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Feminist Literature: Confessional Writing Beyond National Boundaries

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Throughout feminist politics of the 1900s, feminist writing has emerged as a strong and significant chorus of voices. Women have been heard from as far away as Japan, where in 1911 Seitousha was formed as an independent feminist group. The same year, South African Olive Schreiner wrote *Woman and Labour*, establishing a connection between feminism and equal rights. More than thirty years later the Egyptian Feminist Party was founded by Fatma Nemat Rashid which followed Virginia Woolf’s writing of *A Room of One’s Own* and helped lead the way for Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in 1949. Many British and American organizations began their foundations as well, and soon most women, and some men, could see that feminist literature was joining in a common goal across the globe. Women of all nationalities and races began responding powerfully to the social and political times surrounding them and since the 1960s their individual yet unifying effort has led to some of the most influential writings of the twentieth century. Although this writing has taken on various forms by various women, perhaps the deepest story lies in the personal narrative which expresses truth beyond fiction and which connects and paves the literary road for women writers who follow.

In *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, two kinds of feminist narrative of
self-discovery are discussed. The first is characterized by a historical structure in which female self-discovery is seen as a process of moving outward into the public realm of society—often represented in realist feminist fiction. The second is a depiction of self-discovery as an awakening to an inner self that occurs in nature or of which the social world is not a part. Most of the feminist literature, autobiographies, and memoirs that I would like to focus on, however, are in fact created from the many social changes and frustrations that women encounter throughout their lives. To disregard society in their writing would be to disregard parts of history, and that is truly impossible since women, men, politics, writings, and families of the past are what have shaped these women’s lives.

Both feminist literature and feminist politics organize the meaning of the liberation of women as a group through individual conceptions of history and experience. In Writing as Re-Vision, Adrienne Rich writes:

We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us. Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.

Rich sees that the crucial element towards moving forward, towards understanding the shape of one’s written experience now, can only be accomplished when this re-vision occurs. Women should not only learn and break past traditions out of the necessity of survival, but out of their desire to understand and link themselves to a past which continues to shape today’s writing as well.

Before digging deeply into feminist texts, it seems crucial to touch on the historical and political events that in fact led to such writings. The world’s first organized movement in behalf of women was inaugurated in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. There, Elizabeth Cady Stanton delivered her first public speech, saying that she was “nerved” only by her conviction that the time had come for “the question of woman’s wrongs to be laid before the public” and that “woman herself must do this work; for woman alone can understand the depth, the length and the breadth of her own wrongs." Through the campaigning of American women, and educational rights, the cause swept Europe as well, and feminists from all over the world joined in their political alliances.

Although the majority of what is considered feminist literature was written after the 1960s, early feminist literature was crucial a starting point, even though the movement instantly been quite as strong. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, much discussion of feminism had ended. With Woolf’s basic argument, she continued with their quest and with the first-wave feminism, believed that “women are not a separate race, but are women with a consciousness of something; within their social groups and that such a consciousness is a sign of victimization but a means of providing a base for organization between women and thus a center for all women’s organizations.” With Woolf’s basic argument, she had constructed and that inequality begins everywhere in family, her highly influential book, A Room of One’s Own, show today’s women the social and physical obstacles that stand in their way.

In one part of A Room of One’s Own, she had written after the 1960s, early feminist literature had been as crucial a starting point, even though the movement instantly been quite as strong. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, much discussion of feminism had ended. With Woolf’s basic argument, she continued with their quest and with the first-wave feminism, believed that “women are not a separate race, but are women with a consciousness of something; within their social groups and that such a consciousness is a sign of victimization but a means of providing a base for organization between women and thus a center for all women’s organizations.” With Woolf’s basic argument, she had constructed and that inequality begins everywhere in family, her highly influential book, A Room of One’s Own, show today’s women the social and physical obstacles that stand in their way.
The first is characterized by a historical self-discovery is seen as a process of moving through the realm of society—often represented in realist fiction as an awakening that occurs in nature or of which the social world is the scene. The second is a depiction of self-discovery as an awakening to the social world of nature often represented in realist fiction. Both focus on, however, are in fact created from the frustrations that women encounter throughout society in their writing would be to disregard the past are what have shaped these women’s nature and feminist politics organize the meaning of one’s written experience now, can only be re-vision occurs. Women should not only learn out of the necessity of survival, but out of their link themselves to a past which continues to well. Deeply into feminist texts, it seems crucial to touch upon political events that in fact led to such writings. The movement in behalf of women was inaugurated at Seneca Falls, New York. There, Elizabeth Cady Stanton made the first public speech, saying that she was “nerved” and that the time had come for “the question of aid before the public” and that “woman herself must do this work; for woman alone can understand the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of her own degradation” (Schneir ix). Through the campaigning of American women for their legal, employment, and educational rights, the cause soon was taken up in western Europe as well, and feminists from all over eventually formed international alliances.

Although the majority of what is considered feminist literature was written after the 1960s, early feminists and their writings were just as crucial a starting point, even though their impact may not have instantly been quite as strong. After the passing of the women’s right to vote, much discussion of feminism had ended, but authors like Virginia Woolf continued with their quest and with their writing. Woolf, part of the first-wave feminism, believed that “women constituted a sex-class within their social groups and that such a grouping was not simply a sign of victimization but a means of providing women with the germ of organization between women and thus a coherent and radical politics” (Humm 21). With Woolf’s basic argument that gender identity is socially constructed and that inequality begins early in the male dominated family, her highly influential book, *A Room of One’s Own*, continues to show today’s women the social and physical dominance which men possess.

In one part of *A Room of One’s Own* Woolf writes of what it may have been like if Shakespeare had had a sister:

She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother’s perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. (51)

So many social obstacles would have prevented her from expressing any of the talent she had. For a woman to write fiction, she must have a room of her own so that what she could offer to other women and to the world has the room to flourish and expand. She writes that they must
have that liberty “to travel and to idle, to contemplate the future and the past of the world, to dream over books and loiter at street corners and let the line of thought dip deep into the stream” (Woolf 119). A profound influence over later twentieth-century women writers, Woolf never separated herself from her writing, but was every “she” and “her” in her work.

Actually defining what constitutes feminist literature is not something which can be accomplished in narrow terms. First, a look must be taken at the word “feminist” itself. Alison Jaggar concluded it to be “all forms of theory and practice that seek, no matter on what grounds and by what means to end the subordination of women” (Felski 12). Determining, therefore, what constitutes feminist literature remains nebulous. What texts society deems as feminist literature changes through the decades, as the society of which they are a product changes. The early feminists were indeed internationalists but their contacts were confined to only developed areas of the world. The perspective of today’s feminists, though, has reached new global dimensions. It includes locations where “women suffer from poverty and hunger, where conception is uncontrolled and childbirth dangerous, where wives and daughters are virtual chattels of husbands and fathers, where female illiteracy is widespread, and where genital mutilation is practiced” (Schneir xiv).

Obviously the role of the feminist, and the feminist writer, has taken a more active turn since Virginia Woolf and other literary women writing prior to the 1960s. Stemming from females’ reactions to a society dominated by men come many written journeys of women whose search inward has connected with women everywhere. These many searches, recorded and shared with women readers, work at exploring both what essentially it means to be a woman in a male environment and her personal growth within.

Beverly Jones, who wrote *Toward a Female Liberation Movement*, said that “the first step” in female liberation “is to accept our plight as a common plight, to see other women as reflections of ourselves” (109). This type of belief is what helped many women free themselves from feeling insufficient simply for being a woman or from any weights they felt as a result of living in a “man’s” world. This feeling passage was experienced by women again and again … the female student feels like a citizen among others in the body politics of the intellect. What she doesn’t understand is that she is stripped of her public life and becomes a private property. Enslavement is her fate, and she doesn’t understand now she is doomed to become someone’s nurse, or someone’s wife, or someone’s son if she has some contribution to make to make it privately through the man world (Jones 115).

Although a rather harsh view of a woman’s role as a nurse for instance, when many women do feel proud and respected for it—Jones still makes it clear that she is capable of *is* in fact limited by her “place”.

Women’s literature’s main contribution is a less list of autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries chosen to give of their experiences wholly to the public. Although different authors obviously will inevitably offer (through their own self-awareness) a better way to understand and connect the reader. Self help does not have the negative connotations of a man, active and alive through a process of realizing women’s lives aids in training “self-confidence” (Rose 21), allowing readers to explore more than they might on their own.

Christopher Lasch calls the feminist condition “pseudo self-awareness” (Felski 86). A man, in this way is just as “pseudo self-aware” of his role in knocking down what these women build up. He cannot begin to understand the women as a whole because he has not exper
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... the female student feels like a citizen, like an individual among others in the body politics in the civil society, in the world of the intellect. What she doesn’t understand is that upon graduation she is stripped of her public life and relegated to the level of private property. Enslavement is her farewell present. As things stand now she is doomed to become someone’s secretary or some­one’s nurse, or someone’s wife, or someone’s mistress. From now on if she has some contribution to make to society she is expected to make it privately through the man who owns some part of her. (Jones 115)

Although a rather harsh view of a woman’s life—“doomed” to become a nurse for instance, when many women do this out of desire and are proud and respected for it—Jones still makes blatantly clear that what she is capable of is in fact limited by her “place.”

Women’s literature’s main contribution to other women is the endless list of autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries. These writers have chosen to give of their experiences wholly to their readers, and what better way to understand and connect than through pure experience? Although different authors obviously will have varied intentions, they inevitably offer (through their own self-awareness) “self help” to their readers. Self help does not have the negative connotation here of being needy or dependent; rather it is a springboard for change, and being active and alive through a process of realization. Reading of other women’s lives aids in training “self-confidence and creative powers” (Rose 21), allowing readers to explore more of themselves and society than they might on their own.

Christopher Lasch calls the feminist confession “the banality of pseudo self-awareness” (Felski 86). A man, however, critiquing woman in this way is just as “pseudo self-aware” of himself if he cannot see his role in knocking down what these women writers are working so hard to build up. He cannot begin to understand the relevance of such works to women as a whole because he has not experienced the role of the
woman, and he is not a woman reader in need of gender connection. So
the words and ideas are instantly rendered differently in his mind. Of
course I am not intending to discredit male readers and imply that their
sympathies are never in the right place. Many women are beyond fortu­
nate to have men’s understanding in their written lives. But the men
who do see their significance and contribution to women’s literature
realize that they will never be fully aware of the struggles and experi­
exences women have endured in this society, although these men are given
every opportunity to help with the change through their own means of
expression.

The autobiography is the act of confession, a liberation, which
reveals many political aspects through personal experience and con­
fronting social gender roles. The confession is actually considered a
subgenre of the autobiography: making private knowledge a public truth
for women readers. Texts such as Kate Millett’s Flying (1974) and Ann
Oakley’s Taking it Like a Woman (1984) share a “foregrounding of the
relationship between a female author and a female reader” (Felski 88).
This link of the author and the reader is significant as well as crucial as
it addresses a “we,” a union and merging together.

The significance of confessions relies on placing them in a socio­
historical context. Rita Felski writes that “feminist confession is less
concerned with unique individuality or notions of essential humanity
than with delineating the specific problems and experiences which bind
women together” (94). Late in the sixties, during what was called sec­
ond-wave feminism, the civil rights movement and Vietnam politicized
literature. Women’s writing of memoirs and autobiographies “took on a
new edge as people began to realize that the publication of life stories
by those outside the mainstream constituted political statement” (Rose
15).

At the on-set of second-wave feminism was Simone de Beauvoir’s
The Second Sex. Although not an autobiography, this epic dealt with the
issue of female oppression in a way that targeted society and various
social constructs. De Beauvoir was adamant in her belief that woman­
hood as we know it is a social construct, just as Virginia Woolf insisted.

Female subordination, therefore, had nothing to do with the result of
the forces society places on it, but rather becomes, a woman,” she wrote

De Beauvoir concluded that knowledge with the rest of civilization, was of man’s
“subjects” of their own lives and women there­
er, remain optimistic towards a future in which
their physical disadvantages with the prog­
contraception and abortion. Her introduct­
which she continues to write about women’s
grand social scheme:

The women of today are in a fair way
femininity; they are beginning to aff­
crete ways; but they do not easily su­
life of a human being. Reared by the
world, their normal destiny is marria­
cally subordination to man; for mas­
tinction, resting still upon solid ec­
tions. (Schneir 4)

Some of the most influential works of sec­
ond-wave feminists were written by Africa
undoubtedly aided in an understanding the
was one of a different degree of difficulty.
Age in Mississippi (1968) touched the live­
describes putting herself through a small be­
taking part in civil rights protests. Maya
In I Know Why the Caged
shows the confusion of her childhood, son­
and often the lack of comfort or conf­
one of many brilliant scenes, Angelou, as
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De Beauvoir concluded that knowledge, culture, and art, along

with the rest of civilization, was of man’s making. She called men the

“subjects” of their own lives and women the “objects.” She did, howev-

er, remain optimistic towards a future in which women could overcome their physical disadvantages with the progress of technology—including contraception and abortion. Her introduction shows the power with which she continues to write about women’s issues in relation to the grand social scheme:

The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of

emininity; they are beginning to affirm their independence in con-

crete ways; but they do not easily succeed in living completely the

life of a human being. Reared by women within a feminine

world, their normal destiny is marriage, which still means practi-

cally subordination to man; for masculine prestige is far from

extinction, resting still upon solid economic and social founda-

tions. (Schneir 4)

Some of the most influential works of this “new” literature of sec-

ond-wave feminists were written by African-American women, which

undoubtedly aided in an understanding that the black woman’s struggle was one of a different degree of difficulty. Anne Moody’s Coming of

Age in Mississippi (1968) touched the lives of other women as she

describes putting herself through a small black college in the South and taking part in civil rights protests. Maya Angelou was another powerful

fluence, recounting her experience with segregation in the American

South as well. In I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1970), Angelou

shows the confusion of her childhood, sometimes the rage at what she

aw, and often the lack of comfort or confidence she had in herself. In

one of many brilliant scenes, Angelou, as a young girl, watches from

side as her grandmother is humiliated by the “powhitetrash” girls.

Her grandmother, though, remained composed and dignified, offering

no harsh response at all to their cruelty. Angelou explains that “some-
thing happened out there, which I couldn’t completely understand, but I
could see that she was happy” (Angelou 32). “Momma” then carries on
singing, “Glory, glory, hallelujah, when I lay my burden down”
(Angelou 32), a truly inspiring moment amidst the constant degradation.

Since “black women have suffered cruelly more so in this society
from living the phenomenon of being black and female in a country that
is both racist and sexist” (Humm 140), their plight exemplified an undying
power and strength. Among them is also Alice Walker, whose writing
exemplifies the main features and varieties of black feminism, but in
no way excludes coalitions with white feminists. Instead, she suggests
“that all feminists are writing one huge story with different perspec­tives” (Humm 140). However strong a unified women’s voice may
seem, though, there is still a difference between the “stories” of women
of color and those of Euro-American women. One of Walker’s features
as a writer is her historical account of both black and white men specifically violating black women. In her writing she draws on a spiritual
transformation that combines with social circumstances and shows her
readers that a black feminist writer has a different experience—that should not be lost or blurred among the rest of feminist literature.

Audre Lorde, another woman who dealt with multiple forms of
oppression, had to deal with a third factor: her homosexuality. She
believed that she could not be “simply a Black person and not be a
woman too,” nor could she be “a woman without being a lesbian”
(Schneir 137). Lorde argues that a black feminist standpoint must be a
“holistic” knowledge. Women must combine an African understanding
of emotion with the rationality of the Europeans to counteract sexism
and racism. She blends history, myth, and poetry to show women’s cul­
tural differences. At the same time she emphasizes that the will and
need to survive remain the same among all women. Lorde addresses the
complications of “interracial sisterhood,” writing in her poem, “Who
Said It Was Simple”, of her personal forms of oppression from being
black, lesbian, and of course, a woman. This excerpt from the poem
simply states her complex struggles:

But I who am bound by my mirror
as well as my bed
see cause in color
as well as sex.

and sit here wondering
which me will survive
all these liberations. (Schneir 137)

Although such poetry may be seen as amazing, it is still separate from the autobiographer women have taken on as their means of tel­
ing the female world. Autobiographical confes­sions in its depiction of life and towards that life. It is also, though, a repre­
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Although such poetry may be seen as a type of confessional writ-
ing, it is still separate from the autobiographies and memoirs which
women have taken on as their means of telling their story to the rest of
the female world. Autobiographical confession assumes a guarantee of
the truthfulness in its depiction of life and the writer’s inner feelings
towards that life. It is also, though, a representation of experience—
bringing to light a communal female identity. Confessional writing
exemplifies the problems and contradictions of the everyday life of the
female, and distinguishes among those experiences which may be of
stronger importance in relating to the women it reaches.

Women writing for women have the strong desire for inclusiveness
in their work, believing that it is only by recounting each detail as it
occurs that life and the text can combine into one (Felski 97). Feminist
confession works in such personal, unconventional literary forms in
order to show a text’s open-endedness and ability to go around written
(male) tradition. It also gives the reader a feeling of being personally
addressed by the author, which gives the text that much more power.

In general, the feminist confession attempts to diminish the impor-
tance of the organization of experience as done in the historical, more
traditional narrative. Rita Felski simply explains that “it self-conscious-
ly addresses a community of female readers rather than an undifferenti-
ated general public” (99), since language not only identifies male supe-
riority but also produces it. Women view language and writing as a cru-
cial means of altering an already existing male dominance. So it could
be said that the feminist writer actually communes with her women
readers. This effect of communing with the reader is gained through the

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intimate writing style as well as the subject. Of course, the implied reader is the sympathetic female, who will understand and share the author’s position. Audre Lorde writes, “We share a commitment to language and to the power of language, and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us” (Felski 100)—the “we” referring to the community of women to which the text is addressed.

As women’s writing continued flourishing all over the world, poet, novelist, and playwright Meena Alexander shares her experience as an Indian woman—not only in India, but in Britain and America as well. In her memoir, *Fault Lines*, she asks, “What would it mean for one such as I to pick up a mirror and try to see her face in it?” (Conway 490). The only way for her to draw on an answer to this question is to reach into the memories she has stored from growing up and living in various cultures. These things are what lead towards identifying what has shaped her as a woman, and toward understanding her identity. She discusses the English language as well. At first she describes it as part of her reaching out for the new world of which she was quickly becoming part. Later, however, she realized that English was actually something she allowed to be forced upon her so that she could gain an education. She asks another question: “How could I possibly have received an Arabic education? What would that have equipped me for?”

In her early attempts to write the stories of her life and of the people from which she came, she felt trapped because English did not allow her to express many of the voices she remembered and the history she desired to share. Her statement that “Colonialism seemed intrinsic to the burden of English in India, and I felt robbed of literacy in my own mother tongue” (Conway 523) tells us how the cultural difference of another man’s world has hindered her narrative voice. She did, however, overcome this obstacle as best as she could and now writes memoirs which share much of her life’s experience. Alexander finds the autobiography a powerful and inclusive meeting ground as well: “I was fascinated by the corrosive magic of the first person singular: its exuberant flights, its sheer falls into despair” (Conway 490). Although we might not be able to grasp the full understanding of an Arabic people—an Arabic woman—using the English language, drawing us into Meena Alexander’s private space.

Writing from a feminist perspective sees which women may get to “know” other women communication, becoming an act which only reproduces qualities. While emphasizing the deeply personal experience, feminism connects this with the nature of female oppression. Feminist confluently “self-awareness therapy” as many might go beyond that and into various cultural and social describes the distinction and individualness of women.

 Whereas the rise of the novel occurs at the emergence of the ideology of romantic marriage, which provides a basis for many parts of social and political life. This made it possible for women to write of themselves, where they felt it may be changed with the giving and receiving of contributions. This could easily be labeled an exception.

Therefore, for the feminist reader there reading literature since all interpretation evolves must think of how that text represents women together as a gender, what it says about male sexual difference is defined. Writers are set to will also reaffirm or challenge cultural norms.

Second-wave feminism opened new doors which found inspiration and guidance from the 1970s. Judith Ortiz Cofer acknowledges Vi...
Lorde writes, “We share a commitment to language, and to the reclaiming of that language as a tool to work against us” (Felski 100)—the “we” is comprised of women to which the text is addressed. Language continues to flourish all over the world, poet Meena Alexander shares her experience as an Arab woman—using the English language, the memoir succeeds at drawing us into Meena Alexander’s private space.

Writing from a feminist perspective seems a truly authentic way in which women may get to “know” other women. It transcends everyday communication, becoming an act which omits any possible superficial qualities. While emphasizing the deeply personal dimensions of one’s experience, feminism connects these with the social, institutionalized, nature of female oppression. Feminist confessional writing is not simply “self-awareness therapy” as many might argue—its aspects move beyond that and into various cultural and social realms. Felski describes the distinction and individualness of the confession:

Whereas the rise of the novel occurs at the same time with the emergence of the ideology of romantic love and the idealization of marriage, which provides a basis for most of its narratives, the feminist confession proceeds from the recognition of the redundancy of this model and its oppressive implications for women. (116)

In 1976, Ellen Moers’s Literary Women (Belsey 8) reinstated the second-wave idea that feminist interest in literature is an aspect of the culture as a whole. Her book is a significant contribution to this short literary history in that it addresses the exclusion of women from so many parts of social and political life. This is what in effect prompted women to write of themselves, where they felt their place was, and how it may be changed with the giving and receiving of other women’s contributions. This could easily be labeled an expansion of literary history.

Therefore, for the feminist reader there is no neutral approach to reading literature since all interpretation evolves politically. The reader must think of how that text represents women both individually and together as a gender, what it says about male/female relations, and how sexual difference is defined. Writers are setting out a hope that others will also reaffirm or challenge cultural norms based on sex.

Second-wave feminism opened new doors for women’s writing which found inspiration and guidance from those writing earlier in the century. Judith Ortiz Cofer acknowledges Virginia Woolf’s memoir, A
Sketch of the Past, which she says helped guide her through her literary exploration of her own Puerto Rican childhood. Her epigraph, too, is from Woolf: “A woman writing thinks back through her mother” (Rose 22). Also described is Cofer’s “savoring” of a community of women and their separateness which second-wave feminist thought also praised.

Kennedy Fraser has written about a time in her own life when reading about other women was crucial in helping her situation:

I was unhappy, and ashamed of it. I was baffled by my life. For several years in my early thirties, I would sit in my armchair reading books about these other lives. Sometimes when I came to the end, I would sit down and read the book through from the beginning again. I remember an incredible intensity about all this, and also a kind of furtiveness—as if I were afraid that someone might look through the window and find me out. Even now I feel I should pretend that I was reading only these women’s fiction or their poetry—their lives as they chose to present them, alchemized as art. But that would be a lie. It was the private essays I really liked—the journals and letters, and autobiographies and biographies whenever they seemed to be telling the truth. I felt very lonely then, self-absorbed, shut off. I needed all this murmured chorus, this continuum of true-life stories, to pull me through.

They were like mothers and sisters to me, these literary women, many of them already dead; more than my own family, they seemed to stretch out a hand. (Rose 19)

Seeing first hand this example of the impact of feminist literature shows just how real a woman’s power is when she expresses herself and shares her story. There is truly not more of a motive for writing one’s story than to know that it is being told to a family of women. Tied in intricate ways to the women’s movement, the civil rights movement, and the desire for voices previously unheard to come through loudly, the feminist confession and autobiography dominate much of women’s literature in the twentieth century.

Feminism and the writing it produces point forward to political emancipation as well as social activity. As we have seen, though, it also reflects backward toward the inner life “into transformation of subjective consciousness” (12). Feminist writing has been called full of self absorbed lives are not completely self absorbed; they cannot express the social and political ideas that she is co surrounded by. Feminist writing of the late ’ national boundaries which have continued th tinue in the future. Feminism and its literatu movement whose list of members and contri pointed out by Greene’s Changing the Story, often excruciating thing for feminist writers— tence. Feminist writers see their situations ac tion to create a blueprint for the future” (Gre history and growing from modern experience work form expressive change as it reflects an often “other” environment.
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reflects backward toward the inner life “into myth, spirituality, and the transformation of subjective consciousness” (Felski 128). Although feminist writing has been called full of self absorption, these writer’s lives are not completely self absorbed; they cannot be, because what each is writing about is commenting on and making a connection with those social and political ideas that she is constantly encompassed and surrounded by. Feminist writing of the late ’60s and early ’70s crossed national boundaries which have continued through today and will continue in the future. Feminism and its literature became an international movement whose list of members and contributors is truly endless. As pointed out by Greene’s Changing the Story, “Change is an exciting and often excruciating thing for feminist writers—and a central fact of existence. Feminist writers see their situations as ‘uncharted’ and use fiction to create a blueprint for the future” (Greene 36). Learning from history and growing from modern experience, feminist writers and their work form expressive change as it reflects and acts upon the self in an often “other” environment.
WORKS CITED


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Stereotypes as Reinforcement in *M. Butterfly*

Hope Hoffman

“And what was waiting for me back in himself, “[B]etter Chinese food than I’d eaten” Gallimard’s mind constantly fulfills his expectations rather than recognizing the region’s reality. Married to a Chinese actress for twenty years she is a man, Gallimard depends heavily on order to keep his wife, Butterfly, as “Oriental” she should be. Despite living in the physical world never seems to leave his European home—his safe space, the fantasy realm in which his Western stereotypes are the only reality. As GALLIMARD’s fantasy, Song’s calculated role-playing keeps Song not only reinforces Gallimard’s fantasy sense of imperialist nostalgia. Song knows back with nostalgic fondness to a time when ble” (Shimakawa 349), and exploits Gallimard’s stereotypes.

Though *M. Butterfly* has been examined work which disassembles stereotypes, it actio. At the core of *M. Butterfly* are the char