

ANALYSE ET COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTES OU DOCUMENTS EN ANGLAIS

Analysez et commentez, **en anglais**, les cinq documents suivants

Document 1

5 The nineteenth century saw, for the first time, the emergence of organised women's movements which, by the 1920s, had immeasurably strengthened the bonds between women, enlarged their opportunities, and forced the issue of their rights and wrongs into the public arena in a sustained fashion. It witnessed, in addition,
10 developments whose significance for women has been debated – though not disputed – ever since: the growth of urbanisation, industrialisation, a market economy, a powerful class system, and a peculiarly strong emphasis, associated with the middle class, upon separate spheres for the sexes. Industrialising later than its mother country, lacking an aristocracy and frequently uneasy with the overt acceptance of class divisions, the United States offered its female activists a more encouraging ideological climate in which to operate for the first half of the nineteenth century. But women on both sides of the Atlantic were affected by the developments just outlined – most notably, so far as the feminist movement is concerned, by the separate spheres doctrine. Taking account of
15 the era's novel separation of home and production, of private and public life, this doctrine sought to confine women while simultaneously glorifying them and buttressing the family in an era of individualism. In the process, it unintentionally gave feminists a concept they could reconstruct for their own use when they sought a fairer social order.

20 The first phase of organised feminism has also attracted attention because it has been deemed to have petered out in the 1920s, its agenda either misconceived or only partially achieved, thus necessitating further battles in the later twentieth century. As a historian, it has been my aim to avoid judging the first feminists [...].

25 It should be emphasised at the outset that the British and American women's movements had much in common. Although organised feminism developed a little earlier in America than it did across the Atlantic, in each country it was rooted in basically similar and encouraging social conditions. These included a share heritage of Enlightenment ideas, expanding political rights and political toleration, an economy shifting to industrialisation and urbanisation, an influential middle class and a predominantly Protestant culture. The two movements, over time, pursued roughly the same objectives, which were neither exclusively bourgeois nor always dominated by the vote, and their leaders experienced the same false dawns at the end of the eighteenth
30 century, in the 1860s and in the 1920s. British and American feminists were primarily – though by no means exclusively – middle-class, and were strengthened by their religious activism and feelings of sisterhood as well as by their links with other reform endeavours. In both countries, they grappled with the combined straightjacket and opportunity which Aileen Kraditor has called the cult of domesticity, and found it impossible to transcend their intellectual differences to produce an ideology which was powerfully persuasive to the mass of women.

35 What is more, I have discovered many instances of a conviction among British and American feminists that they were ahead of activists elsewhere in the world, and that their respective countries held out the best hope of a changed position for women. Fortified by their consciousness of responsibility to an international movement, feminists on each side of the Atlantic were willing to make common cause over issues of mutual interest, notably educational provision, labour rights, peace and suffragism. Yet it is my contention that the undeniably close Anglo-American connection in reform has served to
45 obscure the real sense of distinctiveness that British and American feminists felt, even when they were pursuing a variety of shared concerns. It has also overshadowed their

determination not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, however closely allied. While I have no desire to use the comparative method simply to confirm American exceptionalism, I feel that it is necessary to stress that American feminists took heart from what they perceived to be the superiority of their social circumstances, and the greater boldness and strength of their movement. [...]

British feminists, for their part, were willing to concede that their cause was complicated by class considerations far more than was the case across the Atlantic. [...]

Furthermore, as Frank Thistlethwaite has pointed out, the Anglo-American link was strained and changed in the second half of the nineteenth century when the economic ties between Britain and the United States altered, America acquired many of the problems associated with the Industrial Revolution, and British radicals ceased to regard it as being in the vanguard of social improvement. As a result, American feminists – like other American reformers – looked to Britain for inspiration in such areas as labour organisation, vocational education, industrial legislation and the resolution of urban problems. In addition, though the United States initially produced more sex radicals than Britain, the balance between the two countries had evened up somewhat by the early twentieth century, while the British feminists had become more politically radical than the Americans: more willing to abandon bipartisanship, more tactically inventive and, above all, readier to resort to militant action.

So far as class and political considerations are concerned, advantages and disadvantages were, in fact, rather evenly balanced between the two countries. In the United States, if the Revolutionary legacy was a spur to reformers, agitators were less constrained by rigid party loyalties and the federal political system permitted experiment without dire risk, these factors might equally produce complacency, lack of firm commitment to political programmes and indifference to reform at the national level. The more centralised British political system did undoubtedly limit the options of pressure groups, yet it was also sometimes easier to convert Parliament than to convince the American Congress. Indeed, British opponents of political feminism liked to point out that Parliament had frequently granted the demands of women in the nineteenth century, and Britain's paternalistic governments might seem more helpful to outside protesters than American administrations adamantly committed to the *laissez-faire* doctrines which they had – ironically – imported from across the Atlantic...

Finally, for all the regional variety of Britain, further complicated by class, there were no problems for British feminists to tackle comparable to those posed for Americans by southern slavery and its aftermath, and by the massive numbers of immigrants concentrated in the cities. Southern whites offered resistance to most modernising, non-southern causes, and feminism was no exception. More damningly – since some white southern women were eventually converted – black women remained largely untouched by middle-class feminism, while those who did become involved experienced real difficulties both in relating many of its priorities to their needs and in building up their own variant of the movement. For immigrant women, too, feminism often seemed to be either an irrelevance or a force which was unduly dominated by comfortably off, middle-class elites. [...]

Bolt, Christine, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s*, London, Routledge, 1993, extract from the introduction.

Document 2

That a respectable, orderly, independent body in the state should have no voice, and no influence recognized by the law, in the election of the representatives of the people, while they are otherwise acknowledged as responsible citizens, are eligible for many public offices, and required to pay all taxes, is an anomaly which seems to require some explanation, and the reasons alleged in its defence are curious and interesting to examine. (...)

Mr. Anthony Trollope, speaking in reference to restrictions on voting in some departments to the Civil Service, says: — “A clerk in the Customhouse, over whom no political ascendancy from his official superior could by any chance be used, is debarred from voting. I once urged upon a Cabinet minister that this was a stigma on the service, — and though he was a Whig, he laughed at me. He could not conceive that men would care about voting. But men do care; — and those who do not, ought to be made to care.” The case is very similar as regards women. Many people, besides Cabinet ministers, are unable to conceive that women can care about voting. That some women do care has been proved by the Petition presented to Parliament last session. I shall try to show why some care, and why those who do not ought to be made to care.

There are now a very considerable number of open-minded unprejudiced people, who see no particular reason why women should not have votes, if they want them, but, they ask, what would be the good of it? (...) And here let me say at the outset, that the advocates of this measure are very far from accusing men of deliberate unfairness to women. It is not as a means of extorting justice from unwilling legislators that the franchise, is claimed for women. In so far as the claim is made with any special reference to class interests at all, it is simply on the general ground that under a representative government, any class which is not represented is likely to be neglected. Proverbially, what is out of sight is out of mind, and the theory that women, as such, are bound to keep out of sight, finds its most emphatic expression in the denial of the right to vote. (...)

Among instances of hardship traceable directly to exclusion from the franchise and to no other cause, may be mentioned the unwillingness of landlords to accept women as tenants. Two large farmers in Suffolk inform me that this is not an uncommon case. They mention one estate on which seven widows have been ejected, who, if they had had votes, would have been continued as tenants. (...)

There remain to be considered those aspects of the question which affect the general community. And among all the reasons for giving women votes, the one which appears to me the strongest, is that of the influence it might be expected to have in increasing public spirit. (...) And I know no better means at this present time, of counteracting the tendency to prefer narrow private ends to the public good, than this of giving to all women, duly qualified, a direct and conscious participation in political affairs. Give some women votes, and it will tend to make all women think seriously of the concerns of the nation at large, and their interest having once been fairly roused, they will take pains, by reading and by consultation with persons better informed than themselves, to form sound opinions. As it is, women of the middle class occupy themselves but little with anything beyond their own family circle. (...) If the roads are bad, the drains neglected, the water poisoned, they think it is all very wrong, but it does not occur to them that it is their duty to get it right. These farmer-women and business-women have honest sensible minds and much practical experience, but they do not bring their good sense to bear upon public affairs, because they think it is men’s business, not theirs, to look after such things. It is this belief — so narrowing and deadening in its influence

50 — that the exercise of the franchise would tend to dissipate.

Barbara Bodichon, *Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women*, Read at the Meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Manchester, October 6, 1866.

Document 3

Madam Chairman, we meet on the occasion of two historic anniversaries—1918 and 1928. It is difficult to believe that women achieved full equality of voting rights only within the lifetime of some of us here today.

5 And it was Conservatives who led the way. Mrs Pankhurst, who became a Conservative candidate, launched the campaign to win the vote for women. It was a Conservative, Nancy Astor, who was the first woman to take a seat in Parliament and who did so with great style and confidence—proving that a woman does not have to be masculine to succeed in a man's world. [Clapping]

10 It was the Conservatives who extended the vote to all women in the Equal Franchise Act, sixty years ago. And, dare I say it—it was a Conservative who became Britain's first woman Prime Minister. [Clapping]

15 Since 1979, Madam Chairman, nine other women have held Ministerial appointments in our Conservative Governments. Six do so today. But if we are to have more women in Government, we must have more women in Parliament. And that means you must select more women candidates—and more of you must put yourselves forward. [Clapping]

20 Conservative women are, above all, practical. For example, we don't seek to advance women's rights by insisting that you, Madam Chairman, be addressed as Madam Chairperson, Madam [Clapping] Chair, or, worse still, just plain "Chair" . [Laughter] With feminists like that, who needs male chauvinists? [Laughter]

25 Conservative women bring common sense to Government. I can't help reflecting that it's taken a Government headed by a housewife with experience of running a family to balance the books for the first time in twenty years [Clapping] with a little left over for a rainy day.

30 We support the right of women to choose our own lives for ourselves. If women wish to be lawyers, doctors, engineers, scientists, politicians, we should have the same opportunities as men, more and more we do. In the last ten years, the number of women becoming solicitors has doubled; the number of women doctors graduating is up by over 50 per cent; and the number of women becoming chartered accountants has increased threefold.

But many women wish to devote themselves mainly to raising a family and running a home. And we should have that choice too. [Clapping] Very few jobs can compare in long- term importance and satisfaction with that of housewife and mother.

35 For the family is the building block of society. It is a nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure place, a place of refuge and a place of rest. It encompasses the whole of society. It fashions our beliefs. It is the preparation for the rest of our life. And women run it. [Clapping]

40 The state must look after some children in care and those old people who cannot look after themselves. But the family is responsible for an infinitely greater number of children and far more elderly people.

However much welfare the state provides, the family provides more—much more.

Yet today, in some of our inner cities, as many as one in three children are being brought up without the security of two parents.

45 Family breakdown on this scale leads to poor results in school—and to worse. It is serious not only for these children but also for the health of society.

That is why we introduced the new Family Credit—a new benefit—to give extra help where the breadwinner is striving to support the family on a low income.

That is why we removed the financial penalties on marriage in the recent budget.

50 And that's why, because children of an impressionable age spend so much time watching television, often unsupervised, we think it necessary to bring in a Broadcasting Standards Council. [Clapping]

Madam Chairman, We must strengthen the family. Unless we do so, we will be faced with heart-rending social problems which no Government could possibly cure—or perhaps even cope with.

Margaret Thatcher, Speech to Conservative Women's Conference, Barbican Centre, Central London, May 25, 1988.

Document 4

5 Fifty years ago woman's activity according to orthodox definitions was on a pretty clearly cut "sphere," including primarily the kitchen and the nursery, and rescued from the barrenness of prison bars by the womanly mania for adorning every discoverable bit of china or canvass with forlorn looking cranes balanced idiotically on one foot. The woman of to-day finds herself in the presence of responsibilities which ramify through the profoundest and most varied interests of her country and race. Not one of the issues of this plodding, toiling, sinning, repenting, falling, aspiring humanity can afford to shut her out, or can deny the reality of her influence. No plan for renovating society, no scheme for purifying politics, no reform in church or in state, no moral, social, or economic question, 10 no movement upward or downward in the human plane is lost on her. A man once said when told his house was afire: "Go tell my wife; I never meddle with household affairs." But no woman can possibly put herself or her sex outside any of the interests that affect humanity. All departments in the new era are to be hers, in the sense that her interests are in all and through all; and it is incumbent on her to keep intelligently and sympathetically *en rapport* with all the great movements of her time, that she may know 15 on which side to throw the weight of her influence. She stands now at the gateway of this new era of American civilization. In her hands must be moulded the strength, the wit, the statesmanship, the morality, all the psychic force, the social and economic intercourse of that era. To be alive at such an epoch is a privilege, to be a woman then is sublime.

20 In this last decade of our century, changes of such moment are in progress, such new and alluring vistas are opening out before us, such original and radical suggestions for the adjustment of labor and capital, of government and the governed, of the family, the church and the state, that to be a possible factor though an infinitesimal in such a movement is pregnant with hope and weighty with responsibility. To be a woman in 25 such an age carries with it a privilege and an opportunity never implied before. But to be a woman of the Negro race in America, and to be able to grasp the deep significance of the possibilities of the crisis, is to have a heritage, it seems to me, unique in the ages. In the first place, the race is young and full of the elasticity and hopefulness of youth. All its achievements are before it. It does not look on the masterly triumphs of nineteenth century civilization with that *blasé*, world-weary look which characterizes the old 30 washed out and worn out races which have already, so to speak, seen their best days.

Said a European writer recently: "Except the Slavonic, the Negro is the only original and distinctive genius which has yet to come to growth-- and the feeling is to cherish and develop it."

35 Everything to this race is new and strange and inspiring. There is a quickening of
its pulses and a glowing of its self-consciousness. Aha, I can rival that! I can aspire to
that! I can honor my name and vindicate my race! Something like this, it strikes me, is the
enthusiasm which stirs the genius of young Africa in America; and the memory of past
40 oppression and the fact of present attempted repression only serve to gather
momentum for its irrepressible powers. Then again, a race in such a stage of growth is
peculiarly sensitive to impressions. Not the photographer's sensitized plate is more
delicately impressionable to outer influences than is this high strung people here on the
threshold of a career.

45 What a responsibility then to have the sole management of the primal lights and
shadows! Such is the colored woman's office. She must stamp weal or woe on the coming
history of this people. May she see her opportunity and vindicate her high prerogative.

Anna Julia Cooper, *A voice from the South. By a black woman of the South*, The Aldine
Printing House, Xenia, Ohio, 1892, pp. 142-146.

Document 5

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American
women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women
suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife
struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover
5 material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and
Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent
question—“Is this all?”

For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words
written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling
10 women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers. Over and over women
heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no
greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a
man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to
15 cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread,
cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress,
look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their
husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were
taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or
20 physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers,
higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-
fashioned feminists fought for. Some women, in their forties and fifties, still
remembered painfully giving up those dreams, but most of the younger women no longer
even thought about them. A thousand expert voices applauded their femininity, their
adjustment, their new maturity. All they had to do was devote their lives from earliest
25 girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children. [...]

The suburban housewife—she was the dream image of the young American
woman and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American
housewife—freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers
of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated,
30 concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine
fulfillment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to
man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances,
supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of. [...]

35 For over fifteen years, the words written for women, and the words women used
when they talked to each other, while their husbands sat on the other side of the room and
talked shop or politics or septic tanks, were about problems with their children, or how to
keep their husbands happy, or improve their children's school, or cook chicken or make
slipcovers. Nobody argued whether women were inferior or superior to men; they were
40 simply different. Words like "emancipation" and "career" sounded strange and
embarrassing; no one had used them for years. When a Frenchwoman named Simone de
Beauvoir wrote a book called *The Second Sex*, an American critic commented that she
obviously "didn't know what life was all about," and besides, she was talking about
French women. The "woman problem" in America no longer existed.

45 If a woman had a problem in the 1950's and 1960's, she knew that something
must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their
lives, she thought. What kind of a woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious
fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor? She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction
that she never knew how many other women shared it. If she tried to tell her husband, he
50 didn't understand what she was talking about. She did not really understand it herself. For
over fifteen years women in America found it harder to talk about this problem than about
sex. Even the psychoanalysts had no name for it. When a woman went to a psychiatrist
for help, as many women did, she would say, "I'm so ashamed," or "I must be hopelessly
neurotic." "I don't know what's wrong with women today," a suburban psychiatrist said
55 uneasily. "I only know something is wrong because most of my patients happen to be
women. And their problem isn't sexual." Most women with this problem did not go to see
a psychoanalyst, however. "There's nothing wrong really," they kept telling themselves.
"There isn't any problem."

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, W. W. Norton, 1963, pp. 5-9.