II. FEMINISM—AN OVERVIEW

"Male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled [. . .] It is better for them that they should be under the rule of a master" (Politics 190). Aristotle advocated the enslavement of women on these grounds for he believed that a woman’s biology justified the societal pressures that kept her in an inferior position. This biological determinism is what feminists have had to counter. Unlike his pupil, Plato had advocated, in The Republic, an ideal society where women would be regarded as the equals of men and would be given the same opportunities for education and service. He writes, “men and women alike possess the qualities which make a guardian” (313). Modern feminists have used this idea as a springboard to stress that their femaleness will not make a difference when they enter professions which have traditionally been the preserve of men.

This chapter traces the origin of modern-day feminism and highlights certain movements and discusses the theories of influential feminists. The chapter lays special emphasis on the American brand of feminism as most of the feminist critics of Scott Fitzgerald base themselves on the theories of American feminists.

Marilyn Frye describes feminism as the “theory—systems of concepts, propositions and analyses that describe and explain women’s situation and experiences and support recommendations about how to improve them. Feminism may also be understood as a kind of social
movement—one that may generate and be aided by theory” (Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories 195). The ideas and practices that feminists seek to overthrow are ancient in origin and deeply entrenched in the history of western thought. Simone de Beauvoir, in The Second Sex, remarks:

The whole of feminine history being man-made [. . .] men have always held the lot of women in their hands and they have determined what it should be, not according to her interests, but rather with regard to their projects, their fears and their needs. (128)

The first sustained challenge to biological determinism came to be articulated in western thought with the development of liberalism in the eighteenth century in Europe, particularly in Britain and France. The industrial revolution brought women out of their homes and into the job market. Mary Wollstonecraft sought political and domestic privileges in “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.” Written in 1792, “A Vindication” is considered the manifestation of modern feminism. In it, Wollstonecraft attributes women’s disadvantaged social situation to the lack of intellectual opportunities arguing that “a false system of education gathered from the books written by men, who, considering females rather as women than human creatures have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses, than affectionate wives and rational mothers” (The Norton Anthology of Literature, 112).
The feminism of the post World War II decades radically altered the lives of women the world over. As women sought the same opportunities and privileges society gave to men, and started asserting the distinctive value of womanhood against patriarchal denigration, there were upheavals in everyday life. This resulted in a complete change in the consciousness of women themselves, and sex roles were redefined. Modern feminism, which brought about tremendous changes in the status of women, did not emanate from unprepared ground. It has to be underlined that the struggles of the enterprising women from the 1850s to the 1920s have made feminism of today possible.

One has to go back in time to Seneca Falls, New York where in 1898 the fiery Elizabeth Cady Stanton delivered her first spirited public speech that shook America. Stanton insisted that women have “immediate admission to all rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States” (“Declaration of Sentiments” 1899). The Seneca Falls Convention led to a series of dialogues at the local and national level and resulted in the formation of National Women’s Rights Organization. This helped women to actively participate in public life and finally led to the passage of the Nineteenth amendment in August 1920 giving American women the right to vote.

Sarah Grimke, Elizabeth Stanton and Sojourner Truth made sure that women’s voices were heard loud and clear. These women, undeterred by the
ridicule heaped on them, called for conferences, delivered speeches and circulated pamphlets. They undertook journeys to far-flung towns addressing groups wherever it was possible to assemble and faced the wrath of churchmen, politicians and journalists.

What were these women fighting for? They were fighting for the fundamental rights that were denied to women. Women in America at that time did not have access to higher education. They were not allowed to participate actively in political life, nor did they have the right to vote. Married women were totally under the control of their husbands. The men had complete, unchallenged control over their wives’ finances and activities. In case of divorce, women had hardly any legal rights and were often denied custody of their children. While women led a restricted life of total subservience within the confines of their homes, the men enjoyed a high degree of freedom, particularly sexual freedom.

By 1860 a National Women’s Rights Convention was held and the movement gained momentum with more and more activists taking up the feminists’ cause. Thanks to the campaigns waged by Stanton and Ernestine Rose, women gained access to higher education and property, and enjoyed some legal rights.

The year 1920 saw an outstanding victory for the feminists in the form of suffrage. However, few women candidates ran for political offices. The 1920s also witnessed the sexual revolution. Shulamith Firestone, in *The
Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution, describes it as an age where women were searching for a “different, personal, style with which to express oneself” (25). The traditional feminist emphasis on character development and responsible behaviour was out and flapperism with a bohemian code of conduct was in. The revolution in sexual mores was abetted by social rebels like Emma Goldman and Margaret Sanger, who advocated birth control. Goldman, a strong opponent of the traditional family, spoke against women’s suffrage because she saw it merely as a means to gain women’s cooperation in the perpetuation of an essentially unchanged patriarchal structure. The question of who women were and what they were seeking dominated the 1920s.

The New Women or the modern women, as they were called, grappled with the question of marriage and career. These women had high expectations and were ready to challenge mainstream patriarchal ideas. Armed with the right to make political choices, these women had to decide what best they could do and achieve in their roles as wife, home-maker, a career woman and a consumer.

After 1920, the Movement witnessed a decline. Over the following decades with global economic collapse and war, feminism seemed drained of energy. Women’s organizations disintegrated and feminism entered a long period of dormancy but was revived after World War II. In the intervening
years, it was left to a small network of dedicated women to keep the remnants of the cause alive.

The publication of Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in 1949 gave a fresh impetus to the feminist movement. It is considered one of the most important books ever written about the subjugation of women. Beauvoir’s observation, “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (301) is germane to subsequent analysis of femininity. Equally influential is Beauvoir’s characterization of women as ‘the second sex’—so designated by virtue of their creation as ‘other’ with reference to the male norm. *The Second Sex* offers a remarkable account of the social construction of femininity on the basis of biological determinism. The book covers such previously tabooed topics as puberty, menstruation, sexual intercourse and childbearing. De Beauvoir insisted that womanhood, as we know it, is a social construct because the subordination of the female to the male is the result of various social forces.

Denouncing domesticity, love and maternity as traps laid by men to keep women subordinate to them, De Beauvoir found wide audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. “Everything,” she asserted, “happens to women through the agency of others, and therefore these others are responsible for her woes” (606). When she wrote *The Second Sex* and for many years after, De Beauvoir believed the transformation of society to the most urgent project. Societal changes, she felt, could help in bringing about the total
emancipation for women. Only in the early 70s when Western Marxism started disintegrating was she convinced that radical and complete social change was far off while women's equality was realizable.

The pace of feminism quickened with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963. Friedan declared that American women were becoming increasingly unhappy with their lot in post-war society. Domesticity was not a satisfactory condition for an intelligent and career-aspiring woman. She held women's magazines, advertisements and Freudian psychology as responsible for advocating that American women could achieve happiness only through marriage and motherhood. She labelled this ideology Feminine Mystique which she defined as "the strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image which we are trying to conform" (11). She felt that American women were put under tremendous pressure as the feminine mystique "encourages women to ignore the question of their identity" (71) thereby ensuring that they had "no private image" (75).

Friedan pointed out that the feminine mystique suited several social needs. Marriage and motherhood were promoted with the view to making the female wage earner give way to men, especially those returning from the war. The feminine mystique also helped to give a fillip to the country's economy by instilling in women a desire for new consumer goods like washing machines and toasters. Friedan exhorts women to break through the feminine mystique and take themselves seriously. The book had a powerful
appellation shows. These feminists took a totally different path from that of the liberal feminists to voice their opposition to patriarchy. The Canadian radical feminist, Shulamith Firestone, who, along with Ellen Willis, founded the ‘Red Stocking’ in 1969, defined her brand of feminism, in *The Dialectic of Sex*, as one which “sees feminist issues not only as women’s first priority, but as central to any larger revolutionary analysis” (37).

The radical feminists adopted the larger goals of liberating women from sex-role stereotypes and reshaping sexist institutions. Their daring strategy of voicing protest gave feminism a distinctive style and character and its media image. For instance, in 1968 some two hundred demonstrators appeared at the Annual Miss America Beauty Pageant to denounce beauty contests as harmful to women’s self-image. Miriam Schneir vividly describes the scene in *The Vintage Book of Feminism*. She tells us that the protesters set up a “freedom trash can” into which women were invited to toss what they called “objects of female torture” like hair-curlers, girdles, bras and high heels. The novelty of this event attracted tremendous media notice and the protesters were branded “bra burners” (126), an epithet that was widely and derisively applied to feminists.

The *Red Stocking Manifesto* as presented in Schneir’s *The Vintage Book of Feminism* reads as follows:

We identify the agents of our oppression as men [. . .] all power structures throughout history have been male dominated
and male oriented. Men have controlled all political, economic and cultural institutions and backed up this control with physical force. All men receive economic, sexual and psychological benefits from male supremacy. (127)

The radical feminists, reveals Vivian Gornick, in Essays in Feminism, "look forward to a future in which the family will disappear, all births will be extrauterine, children will be raised by communal efforts, and women once and for all will cease to be the persecuted members of the race" (21). This, Gornick admits, is hard to take in for this kind of a stance is extreme. Firestone had maintained that female and male equality is impossible, unless women gain control of reproduction. She believes that scientific advancements in medicine have liberatory potentials. She identifies "love, even more than child-bearing" as "the pivot of women’s oppression" (126).

The 1970s in America also saw the emergence of lesbian feminism. These feminists were purged from NOW as Friedan strongly disapproved of their presence in the Association. Judy Graham and Wendy Calden formed a forum for lesbian feminists. Sexual and emotional love became overt for the lesbian feminists and they were labelled man-haters. But that is not all there is to it. Lesbian feminism, writes Sarah Lucia Hoagland, is an "emotional, sexual, political and economic commitment to women as a political entity leading to power for women" (Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories 296). And hence women loving women put up a strong and active resistance to the
oppressions of women in society. Ginette Castro, in *American Feminism: A Contemporary History*, notes that “the lesbian version of feminist sisterhood is presented as the only possible way to achieve love since lesbian love unites two equal persons” (106). The lesbian feminists were not just women lovers but were deeply involved in issues concerning racism, opposition to the Vietnam War, rape and other evils in society. They were also involved with animal rights movement.

Feminist classics such as Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* and Simone De Beavoir’s *The Second Sex* were significant precursors to Mary Ellmann’s *Thinking about Women* (1968) and Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1970) which were path-breaking texts heralding feminist literary criticism. Both argued that images of women in male-authored texts do not reflect the real female experience. On the contrary they reflect the misogynist stereotypes of women.

Ellmann’s *Thinking about Women* is the basic source for what is called ‘images of women criticism’. Written with a lot of wit and humour, Ellmann looks for female stereotypes in male-authored literature. She identifies eleven major stereotypes of femininity as presented by male writers and critics and asserts that “not only sexual terms but sexual opinions are imposed upon the external world. All forms are subsumed by our concepts of male and female temperaments” (9). In a lighter vein she reminds the readers, “all imagined forms of fear and punishment and the devil are
masculine. So are the sun and the wind with the exception of American Hurricanes" (9). Not only do the hurricanes have female names, the Loch Ness 'Monster' is female—'Nessie' and the bombs the United States dropped over the Taliban hideouts were called Daisy Cutters.

Kate Millet delivered in 1970, according to Toril Moi, "a powerful fist in the solar plexus of patriarchy" (Sexual/Textual Politics 26) with her classic feminist text Sexual Politics. As far as literature is concerned, Millet took the world by storm with her radical feminist theory of sexual politics. Thereafter almost every other feminist critic used a similar yardstick to judge the literary characters from a literary standpoint. Moi considers Sexual Politics to be "the mother and precursor of all later works of feminist criticism in the Anglo-American tradition" (24). Feminists of the 1970s and 80s have always used the book as a reference. Indeed, most of the feminist critics of Fitzgerald have based themselves on Millet's theory of sexual politics.

Millet analyzes sexual power politics in the works of DH Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and Jean Jenet. She takes up passages from the works of these authors whom she considers sexist to show how the tone and the language indicate the dominance of the male. She refers to these authors as "the counter revolutionary sexual politicians" (233). Her definition of sexual politics is "power structured relationship [ . . . ] whereby one group of persons is controlled by another" (21). The whole book is an elaboration of
this basic premise. Declaring that "patriarchy has God on its side" (57), Millet calls for the reexamination of the traits categorized as 'masculine' and 'feminine' and asserts that only a sexual revolution would bring the institution of patriarchy to an end.

Like the radical feminists before her, Millet too comes down heavily on love and motherhood considering both to be repressive. For all her path-breaking literary analysis and her contribution to the feminist cause, Millet is accused of not acknowledging the influence of De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, which came out in 1949, and Ellmann's *Thinking about Women* that appeared in 1968. Also, Millet does not give due recognition to her feminist precursors and deals exclusively with male authors. Nevertheless, Millet, with her brilliant and authoritative readings of the texts, has established *Sexual Politics* as a pioneering foundation for both contemporary Anglo-American feminist literary criticism and the women's movement.

Since Anglo-American literary theories are preponderantly male-dominated, feminist critics from the 1970s focussed on the works of women writers. They turned to women's writings, studying authors such as Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf. According to Janet Kaplan, feminist criticism "originated in a recognition of [...] their [the feminists'] love for women writers" (36). The approach she holds is different from the one that seeks to study the images of women in male-authored texts. These two approaches have led to a variety of critical
methods and have points of convergence as well. Both approaches not only question the literary canon itself for the stereotyping of women characters but also question the neglect of women-authored texts.

Anglo-American feminist criticism is represented by Ellen Moers, Judith Fetterley, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. Moers's *Literary Women*, published in 1976, traces the development of many British, American and French women writers. It is the first attempt by a feminist to depict women's writing as running alongside the mainstream male tradition. In *The Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979), Gilbert and Gubar make a comprehensive study of major women writers of the nineteenth century. A psycho-historic approach is used to explore the anxieties that plagued women writers in the patriarchal society of the nineteenth century.

Questioning the thesis that artistic quality is fundamentally male, Gilbert and Gubar raise a crucial question: "What if such a proudly masculine cosmic author is the sole legitimate model for all early authors?" (7). Since creativity is defined as male, it follows that the dominant literary images of femininity are male fantasies too. Women are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness and instead must seek to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed on them. Gilbert and Gubar conclude that women writers "simultaneously conform to and subvert patriarchal literary standards" (73). Hence, although the female voice is ambiguous it is nevertheless a truly female voice.
The figure of the mad woman is then, literally, the answer to the question raised about female creativity. "In projecting their anger and disease into dreadful figures, creating dark doubles for themselves and their heroines, women writers are both identifying with and revising the self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them" (The Mad Woman in the Attic 79). The angel, the monster, the sweet heroine and the raging mad woman are all aspects of the author's self-images. This critical approach puts forth the view that a real woman is hidden behind the patriarchal textual façade, and it is the task of the feminist critics to lay bare the truth.

While Gilbert and Gubar's attentions are directed towards the reestablishment of neglected women writers, Showalter calls for restoring the female perspective. Credited for putting feminist literary criticism on the map, Showalter refers, in Towards a Feminist Poetics, to the "awakening to the significance of its [the male-authored texts] sexual codes" (25). She calls this kind of analysis the "feminist critique" (25). According to her, when women writers move from an imitation or internalization of the patriarchal codes to a state of self-discovery, they pass through three phases: feminine, feminist and female. The feminist critique is a "historically grounded enquiry which probes the ideological assumptions of literary phenomena [. . .] [including] the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the omissions and misconceptions about women in criticism, and the fissures in male-constructed literary history" (25). Catherine Stimpson in Where the
Meanings Are: Feminism and Cultural Space corroborates this point of view and adds that “one of the great tasks of feminism—at once ethical, aesthetic and educational is to confront this misrepresentation” (180).

The counterpart of “feminist critique,” according to Showalter, is “gynocriticism” (25) which is crucial to the act of redressing the imbalances of a male-dominated system. In Towards a Feminist Poetics, she advocates “a programme of gynocritics [which] constructs a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature [and] develops new models based on the study of female experience” (28). Such a programme calls us to stop trying to force and fit women into categories laid down by the male tradition.

Fetterley, in The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction, exhorts the feminist critic to become “a resisting rather than an assenting reader” (32). She defines feminist criticism as “a political act whose aim is not simply to interpret the world but change it by changing the consciousness of those who read and their relation to what they read” (VIII). Yet another notable variety of feminism is French Feminism which includes the work of Hélène Cixous, Lucy Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. But there are striking differences between the French brand of Feminism and the Anglo-American variety of feminism. While the French feminists have anchored themselves and have made forays into disciplines like linguistics, philosophy and psychoanalysis and are given to theorizing, their Anglo-American counterparts are interested only in those theories which “have practical
applications to particular texts” (Ruthven 21). There is a difference in their character, tone and style. “French feminists, whether radical or reformist,” note Marks and de Courtivron, the editors of *New French Feminism: An Anthology*, in their introduction, “attack male systems, male values, the perverseness of misogyny, more vigorously than do American feminists [. . .]” (35-6). This, of course, subtly underlines the superiority of the French standpoint. Moi, in *French Feminist Thought: A Reader*, has summarized the positions of both these schools from an Anglo-American standpoint:

> Where we were empirical, they were theoretical; where we believed in the authority of experience, they questioned [. . .] the category of experience [. . .] If we were looking for a homogenous female tradition [. . .] they insisted that female writing could only ever be visible in the gaps, contradictions or margins of patriarchal discourse. And when we were looking for women writers, they sought for feminine writing [*écriture féminine*]. (5)

As discussed in this chapter, there are many feminisms and feminist theories. The feminist movement has opened up new opportunities for women and has transformed women’s lives, and has helped to reshape the ways in which we think about what it means to be a woman. Yet there are misgivings about feminism and feminists are angered at this mistrust.
Judith Evans, in Feminist Theory Today: An Introduction to Second-Wave Feminism, makes it amply clear that "there are variations between groups and categories of women and that at the very minimum, one group does not speak for all" (6). This is a caution feminists have been slow to take. Gayatri Spivak also cautions us on the dangers of "academic feminism" (39) and notes that feminists conveniently overlook the oppression of women by women the world over. Jane Sochen, in The New Woman: Feminism in Greenwich Village: 1910-1920, notes, "a crucial failing of the feminists was their attempt to do too many things at once—with too little ammunition" (146).

Quite a few feminist writers have expressed doubts over the functioning of various feminist organizations and have questioned the need for their existence. In North America itself, many differences in outlook have divided white middle class feminists and black women even though they all basically agree that women should get their due. Chilla Bulbeck, while defending Alice Walker's concept of "womanism" as distinct from feminism, argues that differences among feminist groups are more than skin deep. In what appears as an inversion of white feminists' demand for equality, Bulbeck, in One World Women's Movement, contends that "black women deny the strengths of their own position and demand the superiority of black men, a reversal of their emasculation at the hands of white society" (139). In the hands of a white society, black men are condemned as brutes and rapists.
and hence black women feel the need to stand by their men. Schneir too highlights the fact that black women feel alienated from their white counterparts as social issues of vital importance are not being taken up by the existing feminist organizations which are largely the preserve of white feminists.

Asian women cannot fully identify themselves with the aims of liberal or radical feminism. Neither can they totally adopt wholesale their militant means of registering their protest against patriarchy. This is because the challenges Asian women have on hand are different from their western counterparts. The Asian feminists are more concerned in taking on cultural norms and traditions that subordinate them. Practices such as dowry, bride burning, female infanticide, foot binding and suttee are to be fought against ruthlessly and these practices which dehumanize women should be accorded the topmost priority. Of course, other issues like equality in jobs should also be addressed seriously.

Unlike their Western counterparts, Asian women do not debate over issues like motherhood. For these women, radical feminism with its negation of marriage and motherhood as oppressive and limiting is not attractive; neither does it offer any solution to their day-to-day problems. Many women in Asia today are conscious of their responsibilities and set their priorities rather than trying to live up to an unattainable ideal. Vandana Shiva in India
mobilizes women at the grassroots level while Kumari Jayawardena is a civil rights activist in Sri Lanka.

This disenchantment within the feminist movement set in the 1970s itself when black feminists and lesbian feminists realized that their voices were not heard and their issues were relegated to the background. To highlight the discrimination against lesbians in the women's movement, lesbian feminists started 'radicalesbians' in 1970. Friedan came down heavily on the lesbians fearing that such a group would cause damage to the feminist movement. Black feminists organized themselves in 1973 under the National Black Feminist Organization as they felt they could see no place for themselves in the white feminists' declaration of sisterhood.

Schneir highlights two issues which have caused this rift between the black and white feminists. Firstly, the blacks and whites are divided on the issue of abortion. White feminists do not want any restriction on the issue of abortion. Black feminists, on the other hand, feared "the overuse of abortion in the black community for population control" (171). Secondly, male bashing so strongly indulged in by the radical feminists was not taken to by the blacks because of their bond with black men as partners in the struggle against racism.

More than any other single issue, the support for a woman's right to choose to have an abortion has become the bone of contention. Catholic women find it difficult to accept the feminists' defense of abortion. That
does not mean that Catholic women are not feminists even though the feminists dub any notes supporting this issue is an anti-feminist. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, who calls herself a ‘family feminist’ as she advocates strong ties within the family to help build a better society, raises a pertinent question in her influential book Feminism is Not the Story of My Life: “Do feminists believe that feminism has no room for pro-life women even if they support equal pay for equal work and related women issues?” (10).

Feminists dismiss such reservations as nothing but bigotry or backlash. Fox-Genovese contends that “the most serious feminist failure lies in many feminists’ preference to consider women as independent agents rather than as members of families” (28). Feminists like Catherine Stimpson view any reference to families as capitulation to a conservative backlash that seeks to strip women of their independence for which they have been fighting for so long. As already noted, to the radical feminists responsibility to children is seen as oppressive and not as something natural.

“Women are hard on women” (115) wrote Virginia Woolf in A Room of One’s Own. Feminists have come down heavily on their ‘sisters’ who show too much of militancy and whose utterances are difficult to digest. Take for instance, Stimpson, a leading American feminist, who describes herself “a striving, womb-denying, animus-mad, career woman” (115) and argues that “feminists are not familial; happy and cheerful; giving and generous” (186).
Feminists are also not prepared to go along with Dalma Heyn’s defense of adultery as something which gives women a sense of power and a freedom from dependence upon their husbands. How can one advocate infidelity as a weapon in women’s liberation movement? Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* declared “pregnancy is barbaric [. . .] Childbearing should be taken over by technology” (238). Gornick, herself a feminist of the 1970s, admits that “the feminist position is extreme and many of these pronouncements are chilling” (*Essays in Feminism* 22). Alexander too concedes that feminists go overboard in attacking patriarchy and discount all the good things that happened between men and women. While she too champions political and economic equality for women with men, she is moderate in her views on patriarchy claiming that “women love men and men need women and both sexes often find real support in each other” (273). As Fox-Genovese rightly cautions that “any attempt to lump the lives of very different women under a single formula is likely to exclude more women than it includes” (31). Thus real ‘sisterhood’ would entail cutting across diversities and adopting a global perspective on women’s issues.

Friedan, who had given a call to American women in 1963 to eschew motherhood and domesticity, had been charged by feminists with abandoning her early militancy and surrendering to the ‘enemy’ in *The Second Stage*. In this book written in 1981, Friedan reconsiders some of her earlier pronouncements. Earlier she had exhorted women to break the
feminine mystique but in The Second Stage she observes, “I sensed a dead end. I saw younger women dressed for success in those dark gray suits; trying to be super women, to ‘have it all’ [. . .] Did women really want to live and die like men?” (XVII). She talks of the second stage as one wherein women will realize that “assertion of absolute independence is a mark for that residue of soft need to remain dependent” (340). Friedan’s valiant attempt to reintroduce the family at the heart of the feminist programme predictably failed to convert radical feminists.

Naomi Wolf, in Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It will Change the 21st Century, calls for a new approach to the issues that confront women of today. She calls her approach “power feminism” (58). She writes:

Power feminism means taking practical giant steps instead of ideologically pure baby steps; practising tolerance rather than self-righteousness. Power feminism encourages us to identify with one another primarily through the shared pleasures and strengths of femaleness rather than primarily through our shared vulnerability and pain. (58)

Wolf does not argue that women should denude themselves into being that their days of victimization are over. She advocates tackling sexism with confidence, positive thinking and power.
One does not have to be a die-hard feminist to be successful. Katherine Graham, considered one of the most powerful women as the owner of The Washington Post and Newsweek, is an outstanding example of a successful twenty-first century woman. Graham, who died in July 2001, described herself as “a doormat wife” (Span 61). We are told that she was ambivalent about feminism [but] [. . .] nevertheless became a standard bearer for a generation of women who struggled for a voice, independence and careers in a male-dominated world” (Span 61).

One has only to take a look at the films Hollywood is churning out to see that feminism is not a blatantly militant movement any longer. A lot of films stress family bonding and show women running the home and office successfully. The concept of reverting to the tradition of marriage as being sacrosanct and not a “functionally defunct” (Firestone 222) institution and that a professional woman need not be a cynic is beautifully brought out in the recent American movie, The Horse Whisperer.

This chapter has attempted to deal with feminism as a socio-political and literary movement. It needs to be emphasized that feminism as a movement has radically altered the lives of women and has helped them reconsider their situations. Though a lot needs to be done in bringing women the world over out of their subjugation, feminism has gone a long way in making women aware of themselves and their rightful place in society.
Feminist literary criticism, as Ruthven puts it, has made one wake up to the realities “that gender is a crucial determinant in the production, circulation and consumption of literary discourse” (9). And feminist literary critics have set themselves the task of rectifying the imbalances and presenting a truer picture of women. The work and worth of feminist critics is best summed up by Wilfred L Guerin in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches*. He states:

> Despite their diversity, feminist critics generally agree that their goals are to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and re-valuation of literature by women, and to examine social, cultural, and psycho-sexual contents of literature and literary critics. (196)

While this chapter has taken into account the major feminist theories, the following chapter will present the views of the feminist critics on the novels and short stories of Fitzgerald. The influence of the American feminists on the feminist critics of Fitzgerald will be discernible.