BELLATRIX: THE AWAKENING OF FEMINISM

STUDY GUIDE

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Bellatrix

Bellatrix is the name of a star in the constellation of Orion. Orion is one of the brightest and most easily-recognized constellations in the night sky, and can be seen in most parts of the world. The constellation is named after the mythical hunter, Orion, in Greek mythology. Bellatrix, which is located at Orion's left shoulder, is it is the third-brightest star in Orion, and estimated to be approximately the twenty-sixth brightest star in the sky. It is also known as the "Amazon Star," or the "Female Warrior."

Feminism

Feminism is the belief that women should have political, social, and economic equality with men. While there are some societies around the world where women—not men—hold the main positions of power and leadership, this is not common.[1] Instead, throughout history, women have struggled for equality. In facts, as late as the nineteenth century, the majority of women in Western society not only did not have equality with men, but they were denied many of the basic rights that men had such as owning property, studying in school, and participating in politics. These rights continue to be denied women in some parts of the world even today.[2] In response to such inequalities, women in countries all around the world have embarked on various different campaigns in an attempt to change things.

There is no one single feminist movement. Instead, there are many different beliefs about what feminism is, what its goals should be, and how these goals can be achieved. Some people categorize feminism into three different "waves." The first wave is generally seen as women's fight to obtain the right to vote, and it began in the mind-nineteenth century. The fight eventually led to many victories. In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote in national elections. The United States finally allowed women the right to vote in 1920, and in Brazil it happened in 1932.[3] In the second wave of feminism, women looked for more than just political equality; they fought for greater equality in other places, including in the workplace, in education, and at home. The third wave occurred as a result of the belief that prior feminists had focused mainly on white, straight women and had not paid enough attention to the concerns of other classes, races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. In this third wave, feminists have attempted to change this inequality.

Finally, in recent years, feminism has included a new focus. The #MeToo movement has focused on sexual harassment and sexual abuse, particularly by people in positions of power. In 2017, after evidence of sexual harassment by film producer Harvey Weinstein

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[1] https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/tradition/g28565280/matriarchal-societies-list/
[2] https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism
[3] https://www.britannica.com/topic/woman-suffrage

was made public, many women came forward with their own stories of harassment and abuse by powerful men.

Women in the Bible

Discussions of feminism sometimes include references to roles and beliefs about women in the Hebrew Bible. Eve is one of the most well-known women in the Bible. According to the book of Genesis, she was the world's first woman. In Genesis it is explained that God created the first man—Adam—from the dust of the earth, then he created Eve as a companion and helper for Adam. He used a bone that he took from Adam's side to create Eve. According to the Bible, God gave Adam and Eve the garden of Eden to live in, and told them that they could eat anything there except the fruit of a certain tree. However, disguised as a snake, Satan persuaded Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. She then took it to Adam, who also ate it. As a punishment for their sin, God banished them from the garden. In addition, he told Eve, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."[4]

Mary is another well-known woman in the Bible. Also called the Virgin Mary, she was the mother of Jesus, and Jesus was conceived and born while Mary was still a virgin.
Lilith is only referred to once in the Bible, however she figures more prominently in Jewish folklore. According to some accounts, she was actually Adam's first wife, but she refused to be subservient to him and so she left the garden of Eden. Because of this independence, some people see Lilith as the world's first feminist.

Abortion

Another topic that often comes up in relation to feminism is abortion, or the right of a woman to end her pregnancy. The topic of abortion provokes heated debate around the world, and abortion laws vary widely. While some countries allow it, in many other places abortion is restricted or criminalized. According to the Center for Reproductive Rights, about 59 percent of women of reproductive age live in countries where abortion is generally allowed, while 41 percent live in countries that have very restrictive abortion laws.[5] Amnesty International finds that restricting or prohibiting abortions does nothing to stop them from taking place, however. Instead, the organization reports that women are forced to seek unsafe abortions, which often result in injury and death.[6]

Abortion is illegal in Brazil and can be punished by up to three years in prison. The only exceptions are if the woman was raped, if the pregnancy puts her life in danger, or if the fetus is brain-dead. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), hundreds of thousands of

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[4] https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-stories/adam-and-eve-in-the-garden.html
[5] https://reproductiverights.org/worldabortionlaws
[6] https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/sexual-and-reproductive-rights/abortion-facts/

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women have abortions every year in Brazil. The organization finds that about one in five women in Brazil have had an abortion by the time they are forty years old.[7] However, because these abortions are illegal, many are performed under unsafe conditions. Researchers have found that in places with highly restrictive abortion laws like Brazil, there is a large number of unsafe abortions, which can result in health complications and death. According to HRW, between 2008 and 2017, more than 2 million women were hospitalized for complications caused by abortion or miscarriage, and between 2000 and 2016, 4,400 died. [8]

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is yet another topic that is related to feminism. Domestic violence is abuse or violence that happens within a family setting. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) , it can include intimidation, emotional abuse, battery, psychological violence, and sexual or physical assault.[9] Domestic violence is common around the world. NCADV calls it an epidemic.

Maria de Penha Fernandes is a Brazilian pharmacist and victim of domestic violence. In 1983, her husband shot her while she was sleeping, leaving her a paraplegic. Afraid to leave him, she came back home two weeks later, and he then tried to electrocute her. She filed a court case against him, however it took nineteen years for him to finally be incarcerated. After the UN Court of Human Rights criticized Brazil's government for its failures in effectively prosecuting perpetrators of domestic violence, the country passed the Maria da Penha Law on Domestic and Family Violence in 2006. The law created shelters for abused women, special domestic violence courts, and increased punishments for perpetrators.[10]

A Continuing Struggle

Overall, feminism is a topic that provokes a lot of debate, and feminism means many different things to different people. However regardless of these differences, the fact remains that in Brazil and in nations all around the world, women continue to struggle against inequality in many different forms.

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[7] https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/31/brazil-decriminalize-abortion
[8] https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/31/brazil-decriminalize-abortion
[9] https://ncadv.org/learn-more
[10] https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/8/maria-da-penha-law-a-name-that-changed-society

Glossary

- **Aristotle:** Aristotle was an ancient Greek scientist and philosopher.
- **Elisabeth Badinter:** Badinter is a feminist writer and philosopher. She has written numerous books about women's rights.
- **capitalist society:** A capitalist society is an economic system based on private property rights and a free market.
- **commodification:** The action of treating something like a commodity.
- **Cronos:** Cronos is the god of time in Greek mythology. He is said to have three heads; of a man, a lion, and a bull.
- **Ethnography:** Ethnography is a branch of anthropology, and involves studying different cultures.
- **Eve:** Eve was the world's first woman, according to the Hebrew Bible.
- **Existentialism:** Existentialism is philosophical movement that focus on understanding existence.
- **industrial revolution:** The industrial revolution occurred in the late eighteenth century, when the economy changed dramatically as a result of the widespread use of power-driven machinery.
- **Lilith:** Lilith is a female figure from Jewish folklore, and according to some accounts, she was actually Adam's first wife.
- **manna:** According to the Hebrew Bible, when the Israelites traveled through the desert for forty years, God gave them manna, an edible substance that appeared on the ground every night, like dew.
- **Mary:** According to the Hebrew Bible, Mary was the mother of Jesus.
- **matriarchy:** A matriarchal society is one where women—not men—hold the main positions of power and leadership. Some people believe that matriarchal societies were more common in the past. Today, however, there are only a few in existence around the world.
- **monotheistic religions:** Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are all monotheistic religions, meaning that they worship one god and deny that other gods exist.
- **NGO:** An NGO is a non-governmental organization, which means it operates independently of government involvement.
- **patriarchy:** A social system where men hold most of the positions of power and leadership.
- **polis**: The polis, or city-state, was a common community structure in ancient Greece.
- **Quran:** The sacred scriptural text of Islam.
- **Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986):** Simone de Beauvoir was a French writer, philosopher, and feminist. She had a significant impact on the feminist movement.
- **suffragettes:** Suffragettes were women who advocated for the right to vote.

Additional Resources

Books

- Mulki Al-Sharmani, ed. (2013). *Feminist Activism, Women's Rights, and Legal Reform*. London: Zed Books.
- Deborah Cameron (2019). *Feminism: A Brief Introduction to the Ideas, Debates, and Politics of the Movement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jill Dearman (2019). *Feminism: The March Towards Equal Rights for Women*. White River Junction, VT: Nomad Press.
- Julie Shayne, ed. (2014). *Taking Risks: Feminist Activism and Research in the Americas*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Online Sources

- Thiago Pierobom de Ávila (2018). "Facing Domestic Violence Against Women in Brazil: Advances and Challenges," *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 7(1): 15-29. DOI: 10.5204/ijcjsd.v7i1.397.
  https://www.crimejusticejournal.com/article/view/891
- History.com Editors (November 20, 2019). "Feminism," *History.com.*
  https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/feminism-womens-history
- Human Rights Watch (July 31, 2018). "Brazil: Decriminalize Abortion."
  https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/31/brazil-decriminalize-abortion
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (June 28, 2018). "Feminist Philosophy."
  https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-philosophy/
- UN Women (August 30, 2011). "Maria da Penha Law: A Name that Changed Society."
  https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/8/maria-da-penha-law-a-name-that-changed-society

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