Mander (1945–) and Anne K. Rush (1945–)

For many people, Adrienne Rich's quote encapsulates the essence of feminist criticism: it is feared, it is problematic, and it has the ability and the transformative power to reshape our world. A branch of feminist studies grounded in feminist theory and scholarship, feminist criticism is a heterogeneous grouping of scholars, writers, linguistics, philosophers, scientists, anthropologists, psychologists, educators, and peoples from all professions and walks of life who believe that women and men are equal. As a social movement, feminist criticism highlights the various ways women, in particular, have been oppressed, suppressed, and repressed. It asks new questions of old texts. It develops and uncovers a female tradition in writing. It analyzes women writers and their works from female perspectives. It attempts to

redefine literary concepts and the dominant discourse—language itself—in terms of gender. It disavows the privileged position of males in a predominantly patriarchal society. It questions basic assumptions about gender, gender difference, and sexuality. And it demands that we become resisting readers to the established male hierarchies upon which our culture and our literature have been shaped.

Critics of feminist criticism often view it as a collection of theorists and critics who cannot decide what they really believe. Its critics assert that one group of feminist criticism defines “female” and “male” one way while another develops conflicting and sometimes contradictory definitions. Even within feminist criticism itself, the various subcategories criticize each other. Postcolonial feminists, for example, harshly critique Western forms of criticism. Psychoanalytic feminist critics often view their cultures and society differently from materialistic or Marxist critics. Because of such differences, critics avow that the multi-voices of feminist criticism(s) cannot sustain a unified ideology.

Feminist criticism’s conservative critics advocate that the goal of feminist criticism is to destroy traditional values and gender roles. Males and females, argue these critics, are naturally and biologically different. From these critics’ point of view, feminist criticism is rooted in error and has become, for them, the enemy. Some even blame their own lack of success in business or any other area in the public arena on the rise of feminism.

Whether such criticism is real or imagined, present-day feminist critics believe that discrimination against women still exists, not only in America, but worldwide—discrimination in the workplace, in the home, in the church, in government, and in society as a whole. Issues such as the glass ceiling, human trafficking, slavery, and prostitution continue to plague society. Feminist criticisms, maintain its advocates, will continue to add their voices of protest to such injustices.

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WEB SITES FOR EXPLORATION

www.colostate.edu/Depts/Speech/rccs/theory84.htm

“Different Types of Feminist Theories” provides working definitions for a variety of feminist theories

www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/lit.html

“Feminist Literary Criticism and Theory” provides information concerning a variety of critics, including Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva, and others

<http://baliwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/theory.html>

Women’s studies resources