

**Feminism: Concepts and Theories**  
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**Feminist Theory: The Second and Third Wave**

Welcome back to Feminism Concepts and Theories and today we are going to launch into the Second Wave of feminist theory, in continuity with our last lecture which was the First Wave. If you remember, at the beginning of the lecture on the First Wave, we had spoken a little bit about when is it that these kinds of forms of feminist theory even begin to be referred to as Waves; and we had spoken about how is it that it was only during the time of the Second Wave that somebody brings up the metaphor of the Wave.

So, the Second Wave is what we are talking about today, and we are going to follow a pretty much similar sort of strategy: we are speaking about the discussion points during the Second Wave; we are speaking about the political atmosphere that gives rise to these questions; and we are going to discuss and read from a few key texts. I find the Second Wave one of the most interesting in these sets of discussions, primarily because it addresses something close to holistic sense of gender as an axis of difference.

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And what I mean become will clearer as we go through today's content. Therefore, like I mentioned, today's lecture is about the second wave, key concepts and key thinkers, and some primary readings that we will go through together.

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**THE SECOND WAVE**

- 1963 – the 1980's
- Responds and reacts to the surrounding political milieu
- Unifying goal of social equality
  - To that extent is continuous with the first-wave
- "The personal is political"
- Names and seeks to do away with the casual sexism ingrained in society

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Let us start with some very basic information, primarily, periodization. The Second Wave is broadly located from 1963 to 1980-s. However, this is not a rigid classification, this is just to indicate the time period when the Second Wave found itself greatly productive; that it produced the large set of thoughts, and movements, and consequences that today we identify with the Second Wave. The Second Wave is also very-very clearly distinguished from the First Wave in that it moves towards social equality as a necessary complement, and as a necessary deepening of the goals of the first wave, which were political equality; to that extent it is continuous, it takes goals and the consequences and the victories of the First Wave, and then asks why is it that those victories have not let to a gender-just society and explores the reasons why.

The Second Wave also gives rise to something that has become almost common-sensical in its invocation today: *the personal is political*. Let us pause a second to consider what that means! Does it mean that we need to politicise every part of our personal lives? Does it mean that every part of our personal lives should come under scrutiny for its political consequences and effects? Not quite! What it means is that, in order to understand how women's personal lives are structured the way they are, in order to answer the questions that seem rather intimate and individual, and consequences of the ways in which individual women lead lives, on the contrary the Second Wave and the thinkers of the Second Wave argue, that whatever we consider personal is a direct result of the ways in which the political milieu is structured; and therefore, struggle in the personal also means struggle in the political; that the goals of

modifying, changing, improving personal life are deeply connected which changes in the political milieu.

The politics of the personal are also about large-scale change and unless we bring about large-scale change, personal lives will not change consequently; and as a result, it names and seeks to do away with the casual sexism ingrained in society, and the term “casual sexism” seems almost casual as if it does not matter much. On the contrary, Second Wave feminist theory argues that, that which we consider to be minute and small is a symptom of the ways in which society is organised in relation to women and sexism towards women.

Let us speak a little bit then about the ways in which Second Wave feminism reacts to the surrounding political milieu. This is a question worth asking: why is it that we such a large time gap between 1920, when you have an ostensible political equality guaranteed to women, and the 1960-s, which is when we locate the origins of the Second Wave? What happens in between? Does it mean that for a period of about 40 years, women's problems in the US and the UK and the global north have been solved? And suddenly, there is a set of issues that crop up. Does it mean that in many a ways, women are now unhappy with 40 years of improvement?

What exactly do we understand as continuity? For this we have to go back to learnings from the previous lecture, which is to say, that term wave can be a little temporally misleading. It does not mean that every wave builds on successive wins and losses from the previous wave. It only means that it references the First Wave. That it learns from it without necessarily thinking about itself as temporally and spatially continuous. It is not the same group of women, they have not learnt together, and even when in specific geographies many other things happened in between, such as World War II.

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The slide features a title 'WORLD WAR II' in bold black letters at the top left. Below the title is a list of four bullet points, each circled in red: 'Rosie the Riveter', 'A country of no men', 'Factory and production lines opened up work spaces posing as war effort', and 'In 1944, government-sponsored propaganda urged women to return home'. In the top right corner, there is a small circular logo with the text 'NPTEL' below it. On the right side of the slide, a woman in a white shirt and dark vest is speaking and gesturing with her hands.

So, from 1939 to 1945, most of the broad western world, and as result often the rest of the world connected to it through colonial consequences, suffers the effect of the World War II.

In the US very specifically, one of the important consequences for our learnings is that, you are left with a country with no men, most of who have gone to war. As a result, you find large areas of work, large work spaces, industries, everyday labour unoccupied because there are no longer the bodies that use to occupy them available within the country. And hence, economically, politically, socially there is suddenly a gaping need for workers of any kind, including women. So, professions that were otherwise unavailable to women, who were considered to be not strong enough, not capable enough, not intelligent enough are opened up. This can be read through figures that were popular during that time in popular media, such as the Rosie the Riveter, and I will come to that in just to second. Factories and production lines open up work spaces posing as war effort. So, remember even the kinds of gains that the feminist movement makes during this time, access to women, access for work all of these are not couched in the language of gender empowerment, instead, they are posed as the national duty for women; that they come and occupy the spaces and keep the country running in the absence of men. In other words, women are merely proxy figures during this time and they begin to experience the fruits of labour, that then secure to them economic independence of a particular kind.

But, in 1944 when it becomes obvious who the winners of World War II are going to be, government-sponsored propaganda in the US, urged women to return home. It said well your

work is done now the men are back, so please return to homes and become the housewives or tenders of home and children like you are always meant to do.

Keep this in mind, because this is no small thing: Often we think about feminist theory as being produced in a kind of vacuum. Women woke up one day and said, let me think about empowerment; but, the truth is feminist theory like all theory is also in a dialectic with the world around it. It borrows energy from ongoing contingencies, accidents, happenstances. Nobody if asked would have ever guessed that World War II might lead to feminist empowerment, but there you have it.

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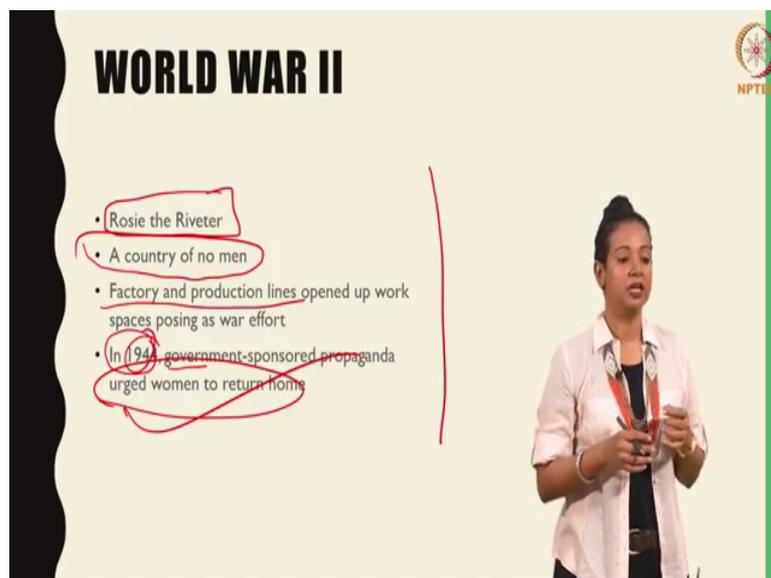
Let me show you a couple of examples from public culture during the time. And this figure may be very familiar to lot of people, this is Rosie the Riveter, *We can do it!* You can see the kind of stance; you can see the determined look on the Rosie's face over here. You can see the ways in which the garb suggests that somebody who is able to work in public space, competently, intelligently, and be a completely functioning worker, in spite of being a woman. So this kind of public culture during that time is also a testimony to the ways in which larger discourses often shape our understanding of gender, sometimes in utilitarian, mercenary fashion, but clearly with consequences that far exceed the goals of the communication at hand.

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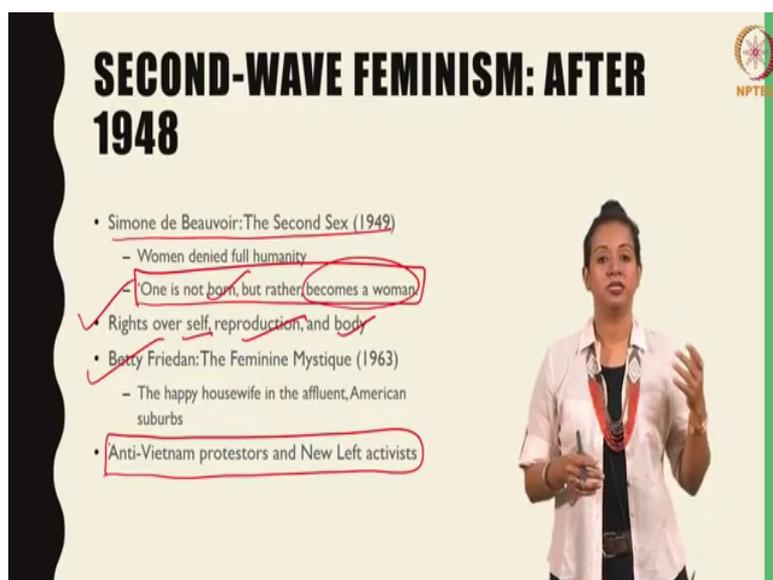
And here is another advertisement that is very-very telling. It says: “The more WOMEN at work, the sooner we WIN!” So, war effort, in a particular fashion, on the inside; men can be war heroes; women are the ones who are making sure the country is running. “Women are needed also as: farm workers, typists, sales people, waitresses, bus drivers, taxi drivers, time keepers, elevator operators, messengers, laundresses, teachers, conductors, and in hundreds of other war jobs. See your local U.S. Employment Service.” So interesting! And can you imagine in the period of may be five or six years when these ads are out and women have taken up these jobs only to be told in 1944 that it’s time to return home. Can you imagine the ways in which this might create ongoing waves of dissatisfaction...?

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...And of resentment, and bitterness of this kind of capacity of public discourse to use women's labour at will, and throw it away at will? If nothing else, it also showed women around that time that they were capable of doing this; that a lot of the things that women had been told until that time – that public space was not suitable for them – was not true thereby exposing the lie of gender roles in private and public spaces.

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The slide features a title 'SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM: AFTER 1948' in bold black text. Below the title is a bulleted list of key texts and propositions. A woman in a white shirt and red necklace is standing on the right side of the slide, gesturing with her hands. The slide has a green vertical bar on the right and a black wavy shape on the left. A small logo is in the top right corner.

- Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex* (1949)
  - Women denied full humanity
  - One is not born, but rather becomes a woman
- Rights over self, reproduction, and body
- Betty Friedan: *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)
  - The happy housewife in the affluent, American suburbs
- Anti-Vietnam protestors and New Left activists

Therefore, after 1948 a series of key texts and key propositions become fundamental to the Second Wave feminist movement. Primary among them Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* from 1949 where she argued that women are denied full humanity. You will see strains of this also in First Wave feminist theory that argues from different stages about this kind of denial and what it means when women are actually accorded the right to be human. Simone de Beauvoir goes a step further and makes the radical proposition, that is then built on by Third Wave feminist theory, that one is not "born" but "becomes" a woman.

Pause for a second! What does that mean? And why is it radical? Why is it something that can shake the foundations of society as we know it? The author is suggesting in many ways that the fact of biological sex itself is *not enough* to claim womanhood. Go back then to something we discussed in our first lecture, which is the sex-gender framework. Sex is the biological body; gender is a set of social rules imposed upon the body. In 1949 a suggestion such as this was tremendously radical.

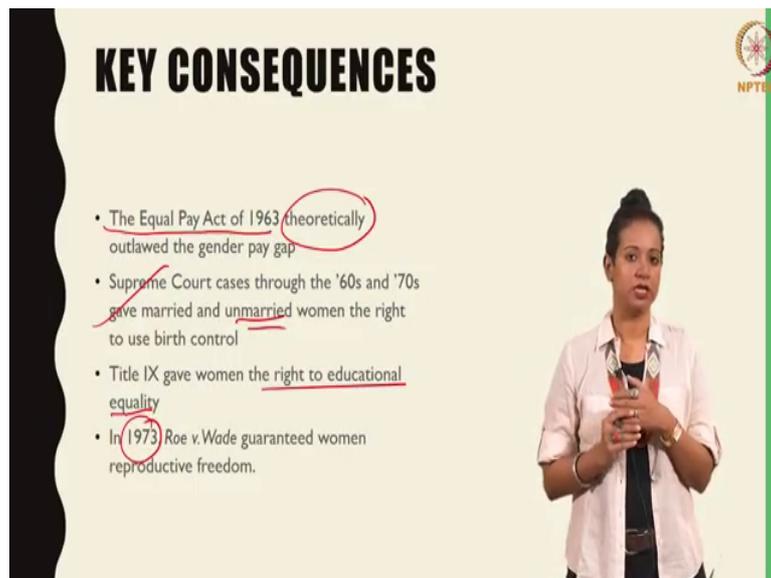
It brought focus and attention to the ways in which all forces in society are ordered in the ways to allow biological sex to become cultural gender. In this time, women began to argue in continuity in some ways as Margaret Sanger's work for example, on women's rights over self – reproduction and body – and not just for the sake of being good partners to men. Like Wollstonecraft would have suggested not to be able to be achieve political equality, but just in order to claim full humanity.

Another influential text during this time was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which spoke about this idea of the happy housewife in the affluent, American suburbs as not just a problem, but as creating something: “a problem with no name” about the growing dissatisfaction among seemingly happy American housewives in the suburbs and what this dissatisfaction was about and how it could be named. As ever Second Wave feminism also borrowed from the energy of anti-Vietnam protesters and New Left activists.

Now, now remember post World War II is also a time of tremendous doubts and cynicism. The consequences of World War II are not necessarily uniformly jubilant; you see the effects of catastrophic social engineering such as the holocaust; you see the ways in which genocide, ethnic hate, all of these are important moving forces in the ways in which the world was brought to the brink of destruction. And in such an atmosphere, a number of people were propounding the force of feelings and affects, such as love, and care, and friendship, and kinship, and ask that the world re-examine the ways in which it had organised itself until that point.

Feminist theory in the Second Wave, similarly asked for such a questioning of gender itself as fundamental category of experience.

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## KEY CONSEQUENCES

- The Equal Pay Act of 1963 theoretically outlawed the gender pay gap
- Supreme Court cases through the '60s and '70s gave married and unmarried women the right to use birth control
- Title IX gave women the right to educational equality
- In 1973 Roe v. Wade guaranteed women reproductive freedom.

And there were number of key consequences as a result of these struggles and a result of all of this kind of discussion and debate. Let me run you through a few of them, some of which continue to be extremely influential even in the current political milieu.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 *theoretically* outlawed the gender pay gap. Now, this made the radical proposition that men and women should be paid the same for the same work. To this day, and that is why we said theoretically, to this day, even in countries like US, this is not the case. Pay often tends to be differential not just for women but, very-very specifically for women of colour, for people of colour, for natives versus foreigners, for ethnic minorities. So, pay gap continues to be one of the key interventions that the Second Wave sought to bring about.

Supreme Court cases through the 60s and 70s gave married and unmarried women the right to use birth control. Now, this might seem surprising especially in the case of Legislative measures in the contemporary era, but, think about it for a second; what does it mean to give women the right to use birth control? And a lot of panic stricken, anti-feminist rights people always speak about the fact that should women be given the right to use birth control they will become sexually promiscuous, they will have no responsibility, they will have no commitment toward reproduction.

I do not have enough time to go into the ways in which such discourses handle the idea of women themselves, but, there is certainly a societal view towards reproduction as primarily a woman's duty or role in life, that structure these kinds of arguments. So, therefore giving married and unmarried women the right to use birth control was tantamount to giving them

full humanity. Title IX gave women the right to educational equality: very-very important. And lastly, in 1973 Roe v. Wade guaranteed women reproductive freedom.

And by this we mean the right to or not to have an abortion, to have control over their own reproductive rights and freedom. To this day this continues to be a contentious issue in countries across the world.

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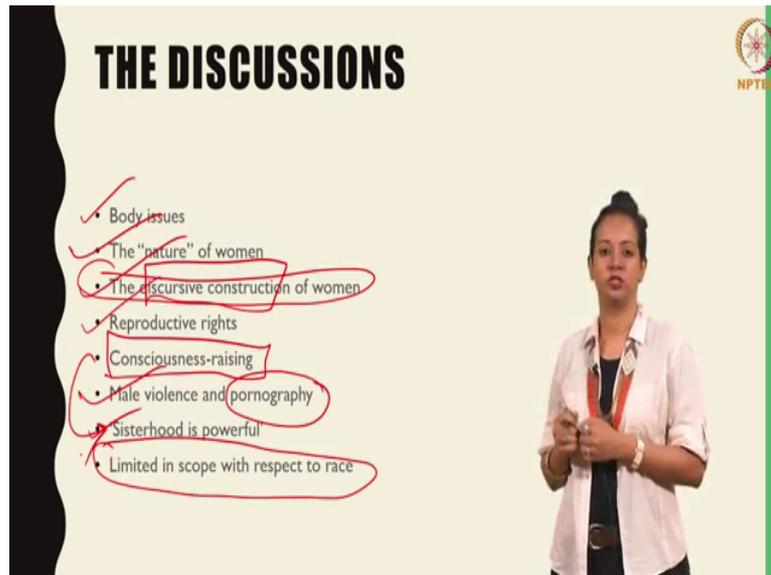
Another set of key consequences was very much to do with the quality of women's lives. So, for example second wave fought to get women the right to hold credit cards under their own names. What does this mean? It means that they have the capacity to be consumers and rights-bearing citizens in the economic sphere in their own right, and not in their husbands or fathers name.

Legislated against marital rape – the idea that providing the sexual relations is not the duty of women who are married, their consent must still be obtained and any form of sexual activity sans consent whether in a marriage or outside of it, it's subject to action through law.

Tried to raise awareness about domestic violence – you will remember this from our discussion around space and home; that homes were often unsafe spaces for a lot of women and a number of them in countries including those like the US experienced domestic violence to a heinous degree. Second Wave brought about this awareness and tried to build shelters for women fleeing rape and domestic violence. They also argued that providing such shelters was the duty of the state; the state was responsible for the safety of women as citizens in their own rights, and it named and legislated, or rather asked for the legislation against sexual

harassment in the workplace. Many of you will recognise that these are ongoing issues, not just in our country but also in countries of their origin. And therefore it demands asking why is it that from the 1960s to now we are still talking about the same issues. This is not to suggest that Second Wave was unsuccessful but to continue to ask the ways in which women are boxed in in society, as needing to perform certain kind of roles and being restricted from particular kinds of freedoms over self and body.

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So broadly, just to summarize the kinds of discussion in Second Wave, we are speaking about body issues also; and body issues had to do with questions like beauty and the ways in which women were expected to conform to certain ideals of form, and presence, and presentation in public space; and how these roles had been so hard wired that women did not know how to behave otherwise. These also led into other questions of body shaming, ideal bodies, fashion, so on and so forth.

Just like Simone de Beauvoir suggested, it also brought forth discussions on the “nature of women”: Is there a fundamental nature? Do we think about women as being one or the other? Must all women have the same nature? Must they all want to reproduce? Must they all have the capacity to care and nurture? Must they all be fantastic housewives? Must they all be good mothers? All of these were ongoing discussions during this time. Very importantly, and this continues in Third Wave and to the present day, the discursive construction of women. We have gone over some definitions of *discourse* in the first week when we spoke about *conceptual clarity*. So, let me just rehearse those arguments. Discursive construction means

that from biological sex to social gender there are multiple discourses that structure how one thinks of oneself as a woman.

Across narratives, across platforms, in relation to body, duty, role, comportment, behaviour, discourses suggest to you, what are the ways in which propriety is built into the idea of woman, and how one needs to conform in order to be seen by self and by others as a woman. This came under discussion during the Second Wave. Reproductive rights as we already discussed and ongoing consciousness-raising that women could only think about these things together; that individual experiences had to be gathered in order to be understood that these experiences were not necessarily individual but were part of a standard narrative about women.

Think about maybe ways in which sometimes you thought of your own issues as singular. So, that I feel so terrible today or I am not sure why is it that I am being denied access to certain things in public space because I am a woman. Why do people speak to me as if I do not know what I am talking about just because I am a woman? And you think something is going on with you or something is wrong with the ways in which you presented yourself except when you meet three other people, other women maybe, who all share similar experiences, and then you realise that each of you is bearing the brunt of systemic problem. Consciousness-raising was part of addressing such a problem. Said we could talk about these experiences together and they are not merely arenas to vent, but they also become important platforms for us to understand the systemic nature of the discursive construction of women.

Also under discussion were forms of male violence and pornography as a necessary complement to the ways in which women experienced violence. In other words, if women are being typecast as particular kind of bodies whose roles in life are about providing sex, good homes, good motherhood, what is the other side of the issue? What are the forms of male violence that are abetted and included and encouraged by society that then allows for these roles to continue together. In other words, we are making a structural argument. There were also some very important debates on pornography during this time and the ways in which it is fundamentally violent and therefore objectifying of women.

There were also other kinds of arguments by women that suggested that pornography can also be very powerful for women to own their own sexuality, but these were minor set of arguments during this time thereby suggesting through consciousness-raising that sisterhood

can be a powerful force. And we read some of this in bell hooks and that text is also an important kind of end point of these discussions.

One of the things to remember however about second wave is that it was rather limited with respect to race. There were multiple ways in which second wave feminist theory is always seen as a white women's movement; There are the issues that was central to it were central to white women's lives, and did not include the particularities or the exigencies of other kinds of disempower populations, such as black women who experienced that doubling of disempowerment through race as well as gender. And thereby black women's feminism decided to take on a different set of discourses to be able to suitably explicate their own experience of gender injustice.

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**KEY TEXTS**

- The Second Sex; Simone de Beauvoir (1949)
- The Feminine Mystique; Betty Friedan (1963)
- The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)
- Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism, bell hooks (1981)
- Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979)

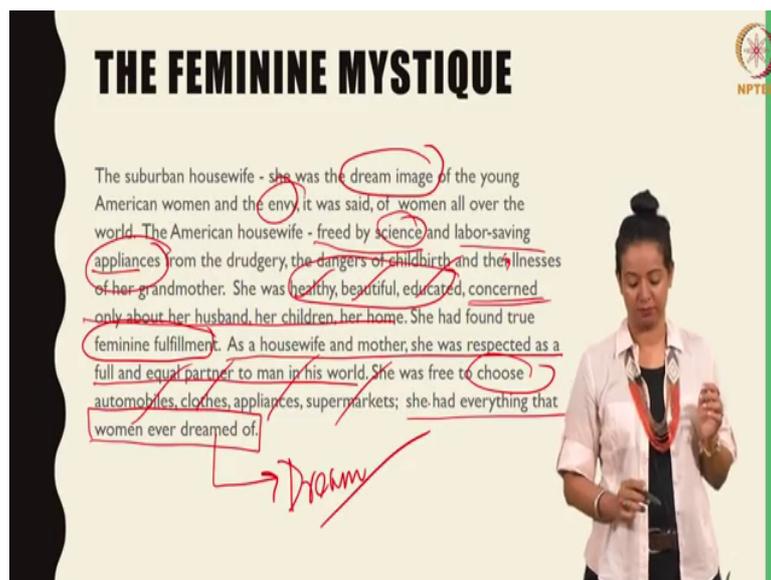
Now, these are broadly some of the key texts during this period and I have chosen these with very particular goals in mind. They sort of speak to each other in multiple ways, so we are speaking about *The Second Sex* as one of the key texts of Second Wave feminism, but I am not going to read from it today because we are also going to discuss *The Second Sex* in relation to next week's lectures, which are about the feminist body.

We will read a little bit from *The Feminine Mystique* and I want to combine it with readings from *Madwoman in the Attic*. We will also read from the statement of the Combahee River Collective, which were a group of black lesbian feminists who argued that both in terms of sexual freedom, race as well as gender, the larger movement did not capture their particular experience. And lastly we will read from bell hooks because she is wonderful, from a text called, *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*.

So, let us go through some parts of each of these text and see what are the issues they bring about. Let us start with *The Feminine Mystique* which is perhaps the most quoted works from the particular time. It is a tremendously compelling document that speaks about the situation of American suburban housewives. At first go you do not think about these as suitable feminine subjects because to all understanding American housewives during this time first was supposed to be happy a lot.

World War II had ended; despite the fact that America was not in great shape, slowly the nation was making its way to prosperity; there was an understanding that there was a collective building of middle class and middle class values. So, why is it that gender is a particular problem for these housewives? And this is what Friedan wants us to try and understand and she writes it in a very-very compelling persuasive fashion. Let us look at a few excerpts.

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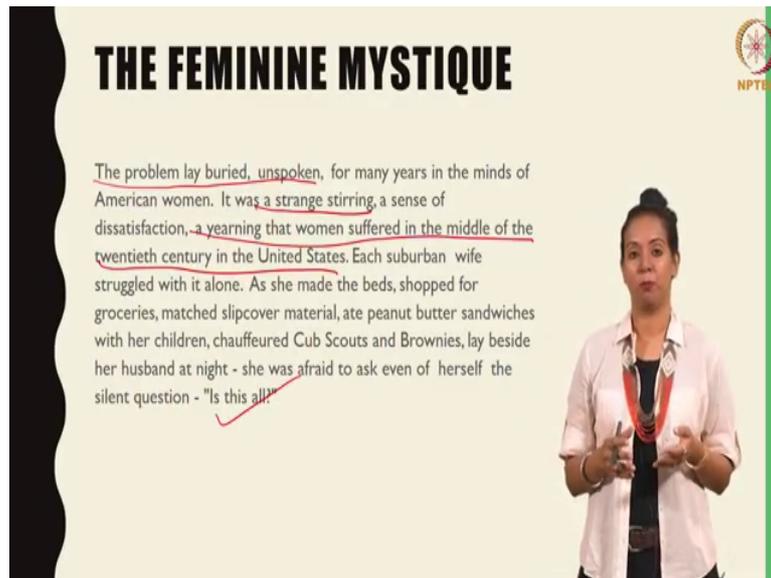


“The suburban housewife - she was the dream image of the young American women and the envy, it was said of women all over the world. The American housewife – freed by science and labour-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine fulfilment. As a housewife and mother she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of.”

Pay attention to the language here: dream image, envy of women all over the world. So, there is already an exceptionalism to the American women. The American women as opposed to women all over the world has a lot of choice. She has the capacity to live like a true blue American consumer, freed by science and labour-saving appliances. Here she's also produced as the modern woman that she is been freed by the efforts of modern, western technology from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth – developments in medical sciences as well – and the illnesses of her grandmother also through developments in medical technology, and increase in mortality rates for women all over the world hopefully. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, all interesting important things, and here comes the zinger: concerned only about her husband, her children, her home through which she had found true feminine fulfilment.

Now, step back and look at this picture; at first glance it does not look too bad, does it? You think about the argument that what's wrong with these women, they have everything; do they only want to complain? How much more can they want? As a housewife and mother she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. Here that is clear separation she was respected as a partner but only in her domain and man has his domain. You remember the alteration of weak feminism of a particular kind that says women's values are important and need to be brought into the world. This is not quite that, here there is a clear demarcation. Women to private, man to public everybody knows their roles. She was free to choose: automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of. Here, comes the important aspect, what should be the appropriate nature of women's dreams? Let us continue:

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**THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE**

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night - she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question - "Is this all?"

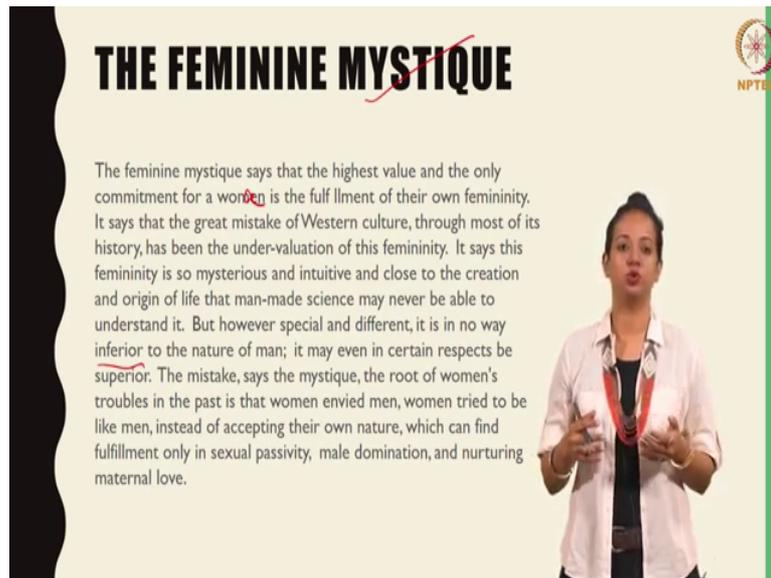
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“The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States.”

Here, Friedan begins to name the nature of the problem. She says, the problem lay buried, unspoken because ostensibly in the face of all of this cornucopia, this plenty, women should not experience dissatisfaction and if they did something was wrong with them. It was strange stirring, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Here she is driving the point home; this is the twentieth century, this is the United States, how could you be unhappy?

“Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – Is this all?” How poignant is this passage, imagine reading it for the first time, imagine that somebody outside of you is naming the problem that you are even afraid to call a problem. This is why Friedan’s text was fabulously popular during this time and became a way for women to name their dissatisfaction as valid.

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**THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE**

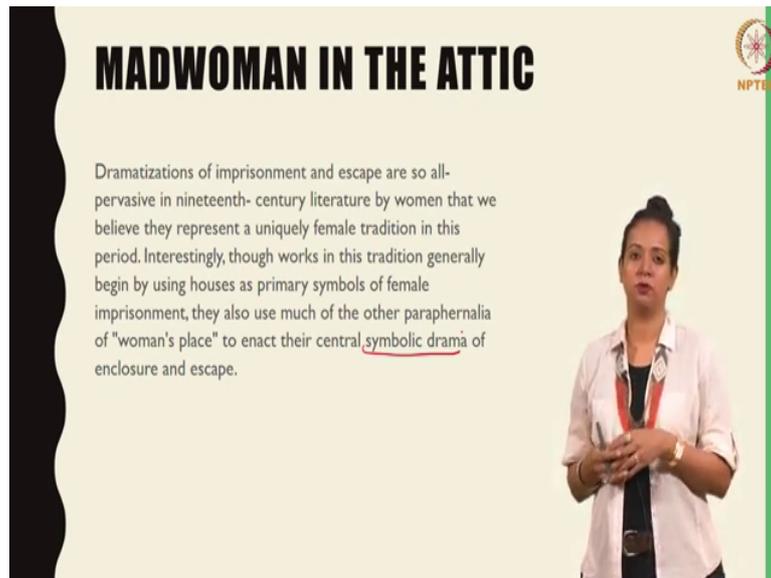
The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for a woman is the fulfillment of their own femininity. It says that the great mistake of Western culture, through most of its history, has been the under-valuation of this femininity. It says this femininity is so mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation and origin of life that man-made science may never be able to understand it. But however special and different, it is in no way inferior to the nature of man; it may even in certain respects be superior. The mistake, says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love.

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Friedan identified the reason for this dissatisfaction in what she calls the “feminine mystique.” “The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for a woman is the fulfillment of their own femininity. It says that the great mistake of Western culture through most of its history, has been the under-valuation of this femininity. It says this femininity is so mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation and origin of life, that man-made science may never be able to understand it, but, however special and different, it is in no way inferior to nature of man; it may even in certain respects be superior. The mistake says the mystique, the root of women's trouble in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love.” Does this paragraph make you a little uncomfortable in some ways to the ways in which Friedan is, over determining the standard the understanding of what somebody feminine should be like? And how true happiness is an accepting and conforming to that kind of femininity.

This is that reason why the feminine mystique also allowed for suburban women to be angry. To begin to come to understand for the first time that the dissatisfaction they bore with their roles was due to the fact of being boxed into this understanding of were they women only if they behaved in ways that society considered to be appropriate to womanhood. And this dissatisfaction is something that comes to the fore again and again.

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**MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC**

Dramatizations of imprisonment and escape are so all-pervasive in nineteenth-century literature by women that we believe they represent a uniquely female tradition in this period. Interestingly, though works in this tradition generally begin by using houses as primary symbols of female imprisonment, they also use much of the other paraphernalia of "woman's place" to enact their central symbolic drama of enclosure and escape.

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Think for example of the text *Madwoman in the Attic* where the authors speak about certain kinds of themes and literature in the nineteenth century. Let us read an excerpt and see what is that they are arguing. “Dramatization of imprisonment and escape are so all-pervasive in nineteenth-century literature by women, that we believe they represent a uniquely female tradition in this period. Interestingly, though works in this tradition generally begin by using houses as primary symbols of female imprisonment, they also use much of the other paraphernalia of “woman’s place” to enact their central symbolic drama of enclosure and escape.”

Now, here the authors are using a review of nineteenth-century literature to try and understand how is it that women were able to dramatize their own plight through symbols, metaphors and a large symbolic universe.

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**MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC**

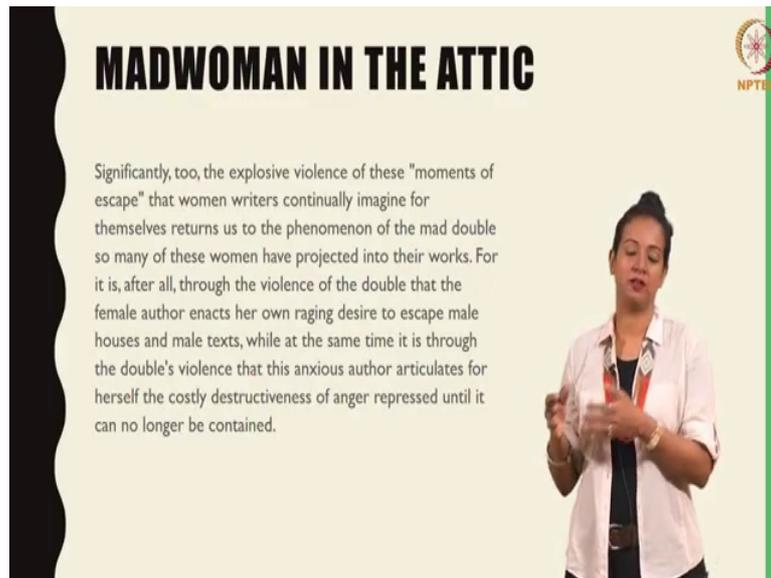
Ladylike veils and costumes, mirrors, paintings, statues, locked cabinets, drawers, trunks, strongboxes, and other domestic furnishing appear and reappear in female novels and poems throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth to signify the woman writer's sense that, as Emily Dickinson put it, her "life" has been "shaven and fitted to a frame," a confinement she can only tolerate by believing that "the soul has moments of escape / When bursting all the doors / She dances like a bomb abroad."

*(Note: The quote is underlined in red in the original image.)*

*(Note: The presenter is a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a white shirt and a red lanyard, standing on the right side of the slide.)*

“Ladylike veils and costumes, mirrors, paintings, statues, locked cabinets, drawers, trunks, strongboxes and other domestic furnishing appear and reappear in female novels and poems throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth to signify the woman writer’s sense that, as Emily Dickinson put it, her “life” has been “shaven and fitted to a frame,” a confinement she can only tolerate by believing that “the soul has moments of escape / When bursting all the doors / She dances like a bomb abroad.” Now, this is such a set of brilliant imagery; you are looking at the ways in which women writers try to escape their fate by writing about it. Or try to name their fate metaphorically because they were not quite sure what is that they longed for.

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**MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC**

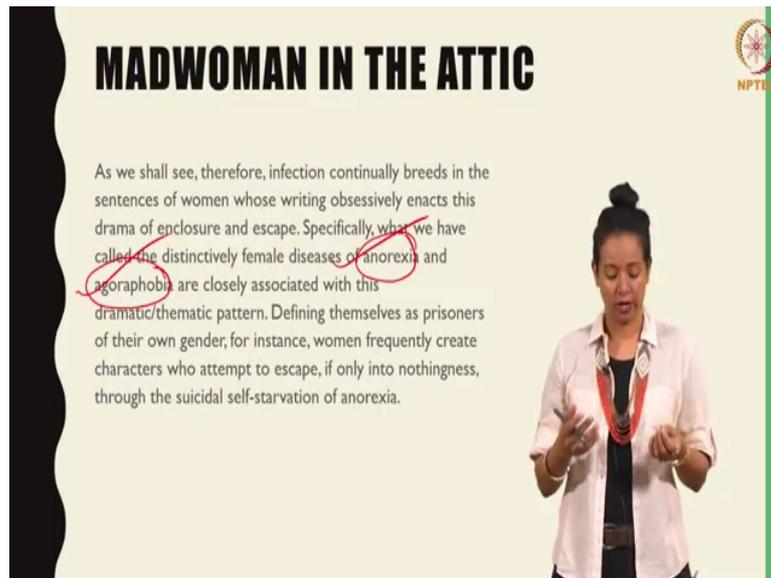
Significantly, too, the explosive violence of these "moments of escape" that women writers continually imagine for themselves returns us to the phenomenon of the mad double so many of these women have projected into their works. For it is, after all, through the violence of the double that the female author enacts her own raging desire to escape male houses and male texts, while at the same time it is through the double's violence that this anxious author articulates for herself the costly destructiveness of anger repressed until it can no longer be contained.

The slide features a woman in a white shirt and dark top speaking on the right side. The title 'MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC' is in large, bold, black letters at the top. A quote is on the left, and an NPTU logo is in the top right corner.

“Significantly, too, the explosive violence of these “moments of escape” that women writers continually imagined for themselves returns us to the phenomenon of the mad double so many of these women have projected into their works. For it is, after all, through the violence of the double that the female author enacts her own raging desire to escape male houses and male texts, while at the same time it is through the double’s violence that this anxious author articulates for herself the costly destructiveness of anger repressed until it can no longer be contained.”

And this is beautiful! What they are saying over here by analysing literature is that often you find in the women writer's works in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the appearance of double figures, where one is good, the other is bad; or one is contained and moderate and appropriate, and the other is monstrous. And the authors here are suggesting that this kind of doubling was a way for women to represent their own repressed desires, to escape men’s worlds and men's texts while at the same time being aware of the dangers of allowing these repressed selves to be out into the world. And being aware that ultimately those repressed selves would have to be contained, would have to be killed in order to continue living in the world.

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## MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC

As we shall see, therefore, infection continually breeds in the sentences of women whose writing obsessively enacts this drama of enclosure and escape. Specifically, what we have called the distinctively female diseases of anorexia and agoraphobia are closely associated with this dramatic/thematic pattern. Defining themselves as prisoners of their own gender, for instance, women frequently create characters who attempt to escape, if only into nothingness, through the suicidal self-starvation of anorexia.

The slide features a speaker on the right side, a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white lab coat over a dark top. The background is a light beige color with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. A small logo is visible in the top right corner.

“As we shall see, therefore, infection continually breeds in the sentences of women whose writing obsessively enacts this drama of an enclosure and escape. Specifically, what we have called the distinctively female diseases of anorexia and agoraphobia are closely associated with this dramatic / thematic pattern. Defining themselves as prisoners of their own gender for instance, women frequently create characters who attempt to escape, if only into nothingness through the suicidal self-starvation of anorexia.” So, they’re going further where identifying the appearance of diseases or conditions like agoraphobia and saying that, the central characters are representation of women’s deepest fears and possibilities for their escape by either giving up body or killing of the characters or destroying themselves.

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**MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC**

Similarly, in a metaphorical elaboration of bulimia, the disease of overeating which is anorexia's complement and mirror-image (as Marlene Boskind-Lodahl has recently shown), women writers often envision an "outbreak" that transforms their characters into huge and powerful monsters. More obviously, agoraphobia and its complementary opposite, claustrophobia, are by definition associated with the spatial imagery through which these poets and novelists express their feelings of social confinement and their yearning for spiritual escape.

The slide features a presenter on the right side, a logo in the top right corner, and a decorative black wavy border on the left. The text 'spiritual escape' is circled in red.

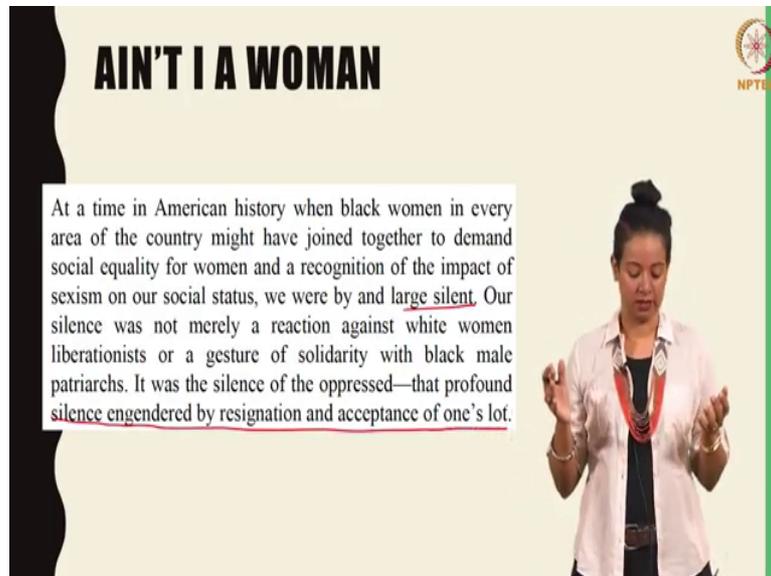
“Similarly, in a metaphorical elaboration of bulimia, the disease of overeating which is anorexia’s complement and mirror-image (as, Marlene Boskind-Lodahl has recently shown), women writers often envision an outbreak that transform their characters into huge and powerful monsters. More obviously, agoraphobia and its complementary opposite, claustrophobia, are by definition associated with the spatial imagery through which these poets and novelists express their feelings of social confinement and their yearning for spiritual escape.”

Now, connect this to the goals of the Second Wave movement. What does it mean to want spiritual escape? We are suggesting, the authors here are arguing that, by reading literature, you begin to understand that this problem that has no name, according to Betty Friedan, and the ways in which women writers are plotting their spiritual escape, are indicating a very-very real issue at the heart of the ways in which gender constructions are forms of imprisonment and prevent women from achieving full humanity.

At the same time, these seem to be problems of a very-very specific set of racial and classed women who are otherwise taken care of; who otherwise do have homes with gadgets, free from drudgery, free from disease that is however, not the universal lot of women even in the US. So, as much as Second Wave feminism was very much about recognising the lack of full humanity, even to seemingly privileged women, there were whole set of African-American writers, theorists and activists, who are argued that these kinds of theorization did not capture their experience, or even accord to them the possibility of gaining full humanity in the same

mode. Their struggles were different. So, the next half of this class, I want to read from two different text written about the experience of African-American women.

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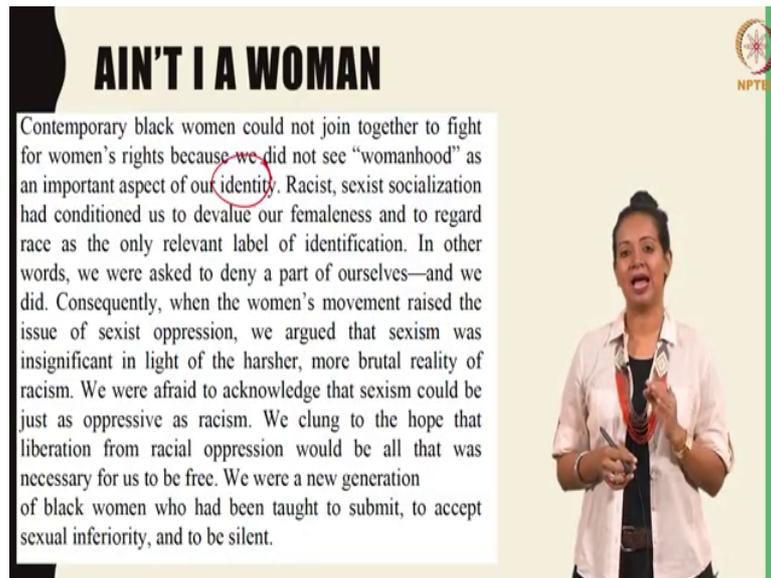
**AIN'T I A WOMAN**

At a time in American history when black women in every area of the country might have joined together to demand social equality for women and a recognition of the impact of sexism on our social status, we were by and large silent. Our silence was not merely a reaction against white women liberationists or a gesture of solidarity with black male patriarchs. It was the silence of the oppressed—that profound silence engendered by resignation and acceptance of one's lot.

The slide includes a photograph of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white shirt and a red necklace, speaking with her hands raised. In the top right corner, there is a logo for NPTEL.

Let us start with bell hooks' *Ain't I a woman?* Hooks says, “At a time in American history when black women in every area of the country might have joined together to demand social equality for women and a recognition of the impact of sexism on our social status, we were by and large silent. Our silence was not merely a reaction against white women liberationists or a gesture of solidarity with black male patriarchs. It was the silence of the oppressed – that profound silence engendered by resignation and acceptance of one’s lot.” Here Hooks, is making a tremendously poignant assertion. She says that, the reason black women have not joined this call for gender liberation, is not because they are throwing a tantrum, it is not because they want to resist white women’s understandings of liberation on the one hand, it is also not because they want to express solidarity with their own men. It is in fact something a lot more tragic. It is the profound silence engendered by resignation and acceptance of one's a lot: of racism on the one hand and of sexism on the other.

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**AIN'T I A WOMAN**

Contemporary black women could not join together to fight for women's rights because we did not see "womanhood" as an important aspect of our identity. Racist, sexist socialization had conditioned us to devalue our femaleness and to regard race as the only relevant label of identification. In other words, we were asked to deny a part of ourselves—and we did. Consequently, when the women's movement raised the issue of sexist oppression, we argued that sexism was insignificant in light of the harsher, more brutal reality of racism. We were afraid to acknowledge that sexism could be just as oppressive as racism. We clung to the hope that liberation from racial oppression would be all that was necessary for us to be free. We were a new generation of black women who had been taught to submit, to accept sexual inferiority, and to be silent.

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“Contemporary black women could not join together to fight for women’s rights because we did not see “womanhood” as an important aspect of our identity.” When she says this you have to remember that even for those who claimed womanhood, their coming to consciousness is a fraught struggle. It is not always easy and it is conditioned by the particular aspects of women's lives that allow or disallow them from understanding woman as a primary part of identity. “Racist, sexist socialization had conditioned us to devalue our femaleness and to regard race as the only relevant label of identification.” And this is very-very particular to African-American women's histories because for the first time in their lives as when they think about identity, race is a platform through which they were taught to have any kind of value. “In other words, we were asked to deny a part of ourselves and we did.” And this was important for African-American solidarity at a particular point is the argument that women were given.

“Consequently, when the women’s movements raised the issue of sexist oppression, we argued that sexism was insignificant in light of the harsher, more brutal reality of racism.” In other words, African-American women argued that we can think about sexism later, we need to address racialisation and its brutal violence first. “We were afraid to acknowledge that sexism could be just as oppressive as racism. We clung to the hope that liberation from racial oppression would be all that was necessary for us to be free. We were a new generation of black women, who had been taught to submit, to accept sexual inferiority and to be silent” towards the cause of racial emancipation.

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## AIN'T I A WOMAN



Just as the 19th century conflict over black male suffrage versus woman suffrage had placed black women in a difficult position, contemporary black women felt they were asked to choose between a black movement that primarily served the interests of black male patriachs and a women's movement which primarily served the interests of racist white women. Their response was not to demand a change in these two movements and a recognition of the interests of black women. Instead the great majority of black women allied themselves with the black patriarchy they believed would protect their interests. A few black women chose to ally themselves with the feminist movement. Those who dared to speak publicly in support of women's rights were attacked and criticized. Other black women found themselves in limbo, not wanting to ally themselves with sexist black men or racist white women. That

“Just as the nineteenth century conflict over black male suffrage versus woman suffrage had placed black women in a difficult position” because remember that their fight was between white women’s suffrage and black men's identities, in which case it would have been difficult for African-American women to be able to side with white women in the asking for gender suffrage, “contemporary black women felt they were asked to choose between a black movement that primarily served the interest of black male patriachs and a women’s movement which primarily served the interest of racist white women.” Look how beautifully hooks presents the quandaries for African-American women.

“Their response was not to demand the change in these two movements and a recognition of the interest of black women. Instead, the great majority of black women allied themselves with black patriarchy they believed would protect their interests.” Between racist white women and black patriachs, black women in hooks’ understanding chose black men because they believed that race was the greater kind of affinity. “A few black women chose to ally themselves with the feminist movement. Those who dared to speak publicly in support of women's rights were attacked and criticised. Other black women found themselves in limbo, not wanting to ally themselves with sexist black men or racist white women.”

And here hooks states the problems so succinctly that you are caught between two very-very difficult propositions and thereby asked to deny either race, or gender, and as a result, a lot of women found themselves in limbo denying both, thereby leading to silence – the silence of resignation!

Our last document for today, I want to read a statement of the Combahee River Collective, which spoke for the rights of black lesbian women and said that from this marginal position

we can formulate a kind of agenda that combats both race and sexism, specifically for sexual minorities like lesbians.

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**THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT**

We are a collective of Black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974. [!] During that time we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements. The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face.

The Combahee River Collective Statement reads: “We are a collective of Black Feminists who have been meeting together since 1974. During that time, we have been involved in the process of defining and clarifying our politics, while at the same time doing political work within our own group and in coalition with other progressive organisations and movements. The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.” In many ways this is the precursor to what then becomes common-sensical knowledge during the Third Wave, that systems of oppression are interlocking, they work together. “The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of colour face.” And this is an important kind of statement that acknowledges the simultaneity of oppressions.

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**THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT**

We will discuss four major topics in the paper that follows: (1) the genesis of contemporary Black feminism; (2) what we believe, i.e., the specific province of our politics; (3) the problems in organizing Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; and (4) Black feminist issues and practice.

The slide features a woman in a white shirt speaking on the right side. The background is light green with a black wavy border on the left and an NPTEL logo in the top right corner.

“We will discuss four major topics in the paper that follows” and this is part of statement, “(1) the genesis of contemporary black feminism; (2) what we believe, that is, the specific province of our politics; (3)the problems in organizing Black feminists, including a brief herstory of our collective; an (4) Black feminist issues and practice.

Now, this is such a clear mandate because it refuses to abandon either race or sex as identity. And in fact deepens the question of sex identity itself, beyond the category of heterosexual woman.

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**THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT**

A Black feminist presence has evolved most obviously in connection with the second wave of the American women's movement beginning in the late 1960s. Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, but both outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation. In 1973, Black feminists, primarily located in New York, felt the necessity of forming a separate Black feminist group. This became the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO).

The slide features a woman in a white shirt speaking on the right side. The background is light green with a black wavy border on the left and an NPTEL logo in the top right corner.

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outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation. (Therefore,) [i]n 1973, Black feminists, primarily located in New York, felt the necessity of forming a separate Black feminist group. This became the National Black Feminist Organisation (NBFO).” This might be a point also to reemphasize that things that break away from feminist movement are not breakaway movements. They are very much part of the heart of feminist theory and feminist mobilization. And that is why the term wave again can be slightly misleading.

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The slide has a light green background with a black wavy border on the left. The title 'THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE STATEMENT' is in bold black text at the top left. A woman in a white shirt and dark top is speaking on the right. A logo with a star and the letters 'NPTR' is in the top right. The text on the slide reads: 'Black feminists often talk about their feelings of craziness before becoming conscious of the concepts of sexual politics, patriarchal rule, and most importantly, feminism, the political analysis and practice that we women use to struggle against our oppression. The fact that racial politics and indeed racism are pervasive factors in our lives did not allow us, and still does not allow most Black women, to look more deeply into our own experiences and, from that sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression. Our development must also be tied to the contemporary economic and political position of Black people.'

“Black feminist often talk about their feelings of craziness before becoming conscious of the concepts of sexual politics, patriarchal rule and most importantly feminism, the political analysis and practice that we women use to struggle against our oppression. The fact that racial politics and indeed racism are pervasive factors in our lives did not allow us and still does not allow most Black women to look more deeply into our own experiences and, from that sharing and growing consciousness, to build, (not a politics,) a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression. Our development must also be tied to the contemporary economic and political position of Black people.” And I think the Combahee River Collective statement is very important to read because of the ways in which it so attentive to the multiple ways in which, different forms of their identities demand different forms of struggle that must then all come together.

So, a couple of texts from Second Wave to give you an understanding; I would encourage you to go and read up more about it because it is a tremendously productive period as I had mentioned.

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**IN SUMMARY**

- The Second Wave recognized and sought to address the ways in which gender was both a social and cultural axis of difference
- It responded to the cultural milieu of both great cynicism and disappointment with the current world order
- It led to a specific politics of gender that seemed unable to cope with the complexities of other identities such as race

In summary, the second wave recognized and sought to address the ways in which gender was both a social and cultural axis of difference. Now, this is a term you should know: what do we mean by an “axis of difference?” It is an axis along which there are different consequences depending upon where you located, the consequences for you will be different and this functions in a social and cultural fashion, as much as in a political fashion, which is what First Wave was sought to address. It responded to the cultural milieu of both great cynicism and disappointment with the current world order. People thought of themselves as dissatisfied. People began to see how dissatisfied they were, whether it was with war or with genocide or with housewife rules or with racism and sexism writ large in society, which was not necessarily addressed through political means only.

It led to a specific politics of gender that seemed unable to cope with the complexity of other identities such as race, thereby demanding that it be deepened, such as we saw in the Combahee River Collective Statement. So, this brings us to the end of Second wave and for the last maybe ten minutes of this lecture, I want to focus on Third Wave and beyond.

Now, I am only going to spend a little time on third wave because we will also talk about it in the coming weeks as we go through other sets of readings.

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**FEMINISM – SECOND WAVE BACKLASH**

- The comfortable conservatism of the Reagan era
- That image of feminists as angry and man-hating and lonely become canonical
- “I don’t think of myself as a feminist,” a young woman told Susan Bolotin in 1982 for the New York Times Magazine. “Not for me, but for the guy next door that would mean that I’m a lesbian and I hate men.”



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But the Third Wave in many ways can be broadly spoken about as a set of reactions also to the end of the Second Wave, which created very particular stereotypes of feminists as being angry, as being out there to burn the world order and a growing backlash against the figure of the feminist. Third Wave comes about in the comfortable conservatism of the Reagan era in the US.

And this canonical image of the feminist was angry, man-hating and lonely. “I do not think of myself as a feminist,” a young woman told Susan Bolotin in 1982 for the New York Times magazine. “Not for me, but for the guy next door that would mean that I am a lesbian and I hate men.” We can see continued strengths of these forms of thought even in the present day, where people will say I am not a feminist; I am humanist, I think men and women should have equal rights and I do not hate men.

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**THIRD WAVE FEMINISM: 1980S ONWARDS**

- A more modest feminism
- Class, race, gender
- A critique of Eurocentric feminism
- The effects of colonialism, and neocolonialism
- Women of color and of the third world
- The difference in questions at stake
- No central issue, more centered around ways to think about gender and its impacts

The slide features a presenter on the right side, a logo in the top right corner, and a decorative black wavy border on the left. Red handwritten annotations are present: a line under 'A more modest feminism', a circle around 'The difference in questions at stake', and a line under 'No central issue, more centered around ways to think about gender and its impacts'.

Think about these as originating in the Third Wave and the 1980s; Third Wave aims for a more modest feminism that works in multiple ways through literature, through writings, through theory, through cultural change, cultural discourse, but, at the same time is not overarchingly defined by anger, which might be construed as a loss in many ways. It works on questions of class, race, and gender, but it also critiques Eurocentric feminism and seeks to understand feminist movements in other parts of the world as well.

It debates the effects of colonialism and neo colonialism and seeks to include multiple kinds of feminisms, including those of women of colour and of the Third World. There is a difference in the questions at stake; since identities are not differently positioned, it is not just about gender, but it is about gender as intersecting with other kinds of modes of oppression. And there is no central issue; it is more centred around ways to think about gender and its impacts.

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**KEY ISSUES**

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- In the US, 1992, would be dubbed "The Year of the Woman" after 24 women won seats in the House of Representatives and three more won seats in the Senate.
- Embrace of intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw, scholar of gender and critical race theory coined the term intersectionality to describe the ways in which different forms of oppression intersect.
- Judith Butler: Gender and performativity
- An aesthetic embrace of "girliness": girliness, third-wavers argued, was not inherently less valuable than masculinity or androgyny.
- Recognizing danger as well as pleasure in patriarchal standards of beauty

Some of the key issues around that time, and some of the key consequences however are important to consider. For example, in the US, in 1992, the year was dubbed The Year of the Woman after 24 women won seats in the House of Representatives and three more won seats in the Senate. There was an embrace of a term that has almost become common-sensical now called, intersectionality where Kimberle Crenshaw, a scholar of gender and critical race theory coined the term, to describe the ways in which different forms of oppression intersect.

And now this has become a fairly required way to operate in relation to feminist theory, which is that, one has to understand that identities are complex and you cannot front end one at the cost of others. Another important text during this time was Judith Butler's *Gender and Performativity*, which I will not go into right now, but which suggests that, gender is also a set of performances and thereby can be unlearned although it is not easy. We will read more from the text in our week on Queer theory and post-structuralism, so hang on to that thought.

And in direct consequences of these forms of thought, and in direct consequences to the backlash that feminism received at the end of Second Wave, there was also an aesthetic embrace of girliness. Girliness, third wavers are argued was not inherently less valued or valuable than masculinity or androgyny that one could embrace feminineness without it being always oppressive. The reaction was to second wavers' anger at all of ways in which feminine nature was considered to be natural for women, and was considered to be compelling for women. They rebelled against that and third wavers rebelled against this kind of rebelling. Third wavers was argued that one should recognized danger but also pleasure in patriarchal standards of beauty. So, third wavers often argue in many ways that, women

should be allowed to like makeup, because they like it, and not because they are oppressed by male standards of beauty where they dressing up for men and the male gaze. Sometimes pleasure is important even for women's own sake.

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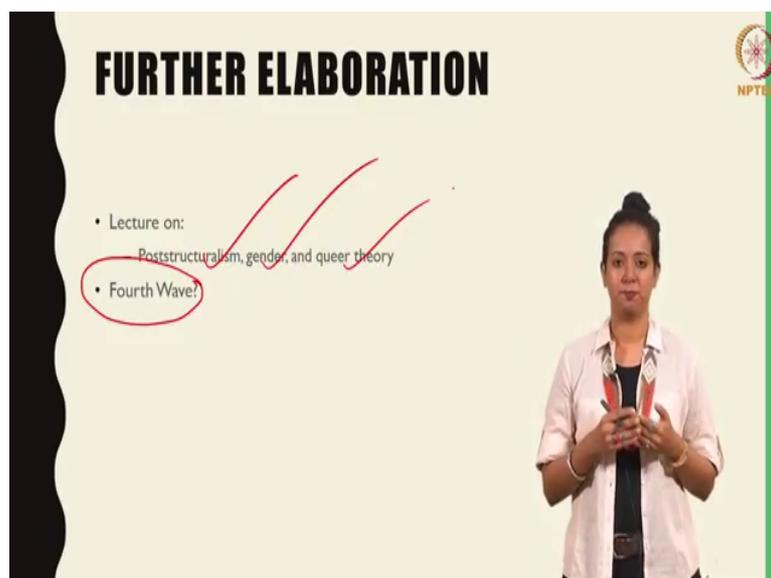


The slide is titled "KEY TEXTS" in bold black letters. It features a list of three books with red checkmarks next to them. The presenter is a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a white button-down shirt over a dark top, standing on the right side of the slide. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

- Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Judith Butler (1990)
- The Beauty Myth, Naomi Woolf (1991)
- Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics, bell hooks (2000)

Key texts during this time *Beauty Myth*, *Gender Trouble*, *Feminism is for Everybody*. Now, both of these we will go on to explore in the coming weeks. *Feminism is for Everybody* has of course been your foundational text for this course.

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The slide is titled "FURTHER ELABORATION" in bold black letters. It features a list of two topics. The first item is "Lecture on: Poststructuralism, gender, and queer theory" with red scribbles over it. The second item is "Fourth Wave?" which is circled in red. The presenter is the same woman as in the previous slide, standing on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

- Lecture on: Poststructuralism, gender, and queer theory
- Fourth Wave?

The question that we have not addressed, which we will address in our last week, where we gather learnings and conclusions, is to ask, “is there a Fourth Wave of Feminism in the contemporary era?” and the answer is out there.

So, will talk about that a lot more once we have done a whole new set of key readings on Third Wave. And we will speak about post-structuralism gender and Queer theory in continuity, with the little bit that we have discussed today on Third Wave. Next week, we return to our key set of discussions on the feminist body. Until then....