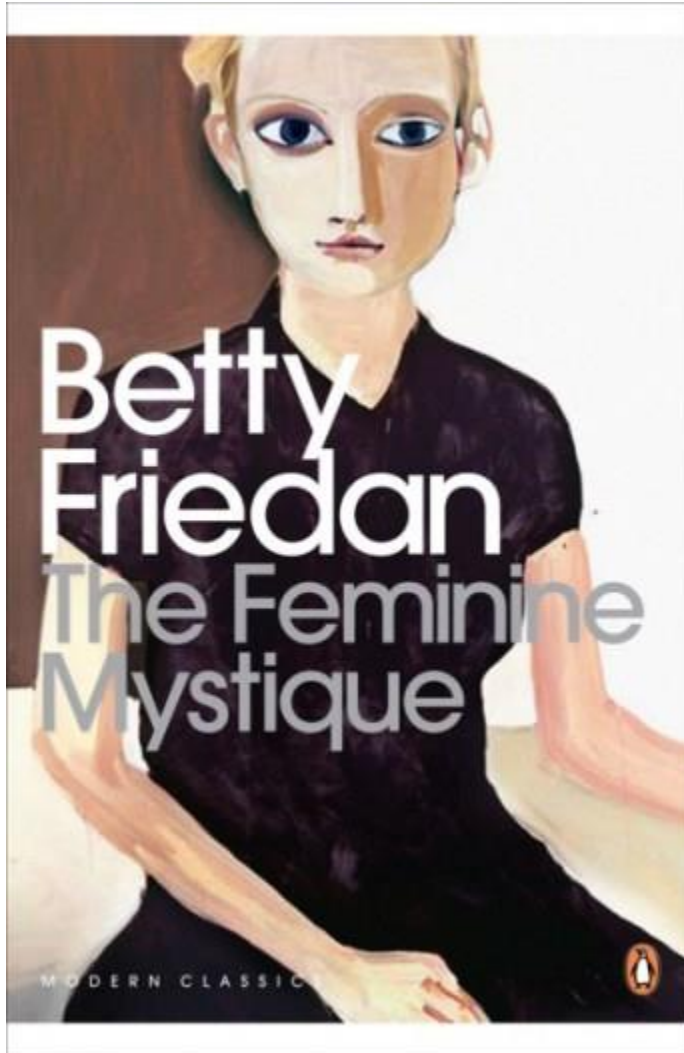


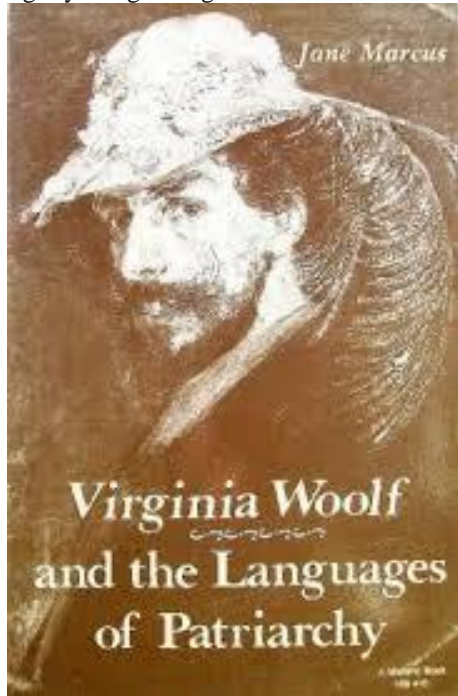
The Feminist movement in America received great stimulus from the 1960s' civil rights movement, and in Britain it has had a political orientation, insisting on situating both feminist concerns and literary texts within a material and ideological context. Thus Anglo-American feminism is inclined towards liberal humanistic tendencies of criticism, with its interests in traditional critical concepts like theme, motif and characterisation.



Major Anglo-American feminist works include [Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*](#) (1963) (which discussed the fundamental grievances of middle class American women, their entrapment in private, domestic circles and inability to pursue public careers), [Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women*](#), [Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*](#), [Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*](#) and [Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*](#). While Anglo-American feminism had grown out of socialist politics, the French feminism developed out of a philosophical tradition. This led to the contention that Anglo-American feminism is more activism oriented and French feminism is more theory-oriented. While the Anglo-American feminists questioned the role of gender within the framework of patriarchal society, the French feminists studied the theory of the role of gender in language, writing, drawing heavily from Derridean poststructuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis in terms of Saussurean linguistics. They looked at language as a means of coding and maintaining the dominant patriarchal order. While being anti-essentialist, the French feminists radically claimed that all western languages are utterly and irredeemably male-engendered, male-constituted and male-dominated. While the British feminist [Virginia Woolf](#) had claimed in

1929 that language is gendered, the French feminists since the 1960s worked towards advancing the notion of an alternative, unconscious, man's language/writing — a writing that would issue from the unconscious, the body, from a radically reconceived subjectivity, in an attempt to escape the phallogocentric discourse.

Thus [Helene Cixous](#) developed the idea of [Ecriture Feminine](#) [Julia Kristeva](#) conceptualized the pre-Oedipal “semiotic” language, [Luce Irigaray](#) advocated a female language that is more diffuse, like female sexuality, and less rigidly categorising than male discourse.



French Feminism with its linguistic analysis and psychoanalytical bend, had a huge impact on Anglo-American literary criticism. Recent debates within American Feminism conducted by Showalter, [Lillian Robinson](#), [Annette Kolodny](#) and [Jane Marcus](#) have concerned the relationship of female writers and male theories, the need for a feminist theory and female language, feminism's relation to poststructuralist perspectives, as well as continuing problems of political and educational activism.