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Filière : B/L

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Épreuve de : LVE - PARIS/LYON ECRIT : ANGLAIS

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LVE

## Consignes

- Remplir soigneusement l'en-tête de chaque feuille avant de commencer à composer
- Rédiger avec un stylo non effaçable bleu ou noir
- Ne rien écrire dans les marges (gauche et droite)
- Numéroté chaque page (cadre en bas à droite)
- Placer les feuilles A3 ouvertes, dans le même sens et dans l'ordre

In 1913 in the UK, feminist activist Emily Davison killed herself by getting run over by the king's horse at the Epsom Derby, making headlines across the world. This was a way for her to protest against gender domination and to demand women's suffrage. Feminism is a protest movement aiming to obtain gender equality. ~~So~~ In the UK and in the US, feminist militant action has taken multiple forms since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and has achieved to obtain landmark decisions such as women's suffrage or equal pay. It has also raised awareness among both men and women regarding gender inequalities originating in deep-rooted narratives internalized by men and women. Thus ~~feminism~~ the study of feminism is key to understanding the evolution of the women's condition over time. Such is the topic this set tackles. The present file is comprised of five extracts of political essays and speeches spanning from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to today, and originating from the US and the UK. First, in 1866, Barbara Bedichon defends women's suffrage in the UK, claiming that it is a necessary right in order for women to participate in democracy, ~~Her standpoint is not radical as she strives to convince~~ in a speech titled "Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women". Her standpoint is not radical as she seeks to convince both men and women of the importance of ~~being for~~ women's suffrage. This shows that women's suffrage is at the time a relatively new and uncommon idea : in the UK, it is to be

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obtained more than ~~sixty~~<sup>fifty</sup> years later, in 1918, and in the meantime the movement radicalizes itself as a way to attract more attention and highlight the urgency of women's suffrage. A few decades later on the other side of the Atlantic, Anne Julia Cooper publishes A voice from the South. By a black woman of the South in 1892. She adopts a highly optimistic ~~the~~ standpoint regarding her condition as a black woman in the American South. Indeed, Cooper writes at a time where slavery has been abolished in the US with the 1865 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment as well as the 1868 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment requiring southern slave states to ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> in order to join the Union. Moreover the feminist movement is gaining momentum in the US with activists such as Susan B. Anthony. However, segregation is being implemented gradually with the "Jim Crow laws", and women are still oppressed as well. Black women in America are to obtain the right to vote only in 1965 with Lyndon B Johnson's Voting Rights Act. In 1963, Betty Friedan describes the ongoing oppression of women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in The Feminine Mystique. She unveils the reasons why women in America are dissatisfied in situations of apparent domestic bliss: to her, women are still highly associated with domestic life, and ~~their role is seen as that of~~ are taught to be and desire to be good housewives, thus obliterating any other form of self-accomplishment. At the time, economic growth in the US and all ~~the~~ over the world favors the birth of ~~the~~ consumerism, ~~and~~ which reinforces the narrative of the good housewife. In 1988, Margaret Thatcher also emphasizes the role of women in taking care of their families in her "speech to Conservative Women's Conference" in Central London. As a conservative prime minister as well as a woman, she adopts a conservative view of womanhood which she links to motherhood, thus underlining the importance of women in society in

order to maintain the institution of family. Finally, Christine Bolt develops a historical ~~view of~~ landscape of feminism in the UK and in the US in The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s, published in 1993. She explains how feminist movements in both countries articulate themselves, working both separately and together, and how issues ~~that~~ defended by activists have varied in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1993, third wave feminism is active, ~~and strives~~ as it still is today, and strives to deconstruct the patriarchy by raising awareness on narratives which confine women to the domestic sphere.

In this essay my contention will be that feminism has evolved as a protest movement from the 19<sup>th</sup> century ~~to today~~ until today in the US and the UK, grappling with various issues and ~~overcoming~~ <sup>seeking to overcome</sup> its own internal ~~of~~ divisions.

First, militant action in the UK and in the US has allowed the condition of women to evolve since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, feminism is not a uniform movement and has had to deal with major internal divisions. Finally, ~~the separate~~ feminism is still active since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, as third wave feminism seeks to deconstruct the patriarchy which ~~is~~ remains as a narrative in modern society.

First, militant action has allowed the condition of women to evolve since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Opportunities for women have increased, facilitated by social evolutions linked to the Industrial Revolution as well as feminist activism. Women's suffrage also ~~is~~ represents a major victory for the feminist movement.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, opportunities for women have increased as oppression was waning. Christine Bolt explains that "organised women's movements" (1.1) arose for the first time during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This can be linked to

the development of a public debate and discourse ~~permitted by the emergence~~ in society due to the development of the press, which came to reach an increasing number of people, thus allowing for political debates and the emergence of a political conscience for many. The growth of urbanisation also ~~is~~ made it possible for activists to meet up and discuss political issues as well as ways to undertake militant action. Anna Julia Cooper states that her condition as a black woman is better in 1892 than it ever was before, claiming that women fifty years prior were confined to "the kitchen and the nursery" (p. 2), while "the woman of today finds herself in the pressure of responsibilities which ramify through the profoundest and most varied interests of her country and race" (p. 5-6). Therefore according to Cooper, <sup>black</sup> women in the 1890s in the US are no longer strictly confined to domestic life, they are also part of the political discourse and have influence on the future of their gender and their "race". Later, because of feminist movements, women ~~are~~ obtain the possibility to become involved in politics, due to women's suffrage as well as the right to participate in politics. Margaret Thatcher thus states that Emmeline Pankhurst became a Conservative candidate in the UK, as was Nancy Astor who became the first female member of Parliament. She also highlights her position as first female Prime minister in the UK as a victory for feminism. So during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the oppression ~~to~~ of women has been tackled by feminists who succeeded in creating more opportunities for women and integrating them to the political sphere.

The right to vote played a major part in this endeavor, and was the main goal of many feminists until it was obtained. Barbara Bodichon was part of the first British suffragists. In 1866, she claimed that women were entitled to vote, as responsible citizens who took part in society and, for instance, paid their taxes like men did. She thus states that the fact that women have no voice in a representative democracy which they are a part of is an anomaly, and that leaving them out of the political sphere ~~is~~ leads to them being neglected as citizens because their

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interests ~~to~~ are not defended in Parliament. According to Christine Bell, ~~that~~ the issue of suffrage has been a major concern of both American and British feminists until the 1920s, and was thus an issue over which they made common cause. In 1872, in the US, Susan B. Anthony protested by going to vote even though she was not allowed to, which resulted in her being arrested. In 1903, Emmeline Pankhurst founded the WSPU - Women's Social and Political Union - in the UK, a <sup>radical</sup> group promoting women's suffrage. ~~at all costs~~ She travelled to the US on several occasions to give speeches to American feminists. This goes to show that the right to vote was a major goal for feminists in both countries at the turn of the century, which prompted them to work together by making their cause an international issue. In the UK, women's suffrage was obtained in 1918 for women over 30 years old, and modified in 1928 to allow all women 21 years old and older to vote, as this was also the age at which men were allowed to vote. In the US, white women obtained the right to vote in 1920 while black women had to wait until the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Therefore militant action has allowed the condition of women to evolve since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, integrating them to the political sphere, especially due to women's suffrage which was a common cause of UK and US feminists and their main goal until the 1920s when it was obtained for the majority of women.

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However, feminism is not a uniform ~~move~~ movement and is subjected to numerous internal divisions and tensions. Radical feminism led with direct action has evolved gradually, in contrast with non-radical feminism which seeks more progressive achievements. Feminism has also been confined to white middleclass women to the detriment of black and immigrant women since ~~its first~~ it first appeared. Among women, some believe that feminism is necessary while others are content with their condition as women, causing strife and debates.

The way to lead militant action has been subject to debate among feminist movements, some being more radical than others. Emmeline Pankhurst's WSPU, for instance, promoted direct action in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pankhurst was convinced that women's suffrage could not be achieved with speeches and petitions, seeing as these methods had not resulted in legislation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the WSPU's motto was "Deeds, not words". The British suffragists led radical actions bordering on terrorism. For instance, Emily Davidson got run over by the king's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913, thus killing herself. The same year, Pankhurst set British prime minister Lloyd George's mansion on fire. When they were imprisoned WSPU members would go on hunger strikes, refusing to eat, which prompted the British ~~government~~ government to implement the "Cat and Mouse Act". Feminists were released just as they were about to die so that they would not die in prison. This limited the number of scandals and thus the WSPU's influence. On the other hand, some feminists and feminist movements favored non-radical militant action, claiming that it allowed them to reach wider audiences and persuade more people to join their cause. Such is the case of Barbara Badichon,

who seeks to attract a wide range of people with her 1866 speech, and in particular she tries to appeal to men. She describes women as "a respectable, orderly, independent body" (l. 1), while the WSPU was less careful of the image they gave of women; their action could easily have been instrumentalized to show that women, insofar as they were capable of committing crime, should not be able to vote. So here Bodichon tries to appeal to the majority in her speech, ~~giving~~ portraying women as respectable and serious, and setting forth arguments as to why women should be allowed to vote. Margaret Thatcher also favors a non-radical approach to feminism, openly criticizing radical feminists which she jokes about, saying that they would not approve of the word "Chairman" as it ~~is~~ could be considered non-inclusive and only directed towards men. Her goal is clearly to make a joke out of these feminists, which can be seen by the change of tone in her speech (l. 17-20) and the laughter of the crowd. Therefore she distances herself from these feminists, stating that, by contrast, conservative women are "practical" (l. 17), meaning that they are less vocal about their claims and strive to attain gender equality gradually, with the consent and approval of the majority. Divisions are stark between radical and non-radical activists.

Moreover, feminism has long been confined to white middleclass women, to the detriment of black and immigrant women. This is developed by Christine Bolt, who shows that while feminism seemed to be an important aspect of the political sphere in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was led by white middleclass women for themselves ~~and~~ rather than being directed towards all women. So black and immigrant women remained distant from this movement which felt relatively irrelevant to them. This is especially true in the US, where the oppression of black people with slavery followed with segregation undermined the victories of feminists. Moreover, while women's suffrage was a major goal for feminists before the 1920s, it was only attained for white women in the US. ~~Black women were~~ Therefore what represented a major victory for white women and prompted

the movement to peter out, was completely irrelevant for black women. Anne Julia Coops ~~is~~ reflects this division among women ~~and feminists~~ in the US = she does not seem to identify with the feminist movement, and the emancipation which she feels like she has benefitted from is relative to her identity as a black woman rather than as a woman only. In this context, race seems to trump gender. Her emancipation is thus more so linked to her association with the black community ~~to~~ than to the racial and social feminist movement. So there are divisions between feminists which cause tensions inside the movement.

Such tensions also exist ~~within~~ within women as a group, between those who believe that feminism is necessary and those who do not. Barbara Bedichon explains that while some women care about <sup>having</sup> the right to vote, most do not, which prevents the suffragist movement from growing ~~in order to influence~~ and thus limits its capability to influence the political discourse and obtain women's suffrage. She strives to persuade those women that they "ought to be made to care" (l. 16), because women's political involvement in ~~affairs~~ the defense of their own cause is key to the accomplishment of legislation promoting gender equality. Cooper's optimism also shows that some women are content with their situation, even though in hindsight few people would agree that being a black woman in the American South in 1892 is "sublime" (l. 19): black people as well as women were highly oppressed at the time, and the South ~~was~~ for the most part openly supported <sup>racial</sup> segregation. So it is possible for women not to get involved in feminism and political activism because they are satisfied with their situation. Betty Friedan explains that women in the ~~early~~ first half of the 20th century were convinced that their dissatisfaction was due to personal reasons. Many of them were unhappy as housewives and ~~even~~ took it as a psychological problem, because being a good housewife in the suburbs was seen as the pinnacle of success, it was a "dream image" (l. 26) for all American girls. So according to ~~Friedan~~ Friedan many women failed to



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understand that this was a political issue, and many thought that feminism was no longer relevant and necessary. When Simone de Beauvoir published ~~the~~ *The Second Sex*, a feminist essay denouncing patriarchy, many thought it was irrelevant in the US because "the 'woman problem' in America no longer existed" (p. 43). Thus women and feminist movements are not uniform. They are subjected to internal divisions and tensions.

Finally, feminism as a divided and profane movement is still present ~~in~~ nowadays in the US and in the UK, where the patriarchy remains and third wave feminism seeks to deconstruct the narrative on which it lies. The belief that women should be mothers and housewives is a narrative ~~which maintains gender inequality~~. It is still very much present. It maintains society in a state of patriarchy dominated by a separate sexes doctrine which has caused the renewal of feminism.

The belief that women are to be housewives and mothers still remains key to understanding the condition of women today. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher emphasizes this role and this part of womanhood in her 1988 speech. Although she seems to promote women's opportunities, stating that "We (the Conservative Party) support the right of women to choose our own lives for ourselves" (p. 25), she also

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highlights their role as mothers and housewives, describing it as a job among those which bring the most satisfaction to women. Moreover, even though she starts by saying that this is the goal of "many" (p. 31) women ~~and not~~ rather than all of them, she continues by claiming that "women run (the family)", thus ~~the~~ making this role that of all women, and obliterating the fact that men could also be involved in rearing their children and caring for their homes. In doing so Thatcher reinforces a narrative in which women are confined to domestic life while men - their husbands - are in charge of providing the family with financial support. She even uses the term "breadwinner" (p. 47), a common term used to describe the husband in this particular narrative: he is the one who brings food home to his wife and children. According to Thatcher, the Welfare State cannot emancipate the woman because ~~the~~ families need mothers to be present at all times for the children and husband. So even though Thatcher claims that women are free to take on a career, she implicitly takes them back to their role as housewives and mothers. Betty Friedan also explains how this narrative is pushed onto women in the 1950s and 1960s in America. According to her, the "dream image" of the American suburban housewife came from magazines and media with "words written about women, for women" (p. 9), but not by women - so this narrative came from men, and was then internalized by women who ~~then~~ ~~then~~ came to think it was normal to only be a housewife, without any personal career ambitions. Therefore this narrative, and the belief that women should be confined to the domestic sphere, is still present.

This has ~~caused~~ caused a renewal of feminism ~~seeking~~ striving to deconstruct the patriarchy and obtain true gender equality. According to Christine Bell, the

feminist movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries seemed to die off in the 1920s, as women's suffrage had been achieved in the UK and in the US. This being the main goal of feminists at the time, it seemed like feminism was no longer relevant. However, this does not mean that feminist movements had succeeded in deconstructing the "separate spheres doctrine" (l. 13). Christine Bolt argues that the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed development such as separate sphere for the sexes, confining women to the private domestic sphere ~~while men~~ of the home while men's activities were associated with the outside, public sphere, especially work. This doctrine as we explained is still present, ~~albeit in a less extreme~~ even though women are less oppressed than they were at the time. So feminism waned in the 1920s even though it had not achieved complete gender equality. Betty Friedan emphasizes this point, stating that people thought "The 'woman problem' in America no longer existed" (l. 43). This is also why women did not understand why they felt dissatisfied in their lives: they did not think that they were still oppressed. The fact that "words like 'emancipation' and 'career' sounded strange and embarrassing" (l. 39) shows that women had abandoned <sup>feminist</sup> ~~feminist~~ ideas entirely. To them, feminism was "old-fashioned" (l. 20). However the narrative of women being confined to the domestic sphere ~~is~~ reinforces oppression, especially if women are not ~~are~~ aware of it as an ideologically charged narrative. Therefore feminism still exists today as a way to combat the patriarchy. Its renewal ~~comes~~ ~~is~~ is in part due to ~~Simone~~ Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex published in 1949 which denounced gender domination.

To sum up, feminism has achieved many victories since it emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has allowed women to integrate the public and especially the political sphere. Women's suffrage was a key achievement for feminists in this

endeavor. However, feminism is a protest movement which is subjected to internal tensions and is considered to be irrelevant for some people who do not feel represented by it. Finally, although feminism as ~~an~~ an activist movement seemed to have disappeared after the 1920s when women's suffrage was obtained, it ~~is~~ has since renewed itself in order to combat the narratives which perpetuate gender norms and gender domination, and which are still present in society today. Feminism thus remains a key political movement today. In the US, the overturn of *Roe v Wade*, ~~in 2022~~ which made abortion a constitutional right, in 2022, shows that feminist movements still have a lot to tackle.