

'Call for Freedom' by de Beauvoir & Friedan: Covering Chopin's heroine 'Louise Mallard'

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Abstract:

Feminism examines variations in social identity and fights for women's equality rights. Using the focal character of Kate Chopin, this study examines Simone de Beauvoir's and Betty Friedan's preconceptions about women and society. After delving into the key reasons for the terrible demise of the story's main character, more than one conclusion emerges as dominating. These factors are known as Patriarchal Setup in Communities, as well as Societal norms, Beliefs, and Behaviours. The major purpose of this research is to show how patriarchy still exists during the second wave of feminism and why women should struggle for their independence. Two feminist writers become a voice for silent and muted women, attempting to rouse them from a lengthy slumber. As a result, Kate Chopin's *The Story of One Hour* is an excellent resource for comprehending and contextualising the concept.

Keywords: Women's rights and lack of freedom, Second Wave of Feminism, Simone de Beauvoir, and Betty Friedan,

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1-Introduction

Women's call for freedom has been a widely discussed subject throughout history. Friedan and Bouvier have taken the subject into account deeply and coherently to convey the message. Women are forced to change the society in which they live desperately, and their ability to move freely has been regarded as an abnormal act in one way or another. Lack of mobility caused a lack of potential in women's dreamy world. The term 'Women's right is human's right' has been uttered mostly in American streets by many consistent female figures during the twentieth century. The high voice of an American woman was heard through the crowd at that time. Betty Friedan, a key feminist activist, provides the voice. Friedan establishes contemporary feminism, which is often regarded as the most important and successful intellectual movement of the twentieth century. Friedan's feminism emphasises professional independence for women over personal life. On one occasion, Friedan states a speech placed in a book edited by Jannan Sherman "*Interviews with Betty Friedan*" A boy asks her what people should do. Her speech has let women wake up from their long-lasting sleep to being wide awake. She answers by saying:

They need to be aware of the danger of becoming polarised. Instead of fighting among ourselves, we must move with a new political urgency to save our democracy and freedoms under attack. That is what is really going on. If we don't, we are playing into their hands and inviting fascism. (Sherman, 2002, p. 102)

This study will examine Beauvoir and Friedan's works related to second-wave feminism and its arising reasons. Simone de Beauvoir is a French feminist writer mostly known for her magnificent book '*The Second Sex*' Published in 1949. She had been involved with politics, social issues, and philosophy during her lifetime. Her book is regarded as an early awakening work in which the author discusses women's role in society. She concludes that certain traits limit women's roles; thus, they are forced to be in dissatisfied positions. Like de Beauvoir, Friedan also has stated a successful book '*The Feminine Mystique*' traced by many American women in 1963. The book is credited with glooming the beginning of second-wave feminism. The book explains dissatisfaction among women and criticises social assumption which has

created a cultural term for fulfilling her dreams through housework and marriage. Friedan has impressed many feminist authors with her bravery and strong courage. In this respect, Chansky states:

Betty Friedan is readily acknowledged as 'the mother of the modern feminist movement,' 'feminism's matriarch,' and perhaps more synoptically, as an advocate of social change whose passion for ideas paralleled her passion for justice. (Chansky, 2008, pp.341-364).

Both writers are angry at the idea buried in their minds reminding them that a true woman is considered to have no desire for higher education, careers, political voice, etc. Regarding the second wave of feminism, Friedan and de Bouvier have argued that the reason behind this wave is the lack of freedom. There is a truth that after the second world war, men returned home, and women were expected to live domestic life again. The expectation inspired both writers to examine the ongoing event. The concept leads to the most contentious dispute over sex and gender. Feminists have long used the distinction between sex and gender to dispute the notion that anatomy determines fate. Gender is described as the body's various ways of acculturation, social meaning, and shape, whereas sex is defined as the physical, unchanging, and anatomically different components of the female body (Butler, 1990, p. 35). Beauvoir's theory, in particular, argues that women are oppressed and refers to "female" as a collection of essential earthly facts (Jabbar, 2022, p. 10).

In addition, de Beauvoir and Friedan have the most important and sufficient thoughts about freedom and the constructions of gender discrimination. While covering their works, Kate Chopin's literary character 'Louise Mallard' in *'The story of an hour'* (Chopin, 2000) would be considered an example to illustrate the idea. Kate Chopin is a great feminist American writer known for her short stories and novels. She published this short story, also regarded as (a feminist statement essay) in 1894. Although it is a one-hour reading book, it has left people with a question mark for their lifetime; it will be answered in this study. The purpose of mixing the late 19th century with the mid-20th is to make awareness that some problems have not been sorted out.

2- A Shift from 1894 to 1963

In addition to the above assumptions, the twentieth century is a period of intense and social changes that let people be involved with massive & developed life forms. However, 19th-century leftovers are capable of showing themselves in the 20th century. Women's roles and achievements are being limited again. Women still struggle with a male-dominated society. Especially lack of freedom has caused fiction in women's lives. An example stated by a literary woman who has become gossiped about 'Kate Chopin' to support my voice; Chopin conveys a universal message in '*The story of one hour*': women's desire for freedom has let the central character Louise Mallard die. Louise serves all women who live in that society. Chopin portrays reality in her work as the central character gets informed that her husband has been killed, instead of being sad, she becomes happy due to her desire for freedom. The writer has a critical view of marriage; she somehow tries to say that marriage reduces humanity in women's lives. Louise is petrified and does not utter a word. She nearly seizes the moment and starts recalling what is absurd in her life "Life in women's prisons is characterised by many loses, mainly the loss of freedom and autonomy" (Kramarae, 2000, p. 257).

At first, Louise does not allow herself to think about freedom. This shows how she is afraid of being free. The idea reaches her wordlessly; she opens the window and gets the fact. Opening the window is symbolically used by Chopin to emphasise the lack of restriction. Besides, the death of her husband makes her see something she has not seen before. Chopin is wise enough who knows what to discuss in her literary work; according to a book editor Dedri Bryfonski:

Kate Chopin was undoubtedly familiar with the existence of the matriarchies of old and of her own day, and thus aware that the patriarchy was nor-low of nature. Even so, she seems to see no happy end to a woman's quest for freedom. (Bryfonski, 2019, p. 108)

Like many women, Louise is searching for freedom within her family; she is tied to someone and cannot fulfil her dreams. The way she utters the word 'Free' slowly, suggests that society has created fear for all female figures who want to go forward. There is a big difference between the subjects 'I' and 'We'; Louise prefers to establish 'I' in her small unique life. And

because there are many Louises; they are not going to be ended; de Bouvier and Friedan have made an influential riot demonstrating that women are dissatisfied with their current life. Concerning the time, this study combines the 19th and 20th centuries to illustrate one point for readers which is; the absence of liberty has been felt in both centuries. The Forbidden Joy of Independence in Louise's and other women's lives has consequently influenced Simon de Beauvoir and then Betty Friedan. The fact that de Beauvoir's works have greatly impressed Friedan; made it possible for her to become a voice to speak on behalf of every woman in the USA. Here is the most asked question 'Why do women still fight for freedom?'. Before answering this question, another question should be answered first 'How equal are we?'.
Women represent fifty per cent of the adult world population, one-third of the official labour force, perform nearly two-thirds of all working hours, receive only one-tenth of world income and own less than one per cent of world property. (Thompson, 1997, p. 30)

Fundamentally, the term 'Feminism' is discovered due to gender inequality and the lack of independence. There is always a debate that a woman should dedicate herself to her husband or her freedom. Society's perfect wife is the one who devotes herself to her husband and children. However, most feminist writers have devoted themselves to those who live in a place where freedom has no meaning. One of them is Kate Chopin; in most literary pieces; she examines women's freedom and independence. In Louise Mallard's life, the writer mostly focuses on the conflicted relationship between life and death. The central character's desire for freedom causes her sudden death in the end. The heart trouble and the heart disease echo Louise's life and she does not believe that she has become free either. When she hardly utters "Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering. (Chopin, 1894), presupposes that she is in a better mood now though she has lost her husband. Nevertheless, the misunderstood news grabs her freedom and lets her die. Chopin cannot find exact salvation for Louise; she somehow tries to say that freedom is a big deal for women. Thus, she suggests that 'Death' is the only solution for a woman who demands such desire in her life. On the other hand, de Beauvoir and Friedan have made it possible for a woman to be independent financially,

socially, and politically. Their belief has been light by which women of the twentieth century have discovered their own path.

3-Conclusion

Women have always played an active role in liberation efforts throughout history. As a result of examining three authors' works and perspectives, one can begin to understand the idea by reading any of them. The term 'Call for Freedom' helped to change the rooted perception and the lives of many women. Especially, Friedan has let many American women realise their full capabilities in society. Although women still search for freedom in modern life, feminist writers have done it very well to wake up women from a deep sleep. Chopin, de Beauvoir and Friedan have found out about women's dissatisfaction with their current lifestyle. Especially, Chopin catches the idea in illustrating Louise Mallard's character; the way she gets confused about whether being happy or sad would be more appropriate for the situation is the key answer to why I chose this study to be done. Louise's death is the only salvation from her imprisonment. The writer wants to achieve her character's dream through the cause of heart disease. Even Chopin cannot find the ultimate solution, no more no less; women have been fighting for their freedom without stopping. There is no doubt; de Beauvoir explains the idea of being free in one of her letters to Nelson Algren in Chicago, she states the exact meaning of freedom as:

I am awfully greedy; I want everything in life. I want to be a woman and be a man, have many friends, have loneliness, work much and write good books, travel and enjoy myself, be selfish, and be unselfish. You see, it is not easy to get all which I want. And then when I fail, I get mad with anger.
(Lawson, 2002, p. 145)

de Beauvoir portrays reality in her speech; she has deliberately selected those words to conduct all women's inner will. Here, she is a voice that calls women for freedom; she is mad and nervous because she desires to achieve all she wants in this life. However, it seems a bit difficult to believe so. But she concludes it positively and says if women are given equal chances, they can achieve as much as men. She trusts women, and she believes her works would alert females to battle for their rights. While Friedan's own conclusion differs from

than other two authors, she concludes as the problem has no name, as a woman she cannot name it well, it is neither lack of freedom nor domestic violence. Feminist writers like to see women as human beings not fragile and weak basic figures, in better words, women should be free in their decisions and act like human beings, not as women. Last but not least, the three female writers discussed above; have brought up an idea that: If a woman's role is only limited to house, she will end up her life sadly with no bear of everything.

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