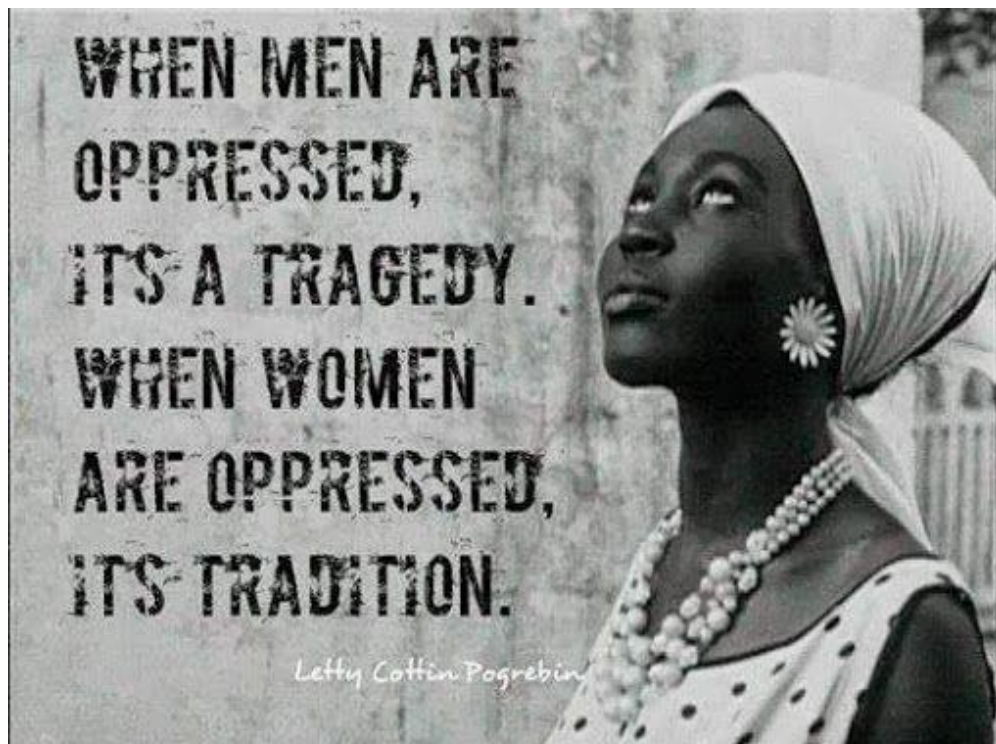


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## Feminism and Womanism in Literature

Applying literature in the classroom to  
identify and understand oppression of  
women

Trondheim, May 2018



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Irja Martine Linderud Skabo

Trondheim, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018

## Abstract

In this thesis, I will explore the theories of Marilyn Frye, Sara Ahmed and Kimberlé Crenshaw. I will then show how we can identify these topics through the use of literature in the classroom. This paper is my response to the #metoo campaign

## **Acknowledgements**

I thank my parents for raising me with the confident needed to face challenges and pushing through when times are hard. Thank you to my man who cared for me when I fell ill in the middle of my studies. Thank you to my doctor and friend who made me realise that taking care of one's mental well-being is the most important of all. Thank you to CISV and "my" children who encouraged me to study what I love; teaching. Thank you to NTNU who provided me with the freedom I needed to be able to finish my studies. Thank you to the Crew for supporting each other regardless, classmates who are now my friends for life. Finally, thank you to myself for never letting myself give up.

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## Introduction

The 15th of October 2017, the phrase “me too” would gain new meaning. Alyssa Milano, a famous actress, posted a tweet encouraging people to use the hashtag #metoo if they have ever experienced sexual harassment or violence (Milano, 2017). Over the next few weeks, the hashtag was used more than twelve million times (Brockes, 2018). As the #metoo campaign unfolded, once more the debates surrounding feminism and equality was brought back to the spotlight. Stories of power abuse and sexual harassment were (and still are) featured on a daily basis in the news. Looking at the news picture, it is seemingly now a time where sexual harassment is happening more frequently than normal, yet it is more likely that the change is not whether it *happens* or not, it is whether or not we *talk* about it.

My contribution to the #metoo movement is to see how I as a literature teacher can use literature to trigger discussions around female oppressions in my classroom. Since I am following the programme Master of Art in Language Studies with Teacher Education, it is natural to write this thesis with a combined focus; teaching and English literature. In other words will this thesis not be a pure literature thesis. The reason for my chosen focus is that the #metoo campaign revealed just how comprehensive female oppression of different types are. Therefore, I see it as my responsibility as a teacher to contribute to a societal change concerning how women for a long time has been experiencing oppression. To do this, I must first provide my students with factual information as to how oppression occurs, what kind of oppressions there are, and how deeply rooted it is in societies. Seeing as I am a literature teacher, literature is my tool for being able to create such discussion. Therefore, my research question is “what kind of oppression does women frequently experience and how can I use literature as a tool to identify and discuss female oppression and feminist theories in my classroom?”.

The main feminist theorists I want to research as theoretical grounds for this thesis are Marilyn Frye, Sara Ahmed and Kimberlé Crenshaw. The reason I chose just these women are because they represent a broad selection of the main feminist battles that has been and still are being fought. They are also known for having contributed in great way to the field of feminist theory. I have chosen to work with literary texts, seeing as I am a literature teacher and that literary texts are my tool into the discussion of feminism. The function these texts holds in my thesis,

is as a tool to close in on the theoretical texts I have chosen. I have chosen literature from 1847 to 2016 to ensure a broad representation of the female role in literature, and to see how newer theory can be supported in older literature and vice versa.

In the first chapter, I will present Marilyn Frye's theory of oppression (1983), outline some different types of oppression and discuss what oppression can lead to. I will be spending more time with Frye (1983) seeing as her work is seen as a framework for feminist theory, and that her theory can be implied in the other theorists in this thesis' work. I will then present Sara Ahmed's (2010) theory of the perception of a feminist. Then, I will analyse "Domestic Violence" (2007), "Pavement" (2013) in short, "A Jury of Her Peers" (1917) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003) to research how feminist practice can transform literary analysis. I will then explain affect theory as a reason for why the #metoo campaign became of considerable size.

For my second chapter, I will turn my focus towards *womanism* and how women of colour experience feminism. Firstly, I will present Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory (1989) on intersectionality and identify how black feminists can experience oppression from white feminists. I will then turn to Audre Lorde and her keynote presentation at the National Women's Studies Association Conference (1981) on how she experiences oppression as both black and female. She too concerns herself with the question of race and gender, advocating black women's rights through her writing. Then, I will analyse "A Rose for Emily" (1931) and "Ain't I a Woman" (Davis, 2016) with a perspective on intersectionality to research how womanist practice can transform literary analysis.

Throughout the thesis, I will also mention some cases famous for their misconduct, because these can be used as a way into literature and feminist theory, and also show my students that sexual harassment and/or violence happens in real life. I am choosing to do this to underline the seriousness of the topic of oppression and what it can lead to for my students. Finally, I will discuss my possibilities of teaching about these women and their theories in accordance with the Norwegian Curriculum requirements set by the Directorate of Education.



# 1. Oppression

Firstly, I will present Marilyn Frye's theory on oppression from her work *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (1983). Frye (1983) explains several types of oppression in her essay, the three I wish to focus on in this thesis being gender expected behaviour, day-to-day oppression, and violent oppression. Seeing as Frye's work (1983) is seen as a "backdrop for understanding the basic, early and continuing perspectives of feminists" (Women's Review of Books, n.d.), and her essays being a framework for understanding feminism, other theorists build their theories (to some extent) on Frye's work (1983). This is the case with Sara Ahmed's work too, author of *Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)* (2010) on the perception of a feminist when breaking gender expected behaviour. Where Frye (1983) mainly identifies different types of oppression and outlines what those types of oppression can lead to, Ahmed (2010) discusses how one is met *after* when discussing already identified oppression. I have chosen two women who were/are publishing during different decades (the 1970s-1980s and the 2000s) to be able to see the differences in female oppression during the different times of publishing, and also whether they confirm or challenges each other. Then, I will apply their theory when analysing literature to see whether literature confirms or denies their theories, and how we can learn of their theories through literature. I will also include some examples of actual happenings as that can help make the theories more relatable for my students. Amongst them are cases which made for public outrages in social media, seeing as social media is the teenagers preferred platform, and also where the #metoo campaign became famous. I will discuss my didactical choices closer in chapter three.

Feminism has always been transdisciplinary, not necessarily in one field. Frye (1983) being a philosopher and Ahmed (2010) a professor in race and cultural studies is evident of this ("Sara Ahmed", n. d.) ("Marilyn Frye", n. d.). Because a lot of the feminists are not actually writing within literary studies, they are not classified as literary scholars. This has led to a somewhat challenging way of discussing feminism, seeing as it does not provide for a complete, existing framework easily accessible for use in the classroom. Therefore, a framework is here introduced and illustrated in figure 1. This is a framework mainly built upon theories and already existing frameworks (such as that of Frye) found in my chosen feminists' work, although not always explicitly shown as theories.

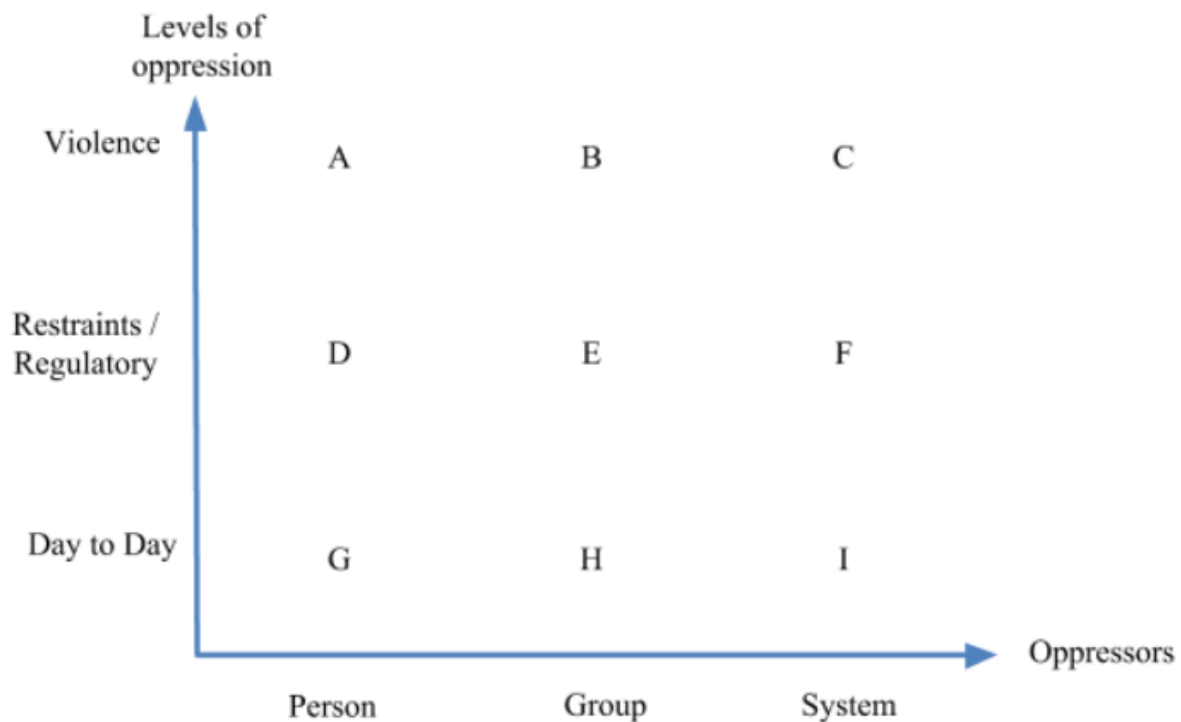


Figure 1:

Frye (1983) explains several types of oppression in her essay, the three I wish to focus on being gender expected behaviour, violent oppression and day-to-day oppression. Also Sara Ahmed (2010) engages in the topic of gender expected behaviour and the results feminists experience when breaking such expectations. Before indulging in the discussion of gender expected behaviour and the results of breaking such expectations, however, a short introduction to Frye’s theory (1983) of what the word oppression actually means and is, is needed. In her first essay *Oppression*, Frye (1983) clearly states that she concerns herself with what the word oppression means and how it acts in society, and not whether there is oppression or not. She makes this clarification to underline the importance of understanding and using this word correctly due to its importance both as a word and as a concept (Frye, 1983, p. 2). Frye (1983) claims that one of the threats to discussing oppression, is a shift of focus. The meaning of the word oppression does not include “random” unfairness, but it rooted in the word “press”. “Press” is the element, and indicates a *pressure* or being pressed into something which again reduces mobility, hence being a restraining motion (Frye, 1983, p. 2). However, the word itself is “stretched to meaninglessness” when misused through *whataboutism*, seeing as it no longer recognises the

difference of experiencing unfair treatment of any severity not based on a given label and actual oppression (Frye, 1983, p. 1). Whataboutism is way of turning the focus away from the discussion and instead point to something else regularly seen used as a political strategy (Richards, 2017). Frye (1983) claims that words being used incorrectly work as ground for whataboutism, thereby threatening the debate about oppression. The threat such strategy implies, is that of a reversal of an accusation, making the one speaking up against (in this case) oppression an equally guilty part (What About Whataboutism, n. d.). Frye (1983) points out that this whataboutism is typical when women state that they are being oppressed, in the way that such statement often is met with someone claiming men are oppressed too (p. 1).

It is this meaninglessness of a useful word and concept that threatens a debate and makes for a shift in focus where one is not needed or wished. Within the feminist debate, this undermines women who are trying to talk about experiencing a serious happening, which oppression is. Whataboutism, in these situations, not only kills the debate but also undermines women's right to both **feel** and **talk about** being oppressed (Frye, 1983, p. 2). Whether the man in these situations does not understand the feeling of being oppressed simply based on one's sex, or is uncomfortable facing reality is uncertain. The ground for gender oppression, however, is perhaps where it is most difficult for a man to see himself in someone else's shoes because it has never happened to him, and therefore is close to impossible to imagine (Frye, 1983, p. 7). However, Frye (1983) argues that one cannot understand the base for oppression of women without firstly understanding how elements of oppression all hold its place in a larger scheme (p. 7). This claim might point to why achieving understanding and legitimising of female oppression as a system, can be difficult.

Frye (1983) argues that the main difference between women and men in relation to oppression, is the **ground** for which one is oppressed, and presents not fitting/breaking the **gender expected behaviour** as a main ground for oppression (pp. 1-16). Where women are being oppressed due to her way of dressing, her speech pattern, her number of sexual partners, her general mood, her physical demeanour and more of what Frye (1983) identifies as "systematically related barriers", men does not experience oppression as systematically in the same way (pp. 2-7). Frye (1983) here uses the example of men's self-proclaimed inability to cry, which often is a typical whataboutism topic men tend to bring forward when oppression of women is brought up (p. 1). Still, a man's inability to cry does not prove male oppression as systematically incorporated into several areas of society, therefore making it an invalid

argument for men being equally oppressed as women. Frye (1983) does recognise that the claim of such gender expected behaviour - the expectation to be masculine and tough – is real. Yet, she takes it one step further, pointing to the aftermaths/reward of fulfilling gender expected behaviour. For a man, being invulnerable rewards him in the way that he now fits in the male community, his self-esteem is built, which again is directly beneficial for him (Frye, 1983, p. 14). Like Frye (1983) says it, “it is to their benefit to practice this discipline”, and this can help him succeed both in the workplace and socially. In other words, acting according to expectations benefits the man (p. 15). It is within gender expected behaviour that the structural, systematic oppression becomes visible, due to **both** sexes fulfilling of such expectations being part of a structure oppressive towards women (Frye, 1983, p. 15).

For women, there are several expected behaviours that according to Frye (1983) are not beneficial. For instance the expectation of being easy-going and happy, not claiming a lot of space is damaging. If one does not obey to this gender expected behaviour, and act on the side-lines of such happiness, one is likely to be perceived as “mean, bitter, angry or dangerous” (Frye, 1983, p. 2). This can be on a personal level (type G) as well as the societal way of perceiving all feminists as angry (type E-F). Seeing as newer theorists also concerns themselves with this issue (Sara Ahmed (2010) being one of them), it seem evident of there being little positive development concerning this label from the 1980s until today. Ahmed’s (2010) observations of what happens when women break out of their gender expected behaviour and speak up for women’s rights has led to her creating the blog *feministkilljoys*. As one can read from the blog title, Ahmed (2010) researches and discusses how feminists are perceived as angry **killjoys**; literally meaning people who kill joy. She explains this as a result of feminists raising questions that others might find problematic, and instead of admitting the need of that conversation, rather labels its author the problem (2010, para. 3, 14). She problematises that engagement and an intensity when discussing feminism is being perceived as tension and anger (Ahmed, 2010, para. 2). Further, Ahmed (2010) exemplifies this by showing how around a family table, the situation can be “upset”, thereby ruining the mood and becoming the problem; “in speaking up or speaking out, you upset the situation” (para. 3). In other words, even with family, there are certain expectations made by society of what we speak of and what we do not speak of. This way of looking at feminists (within the family) fit section G as a personally day-to-day comment based oppression (figure 1). This shift in focus - from recognising the problem instead of the “problem maker” - is problematic to the fact that this norm prevents much needed

discussions, and creates a standstill for a society when it comes to developing equal rights further.

This labelling of women correlates with what we hear several women talking about when asked why they have not come forward previously; it is often stated that they find it easier to just let it go, to not be speak up then and there in fear of being perceived as either a victim, a feminist killjoy or a “feminazi” defined as “[*disparaging*] an extreme or militant feminist” (Merriam-Webster, feminazi, n.d.), or as “a committed feminist or a strong-willed woman” (Barrett, 2006, p. 105). Again, we meet a terminology designed to discredit what is the actual problem, and instead points to the woman being the problem. It is within this anger towards feminists as well as the anger feminists often are seen to carry, that the resistance against what feminists speak of, settle. The fact that it even has its own terminology points to an oppression within type F (figure 1). In people’s assumption of a right for them to be happy regardless, Ahmed (2010) states that this assumption quickly can change hatred towards the groups who denied this assumption, being seen as somehow having stolen their happiness (para. 12). Like previously mentioned, when women do not live up to their gender specific behaviours of being happy and easy-going, they become the problem. Both Frye (1983) and Ahmed (2010) points to this breaking of the **expectation of a comfortable happiness** as a foundation for resistance against feminism. In other words, the sacrifice many feminists meet, is the perception of their own happiness. Like Ahmed (2010) says “to be willing to go against social order, which is protected as a moral order, a happiness order is to be willing to cause unhappiness, even if unhappiness is not your cause” (para. 11). Further, she explains this feeling of happiness, and how feminism threatens it, and argues that “our failure to be happy is read as sabotaging the happiness of others”, due to the uncomfortable breaking of the fantasy that everything is OK, and that “unhappy topics” such as oppression, sexism, rape etc. in this fantasy does not happen (Ahmed, 2010, para. 12).

The willingness to break the happiness also paints a picture of the feminist being unhappy in her own self. Some seem to believe that you become a feminist because you *are* an unhappy person, even if the more obvious reason for the anger is when a person becomes aware of all the situations around oneself that are unfair, bias, based on their sex or other labels (Ahmed, 2010, para. 14). It is interesting to note that when other issues, that are not gender related, such as humanitarian crisis or war conflicts, the issue itself is being discussed, not the people discussing. Ahmed (2010) claims that with feminism, all issues are read as being “*about* the

unhappiness of feminists, rather than being what feminists are unhappy *about*” (para. 14). Also, of the traits that characterises the oppressed woman, is cheerfulness and happiness, meaning the feminist becomes even more visible since the oppressed woman seems happy (Frye, 1983, p. 2). When speaking of unhappiness, Ahmed (2010) also tells us that the word itself has changed meaning from meaning “to cause misfortunate or trouble” to what we know it as today, namely the feeling of sadness (para. 15). In other words, unhappiness has moved from a thing that was caused to a personal characteristic and a something you *are*.

Ahmed (2010) not only discuss the feelings others react with *towards* a feminist behaviour, and also the feelings women experiences *being* a feminist. She writes that “you become alienated - out of line with an affective community - when you do not experience happiness from the right things.”, which speaks of a sacrifice those who speak up against social norms and expectations experience (para. 5). Ahmed (2010) points to Simone de Beauvoir, who writes “it is always easy to describe as happy a situation in which one wishes to place [others].” (Parshley, 1997). Further, Ahmed (2010) explains that “not to agree to stay in the place of this wish might be to refuse the happiness that is wished for. To be involved in political activism is thus to be involved in a struggle against happiness.” (para. 10), which society does not look upon positively. Fortunately, we see that with the #metoo campaign, there are so many people speaking up making it impossible to publicly disregard them all. This is one of the reasons campaigns can have an enorm impact during short times (Figlerowicz, 2012, p. 4).

This “killjoy” of a woman is perceived as difficult as mentioned, which can lead to men not wishing her in the workplace - literally taking away her livelihood (Frye, 1983, p. 3). Breaking gender expected behaviour at work, for instance applying for a job typically dominated by men - like the army or high rank business positions which statistics shows are male dominated - can lead to oppression of different types (i.e. 60% of women experienced repeated and/or sexual harassment during their military service (Street, Stafford, Mahan, & Hendricks, 2008). We know that in some cases, the situation of men having a problem with **women** in the workplace or oppressing **her** at work, can lead to both threats of, and actual physical violence such as rape or beatings, even **murders** (Frye, 1983, p. 3). Physical violence, in this case based on gender, is called **violent oppression**, and is mainly a problem we find in the home, but can also be found in the workplace like Frye (1983) states (p. 3). The next paragraphs will research violent oppression, and what the consequences can be for such behaviour.

In *Men Explain Things to Me* (2014), Rebecca Solnit discusses workplace violent oppression, and addresses those who claim that workplace sexual intimidation is *not* a real threat by telling the story of the twenty year old, pregnant Marine Lance Corporal Maria Lauterbach. She was raped, then burned in a fire pit by a higher-ranking colleague who she was about to testify against for the rape (Solnit, 2014, p. 7). In the branch of the army that L. C. Lauterbach belonged to (the U.S Marine Corps), only 6,8 % of active duty officers are women, making them a vulnerable group. In the U.S army, there is a problem with “frequent occurrence” of sexual assaults and harassment, numbers varying between 22% and 84% when concerning sexual assault and harassment, and 9.5% and 33% when concerning attempted or completed rapes (Bell & Reardon, 2011; Turchik & Wilson, 2010). When studying the reports, we are also being familiarised with terms pointing to a **systematically** occurring problem, such as “command rape”; meaning a higher ranked person pressing a lower ranked person for sex (Bell & Reardon, 2011). When faced with such numbers, we can place this type of oppression within type F, a system based gender oppression (figure 1). This because women as a group experience sexual oppression. However, as a result of an F type oppression, the case of L. C. Lauterbach had a violent outcome, making her case a A type oppression. The indicert reason for this is her not being transferred as she asked when reporting sexual harassment. In other words, the lack of **credibility** shown her, being the army not fulfilling her wish to transfer, lead to her death.

Violent oppression is not only found in the workplace, but also in the home. Solnit (2014) points out that there are ca. three murders happening every day in the U.S. as a result of a spouse or ex-spouse attacking his wife or ex-wife (p. 6-7). Also, reports of domestic abuse tells us up to xx% are experiencing violence at the hand of a boyfriend/spouse. Still, for a woman to firstly get someone to believe in her, she needs **credibility**. As Solnit (2014) says “credibility is a basic survival tool” (p. 6). This statement can be tied directly to those cases where we hear of women being beaten or actually killed *after* having reported the abuser to the authorities (Lauterbach). Often, the woman has no choice but to return to the abuser due to either her “lack of credibility” or lack of support systems (Frye, 1983, p. ?). Because men achieve natural credibility that women does not, there are several cases where the woman has reported or expressed great concern about her violent husband, colleague or other men in her life, then ended up dead. For example was this the case in the famous O. J. Simpson (who it is generally believed got away with murdering his ex-wife) case where we after his ex-wife’s brutal murder has come to learn that there had been several calls to the police from Brown Simpson, calls for help as well as her reporting domestic violence and death threats (Yong, 2016). We also find it

in the case of Candace Carnathan, whom the day *after* getting a protective order against her husband, was shot by her husband (Ward & Cook, 2018).

Another system which punish women on a day-to-day basis (type I) that Frye (1983) discusses, is women and their sexuality (here: specifically in the U.S). Here, you can't "win" either way as a woman. To be frank, teenage girls are often placed in one of two categories - the slut or the prude. As Frye (1983) writes, "neither sexual activity nor sexual inactivity is all right" (p. 3). On the one hand, if a woman is sexually active, she will most likely experience being talked about, being treated as "easy", being labelled as "easy" (and worse), having to defend herself even to her friends, having to lie to her family, and also risk sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies due to poor sexual education and embarrassment and shame around the topic of sex (Frye, 1983, p. 3). The latter is not only a shame that the women carry around due to snide comments from friends and others, but comes from the very top too; the politicians. The Christian right side of American politics has been known to support what is known as "Abstinence-only sex education", where you are strongly encouraged to avoid sex until marriage (Hindman & Yan, 2015). This is still stately funded in USA even though several scientists have proven it to be ineffective, and also a source for students not learning how to protect themselves, or in other words being robbed of having proper sexual education (Santelli et al., n.d.). On a side note, the states with the highest teenage pregnancy rates are all states who practice abstinence-only sexual education programs (Teen Birth Rate Comparison, 2016, n.d.) Young woman who follow this Abstinence-only way of living is likely to be the subject of labelling too, though on the opposite side of the young women who is sexually active. I already used the word "prude", but also claims of sexual abnormality and lesbianism can be found, as well as a social pressure to act "normal", or in other words have sex (Frye, 1983, p. 3). When concerning sexuality, young girls also experience type G oppression (figure 1), when **parents** show concern either way - concerned if their daughter is too sexuality active and concerned if she is inactive which can suggest a lack of popularity (Frye, 1983, p. 3). This struggle between two evils can even unfold in men defending serious actions such as rape, where "the slut" likes sex so much she does not care in what form or way she "gets it", and "the prude" likes it because she secretly wanted it, and was "repressed and frustrated" (Frye, 1983, p. 3). As Frye (1983) further writes, "You can't win. You are caught in a blind, caught between systematically related pressures", and it does not stop with sexuality as previously discussed (p. 3). What this proves, is yet another system which results in young women being left with the disadvantage.



There are also examples of day-to-day oppression on a non-violent level and that does not include the body. One of the relatively new terms related to this, is *mansplaining*. Merriam-Webster defines mansplaining as “[by men] to explain something to a woman in a condescending way that assumes she has no knowledge about the topic” (n.d). This corresponds with Frye’s explanation (1983) of why women “accept” whataboutism. She argues that whataboutism can lead to a woman questioning her own femininity seeing as “sensitivity is our virtue”, making for a guilty feeling (p. 1). Another woman who has felt this mansplaining happen to her, and has written about it, is the author Rebecca Solnit. She addresses mansplaining in her article *Men Explain Things To Me*. Here, she tells the story of when her and some friends attended a party in Aspen to illustrate a situation most women will find themselves in at some point in life - a meeting with a Mr. Very Important; a smug, overconfident man that “crushes young women into silence” (Solnit, 2014, p. 4). Being a well renowned author herself, Solnit (2014) found herself being explained her own book from this man she refers to as Mr. Very Important (p. ). She explains that it is the world that trains women and men to hold different levels of confidence, stating that “it trains us [women] in self-doubt and self-limitation just as it exercises men’s unsupported overconfidence” (Solnit, 2014, p. 4-5). Such oppression can be classified as a type G, a daily problem with the “sender” being a person. The woman’s training when it comes to confidence correlates well with Solnit’s explanation (2014) of her own experience, saying that she experiences a moment there when “I was willing to let Mr. Important and his overweening confidence bowl over my more shaky certainty” (p. 1). Although she is clear in stating that this does not concern all men, and that also women can hold this quality, she still concludes that this confidence and thereby the following mansplaining mostly is gender based (Solnit, 2014, p. 5). Boys and men are taught that they have more credibility in their outings, which is something to keep in mind when teaching too as I as a teacher can influence who gets the speak in class, and how I response to it.

Frye’s claims of women being punished for their sexuality, and being left with all the responsibility for sexual behaviour is relevant also today. In 2015, the case of Brock Turner shocked the world, as his lawyers argued that he was such a promising young boy at an elite university that he should not be imprisoned. Seemingly, the judge in this case agreed with the father, not wanting a harsher sentence than six months in jail due to worries that more punishment would have “a severe impact” on the twenty year old Brock. The prosecution asked

for six years (Martin, 2016). His father also argued that being sent to prison would be “a steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action” (Miller, 2016). But unlike the society in which Frye’s ideas were developed, today’s society spreads information and reactions in just seconds through Internet, usually through social media. Like with the #metoo campaign, also the Brock Turner case was discussed heavily, using the hashtag #BrockTurner. The case led to a public outrage where people reacted strongly to both the light sentencing and how Turner was portrayed as a victim; a young, successful Stanford swimmer with a bright future from a “good” family who due to alcohol made a “little mistake” that should not stand in the way of him pursuing his dreams... The fact that there were two eyewitnesses as well as the rule of statutory minimum sentencing of two years, is here ignored due to Turner’s social status. This sends the signal that a rape is not really rape, it depends on who executes the act. Like Robin Abcarian (2018) in the LA Times so aptly puts it, “for Turner, a slap on the wrist. For his victim, a slap across the face”.

Social media being a platform for the outrage against Brock Turner case showed how strong of an influence this media has become. It has also played a crucial role in the #metoo campaign. As with the Brock Turner case, people’s reactions and outrage lead to others speaking up. Through social media, we are given the opportunity to find others who share our reaction, which makes it easier to start campaigns, and easier for victims to share their stories as they recognise that others have been through the same. A **reaction**, or a **feeling** is often a triggering cause for that person deciding to put pen to paper. We know that feelings often trigger songwriters to write songs, as is the case with newspaper articles or chronicles where anyone can publish and join the debate. We have seen this in massive scale with the #metoo campaign, where several of the chronicles written makes for a powerful read, and makes one emotional or gives one an emotional connection to the author or the situation she/he describes. We can still make the connection of for instance those powerful reads and literature. Whereas literature and its field of theory used to neglect emotions, Marta Figlerowicz addresses one of the newer theories that legitimises emotions in her “Affect Theory Dossier, An Introduction”. Like she states already in her first sentence, there is no single definition of affect theory (Figlerowicz, 2012, p. 2). Yet, most of the various theoretical branches agree that affect theory to some extent are “theories of timing” (Figlerowicz, 2012, p. 2). The use of the word “timing” in explaining affect theory indicates that affect theory is exercised from time to time, or when needed. Seeing as the Brock Turner case happened just previously to the #metoo campaign, one can argue that the time for the #metoo campaign in America was right. People were already

upset, and social media had become the number one way of expressing discontent; in other words was the *timing* right. Figlerowicz (2012) explains what can be grounds for that right timing:

the self and the sensory world, (...) or the self and another person, fall in step with each other in a way that seems momentarily to make a sliver of experience more vivid and more richly patterned than wilful analysis could ever have made (p. 4)

This is the #metoo campaign living proof of. Even though statistics (hence “wilful analysis”) concerning sexual harassment, sexual violence, rape etc. has been and still is available, it has not been able to create the same reactions and publicity surrounding sexual harassment and/or violence that the #metoo campaign has made.

The magnitude of #metoo surprised both people and media houses all over the world (source). In the #metoo campaign, we see that affect and emotions are being “approved” in the debate without (at least publicly, and not too often) alienating those who come forward. An overall agreement of what affect theory concerns/discloses is that of a self-running ahead of itself, and “acting on emotions before we recognize what they are” (Figlerowicz, 2012, p. 2). It can be easily argued that this emotional effect made #metoo reach so far, where a reaction inside one worked as the starting point of committing to the debate. We can also argue that the Brock Turner case had made this feeling start to develop. This feeling of a “something” is difficult to explain, therefore affect theory can be hard to define as well. Still, we all have felt our body make an instant reaction based on one's values and principles. *Reaction* holds many definitions. Merriam-Webster defines reaction as a “resistance or opposition to a force, influence, or movement; [*especially*] tendency toward a former and usually outmoded political or social order or policy” (n.d). Affect theory, Figlerowicz (2012) explains, is used as ground theory and to legitimise these “movements or flashes of mental and somatic activity”, which is where affect theory “founds its most robust notions of knowledge and subjecthood” (p. 4).

A reaction when reading literature is natural. If I can offer my students literature which awakens or provokes them to be curious to a piece of literature, I can build on that feeling - whatever that feeling is. All the different types of gender expected behaviour and oppression mentioned above is present in literature. I now want to analyse Susan Glaspell's short story *A Jury of Her Peers* (1917), a story of gender loyalty, domestic oppression and gender expectations to see how we can identify domestic violence in the story, how we can learn about Frye's theories (1983) on gender expectation behaviour, and to see how oppression is written about or comes

across. The main plot of the story is the investigation and conversation surrounding Mr. Wright's death, and the majority of the story takes place in Mr. and Mrs. Wright's house. Already from the first two paragraphs, both the setting and context are established. We meet Martha Hale who is the protagonist. The old sexist setting and time is also established, having Mrs. Hale following both the male sheriff and her husband's orders. Being a homemaker, Mrs. Hale worries about "her" kitchen being left as a mess (Glaspell, 1917, p. 1), but she obeys the sheriff's wish of her coming along, claiming his wife is too fragile to come without the company of another woman (Glaspell, 1917, p. 1). That she does come along could also be a sign of gender loyalty; dropping everything to accompany Mrs. Peters (Glaspell, 1917, p. 1). The fact that the sheriff says with a grin on his face that his wife is scared, points to a masculine character (gender expected) with stereotypical thoughts of a woman being fragile, and not towards an understanding husband. Mrs. Hale compared Mrs. Peters with the previous sheriff's wife, and observes that she does not seem "like a sheriff's wife" because of her not having a "strong voice" and being tiny (Glaspell, 1917, p. 1). The representation of Mrs. Peter's verbal appearance correlates with what Frye (1983) describes as gender expected; she is in the background, needing not to be "taken note of" (p. 2). However, Mrs. Hale sees Mr. Peters the opposite, as a loud, heavy, self-confident, lively man - fulfilling the stereotype of a masculine, strong, self-confident man like Solnit's self-proclaimed Mr. Important (2010, p. 1). This physical difference represents a power difference between Mr. and Mrs. Peters, the first holding the power, the latter seemingly holding none. Also Mrs. Peters' physical appearance underlines her gender expected role, not only not taking up space verbally, but not physically neither, which too correlates well with Frye's theory (1983, p. 2).

When the group's buggy pulls up to the Wright house, there is discussion amongst the men only about what had happened, indicating that a woman's opinion was not as appreciated as a man's. This correlates well with what both Frye (1983) and Solnit (2014) says about men being given credibility over women. Also in Mrs. Hale's concern for her husband's testimony, when she gets that "sinking feeling of the mother whose child is about to speak a piece", knowing her husband "often wandered along and got things mixed up" when retelling a story (Glaspell, 1917, p. 2). She worries because she knows that his words as a man will be seen as credible, which makes her worry that he will say something that will disadvantage Mrs. Wright.

It is not until now that it is revealed to us that the reason the people are at this house, is that the man of the house, Mr. Wright, is dead. We learn this as Mr. Hale starts his testimony, being

the one who discovered the death, or more precisely Mrs. Wright's odd behaviour when he came to visit. Even if Mrs. Wright shows strange behaviour, like laughing when Mr. Hale asks to see her husband and the "dull like" behaviour as if unaffected by her husband's death, and later when in holding worrying about her jars with fruit bursting in the cold, the men's constant overlooking of actions they do not associate with women actually causes them to overlook evidence of murder (Glaspell, 1917, p. 2). When asked whether there is something of importance that can point to a motive in the messy kitchen, the sheriff laughingly ("little laugh for the insignificance of kitchen things") says "nothing here but kitchen things" (Glaspell, 1917, p. 3). This overlooking of typical female objects, like kitchen supply and the canned fruit, can be said to mirror the men's attitude towards women themselves; they see women as "insignificance" (type E, figure 1). Not legitimising the things, means not legitimising their owner too. The evidences against Mrs. Wright are several - just the fact that she claims that her husband was strangled in bed whilst she slept next to him is hard to believe, but still the men are uncertain of how to deal with this information seeing as they do not associate the violent act of murder with a woman - it is not **gender expected behaviour**.

There are evidences pointing towards Mrs. Wright living as an oppressed woman. Mrs. Hale refers to the girl she used to know when they were younger as lively and talkative, but the references to a dark, dirty house, and Mrs. Wright not looking to sharp herself, points to her having changed for some reason... (Glaspell, 1917, p. 5). Mrs. Hale's observations leads to her finding sympathy for Mrs. Wright, both because she can relate to a farmer's wife's busy life and many chores, but there is also a sense of darkness surrounding this home. "It never seemed a very cheerful place", Mrs. Hale says (Glaspell, 1917, p. 4). Also, there is another situation that can point to oppression. Mr. Hale explains that Mrs. Wright started to laugh about the fact that he came to ask them to join him for paying for a telephone line, then suddenly stopping and looking "scared", or actually not scared, but somethings in the lines of scared (Glaspell, 1917, p. 3). This makes for an open interpretation, but it can be argued that the fact that she suddenly stopped might be a sign of her not behaving as she is expected to, or allowed to, then suddenly realising, thereby stopping (type G, perhaps even A if violence, figure 1).

The men go to investigate, and the sheriff says "I suppose anything Mrs. Peters does'll be all right?", meaning she will not disturb the investigation or evidence since she is an extension of him and his law-abiding mindset (Glaspell, 1917, p. 4). The county attorney allows this, and encourages Mrs. Peters to keep an eye out for evidence, that "clue to the motive" they need for

the case against Mrs. Wright (Glaspell, 1917, p. 4). Even if he here sees Mrs. Peters as one who can help, it is with doubt “no telling; you women might come upon a clue (...)” (Glaspell, 1917, p. 4). However, Mr. Hale mocks this, stripping the woman of the credibility of being able to detect such things, saying in a false polite way that “but how would the women know a clue if they did come upon it?” (Glaspell, 1917, p. 4). This coincides with the general attitude shown by the men in this story; undermining women, even their ability to see a thing and connect it with the crime, in other words undermining their intelligence. Solnit’s experience (2014) of being described things to as if she as a woman would not be able to understand such important topics can be connected with this (type D, figure 1), seeing as she too was exposed to an underestimation of her intelligence or ability to understand even the simplest connections (p. ).

The longer Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters stay in the kitchen, the more they can relate to Mrs. Wright’s situation, and their empathy for her evolves. Especially Mrs. Hale is loyal to her old friend, showing an understanding attitude towards the messy kitchen and dirty clothing. The women soon discover a bird cage that looks as if someone has ripped open its door, then the bird itself, neck twisted (Glaspell, 1917, p. 7). Here, I am hoping that someone in the classroom will detect the similarities between Mrs. Wright and the canary. The canary is a representation of what used to be, singing being associated with happiness. “She used to sing real pretty herself”, Mrs. Hale reflects when discussing her memory of Mrs. Wright as she used to know her before she married (Glaspell, 1917, p. 7). The phrase “used to” tells us that Mrs. Wright does not sing anymore just like the dead canary obviously can’t. The singing, or in other words the *happiness* is gone (Glaspell, 1917, p. 7). It is the observations of oppression that leads Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to hide the bird, seeing as it could be exactly that “clue to the motive” mentioned above, being what the men need (“that’s the thing we need”) (Glaspell, 1917, p. 4). They hinder the investigation due to sympathy for Mrs. Wright’s situation, which the ladies believe is that Mrs. Wright killed her husband because he killed her bird – her last happiness. From this story, my aim is for my students to detect the several hints that points towards an unhappy home with an oppressed wife, seeing as it is never said specifically that Mrs. Wright is oppressed by her husband.

Unlike *A Jury of Her Peers*, we also find examples of literature which leaves no doubt as to what the topic is. In the poem “Domestic Violence” (2007), we are faced with violent oppression/domestic violence (as the title obviously states) leading to death. Eavan Boland

(2007) is the author of a collection which includes this poem. She has explained in an interview that she wrote the poem in **affect** due to such topics being seen as not fitting for the category due to its lack of being “sublime”, in other words not discussing real issues that face the reader with the uncomfortable truth of (in this case) domestic violence and the consequences it can have (McKeon, 2007). She also experiences an anger towards domestic violence not being taken seriously, undermining the topic and thereby also women as “a second-class citizen” (McKeon, 2007). Recognising her anger, then acting on that anger can be connected with Ahmed’s claims (2010) of feminism occurring when trying to make “sense of how we relate to the world” (para. 1), and is also in accordance with affect theory. Also Frye (1983) sees anger as reaction of frustration, meaning we can use this poem to discuss both theorists (p. 85).

Bringing **domestic violence** or **violent oppression** forward as a topic to discuss is crucial so that people realise it is an actual problem. Her poem is clever in the way it is written, using the country’s suffering to mirror the story of a couple. Already in her first sentence, Boland (2007) uses words that are associated with unease; “It was winter, lunar, wet” (line 1), providing us with a setting. The poem follows both the suffering of Ireland (“our island”, “the Dublin hills”, line 13 and 17) and two couples, one being a married couple introduces to us in the second verse, where we find the narrative voice of the poem (“the year that we got married”, line 5). The other couple, we meet in the third verse. The first description of them tells us they argue, being observed as “and there was a couple who quarrelled into the night, / their voices high, sharp: / nothing is ever entirely / right in the lives of those who love each other.” (line 9-12). In this verse, Boland (2007) uses the narrative device stream of consciousness which allows her to both observe and reach inside the narrator’s head by the usage of the colon in the sentence. Previous to the colon, the narrator is simply observing, whilst after we are reading her thoughts about her observation. The sentence itself, “nothing is ever entirely / right in the lives of those who love each other” (line 11-12), can also be read as the narrator telling herself to not worry seeing as every couple has their quarrels, or not wanting to get involved.

Further in the poem, one can argue that Boland (2007) uses the description of a country to mirror how the arguing couple started falling apart. She writes “In that season suddenly our island / broke out its old sores for all to see. (line 13-14)”. “Old sores” can be read as bruises, most likely on the woman of the couple. Further “we saw them to”, indicating that the bruises were noticed, yet the narrator chose not to intervene. In the second stanza, verse two, Boland (2007) asks how “(...)we thought we knew / had been made to shiver” (line 19-20), pointing to

Irish landmarks as what the people are observing. Boland (2007) camouflages the broken relationship as a story of the country's brokenness, then brings it back to the people towards the end of the stanza, verse three and four, "and killings, killings, killings, / then moonlight-colored funerals: / nothing we said / not then, not later, / fathomed what it is / is wrong in the lives of those who hate each other" (line 23- 28). Here, we again see the colon and stream of consciousness the narrative voice makes between an observing role and her mind. We are also faced with another powerful rhetorical device, namely **repetition**, or epizeuxis. Examples of such technique is "particularly vehement and forceful in their repetition" (Literary Devices, Epizeuxis, n.d.). The word "killing" holds an important place in this poem in other words, which the end reveals to the reader.

Also, there is a similarity yet a massive difference in the two sentences "in the lives of those who love each other" (line 12) and "in the lives of those who hate each other" (line 28). We see here that there has been a time lapse, and the narrator has gone from thinking the couple had love for each other to recognising, and admitting to notice, the hatred. Also, the mentioning of both killing and "the moonlight-colored funerals" are strong indications that there has been a death in the quarrelling couple. Through her use of time lapse and stream of consciousness, Boland (2007) brings us from the country back to the couple at the end of the stanza, the point of departure being the end of chapter two "in the lives of those who hate each other" (line 28).

This poem shows the reader the danger in not reporting violence. It is a problem that people recognise yet fail to report their observations, and can be linked to the issue concerning credibility. Solnit (2014) gives an example of such a happening when telling the story she had been told of a woman running from her house, screaming her husband was going to kill her (more visible than in "Domestic Violence" (Boland, 2007)) (p. 6). The person telling her the story thought it was an amusing story, claiming it was made up by the "crazy" wife because her husband was a respected man, belonging to the middle-class, meaning it was not **credible** that he could kill (Solnit, 2014, p. 6). Even with a much more obvious exposure to domestic violence/violent oppression as in this case, we still see the lack of interference from those around just like in "Domestic Violence" (Boland, 2007). Both the poem and the story points to violence in the home not being taken seriously by the society around, fitting a type H oppression (figure 1).



We already see a development in the frankness in addressing issues from *A Jury of Her Peers* (Glaspell, 1917) to “Domestic Violence” (Boland, 2007). This is coherent with the societal development during this period where women are more free to speak up in the 2000s than they were in the beginning of the 1900s. There are also new genres which are even more direct that has entered the literature world. One of these genres is **slam poetry**. Slam poetry is a more raw form of performing as the word “slam” suggests. Urban Dictionary - being a less academic dictionary which mostly concerns slang and slang expressions, where readers vote forward the most fitting definition - defines slam poetry as “a type of poetry expressing a person’s personal story and/or struggle usually in an intensely emotional style. Very powerful, sincere, and moving” (Urban Dictionary, 2010), also (in a less serious way) as “the only thing known to man that makes anyone under the age of 30 like poetry”. Since the readers of U.D. are quite young, the fact that this is the second most popular definition points to young people relating well to slam poetry. Slam poetry being of an emotional character, also makes it work well within the genre of affect theory, seeing as one can feel the affect and emotion in this raw way of performing poems.

A young woman who works within this genre, and speaks up against this thought of young men being excused for their behaviour because they apparently does not know any better, and against young women being seen as the provocateur for sexual abuse, is Rhiannon McGavin (2013). Through her slam poetry, she delivers her message in a powerful way. Especially powerful is McGavin’s poem “Pavement” (2013), which concerns the behaviour a young woman can be exposed for *after* abuse, and how rapists somehow are excused for their “actions” as in the Brock Turner case. “The whole town thinks it’s her fault, that you got two years and she has a life-sentence”, McGavin (2013) says (00:01:29-00:01:36). The fact that the rapist in this poem even was convicted is unusual, seeing as only **6 out of 1000** rapes ends with the rapist being incarcerated (footnote 3). The victim in this poem has become the problem in town, coherent with Ahmed’s theory (2010), being a type B oppression; a group (the town) allowing violent oppression such as a rape (figure 1).

The phenomenon McGavin (2013) explains, is that of **victim blaming**. Victim blaming is the ideology that builds on the thought of a victim taking blame for finding herself/himself in a high-risk situation Crawford (1977). In sexual assault cases, this would show itself as people questioning the victim’s role in her/his own assault, holding also the victim as a responsible part. Typically for victims of sexual assault can be asking them what they wore or how much

they had been drinking, as that meaning an individual “somehow invited/allowed a sexual assault to happen by wearing provocative clothing or getting too intoxicated” (Good Therapy, n.d.). Questions like that are often conducted by the investigators too, pointing to a type F oppression (figure 1) as it is a oppression at the regulatory level and system wide. Also the victim in the Brock Turner case experienced this, when a female friend of Turner thought it unfair - and said it loudly - for him to get his life ruined by a “girl who doesn’t remember anything”, claiming there were differences between an “actual” rape and this “rape” because the victim could not remember (Levin, 2016). Due to her outings causing national outrage, pressure through social media and her band losing contracts however, Brock’s friend later released an apology. Yet, one can only imagine how victims of sexual assault feel when being partly blamed for the misconduct committed against them. In class, this slam poem can be very useful due to its a) raw style, relating to teenagers, b) to problematise the ideology of victim blaming c) to through including the Brock Turner case showing the students that it does actually occur in the real world, making it believable for them, and d) lead way into the discussion of how society welcomes those who speak up against sexual assault.

In “Pavement” (2013), we can lead the discussion in the classroom into the path of how society perceives a feminist, meaning we can discuss Ahmed (2010). Another story that can substantiate such discussion, is Emily Brontë’s classic *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003). *Wuthering Heights* is considered to be one of the most significant English classics (“Emily Brontë”, 2009), and is often used as part of a literary canon in the classroom. I will now analyse some parts *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003) to prove how Ahmed’s theory (2010) is found in literary representation of women, as well as point to classic oppression both in Brontë’s life and in the novel. I will also focus on the gender inequality in the story, keeping Frye (1983) in mind.

*Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003) was Brontë’s first and only novel, and was published under a male pseudonym, Ellis Bell. Brontë was one of three author sisters who first published together - all under male pseudonyms. It was not until her death that her sister decided to publish *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003) under Brontë’s real name (“Emily Brontë Biography”, 2014). Ehling (2013) brings forward an explanation for this; during the times Brontë lived and many years after, women were not allowed to earn money without being allowed so by her husband (type F oppression, figure 1). Therefore, it was common to use a male pseudonym to be able to publish (Ehling, 2013). Emily Brontë never married, meaning

there was not actually any spouse to ask permission from, meaning a male pseudonym was her only option. Even today, women still publish under a male pseudonym for different reasons - for instance due to the gender expectation for a crime writer to be a man (Ehling, 2013). Female author or not, *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003) was seen as a controversial work due to its stark description of cruelty, its critique of classes, its challenging gender expected behaviour and more (“Emily Brontë”, 2011).

If we look towards the female representation in *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Peterson 2003), perhaps the most interesting journey is those of “the Catherines”. We meet the deceased Catherine Linton, born Earnshaw, through letters, and her daughter Cathy Linton in present time. The main plot of the novel is that of love, forbidden love between social classes, and follows both the love story in the late Catherine’s life as well as her daughter Cathy’s life. There are many essays on the role of the female and feminism in Brontë’s writing, amongst them Lyn Pykett’s feminist criticism called *Changing the Names: The Two Catherines* (1989; Peterson, 2003). It concerns (as the title suggests) the two roles each Catherine holds in the story; Catherine Earnshaw/Linton and Cathy Linton/Heathcliff. Due to the name changes, which also includes a third Catherine - Catherine Heathcliff - Lynett claims it is the readers responsibility to “decipher them afresh” to explore and understand the difference between these two roles (Peterson, 2003, p. 468). It is through these “Catherines” Brontë goes against social norms and expectations and battling the **behavioural code of conduct**, raising questions around the female role in the Victorian era. She explores how Catherine Earnshaw’s life does not automatically become better from marriage - a view that in some (higher) social circles would be considered rude because it went against **gender expected** norms (considering a woman’s rank) in the 1840s when the novel was published.

When meeting Cathy, we do so in form of an alive girl, whereas we get to know her mother Catherine Earnshaw through letters. Pykett (1989; Peterson 2003) claims that Cathy goes through the same journey as her mother, a seeking with curiosities leading to self-exploring, although points out that Cathy seems to be taking the journey in reverse (Peterson, 2003, pp. 473-474). Cathy too inherits a rebellious side from her mother, which she carries with her in her personal relationships. Pykett (1989) claims that it is this rebel in her that makes her “resist mental enslavement” (Peterson, 2003, p. 474). Where Catherine in the end failed to change the will of her husband, and therefore also keeping within her expected role as the wife, Cathy on the other hand succeeds. Pykett (1989) argues that the main difference in both the women’s

stories, which are constructed around their choice between two men, is that Cathy “makes her choice sequentially” whereas Catherine’s was simultaneously (Peterson, 2003, p. 475). Further, Pykett (1989; Peterson 2003) writes that “it is perhaps Cathy, rather than Catherine, who gives Emily Brontë the opportunity of writing “the scene of choice”, in which the heroine chooses and demands her love” (p. 475; Peterson 2003). Yet, she also claims that this “choice” is only notional - existing only as an idea existing to let Brontë write “the scene of choice”. In class, we can here discuss how Brontë celebrates the female heroine and how she represents the female, seeing as there is a contradiction there. Still, it is worth pointing out that both Catherine and Cathy fight the type I and F oppression they experience (figure 1), in other words fighting against their gender expected behaviour Frye (1983) discusses.

What is interesting to note, is that the role of Catherine Heathcliff is not explored, but is left as a cliffhanger where the reader can imagine as being the way she should have gone if she followed her heart (Peterson, 2003, p. 469). It is also interesting to note that Catherine’s daughter also finds the free, childish happiness in her relationship with Linton Heathcliff. This too can be seen as social criticism towards a type F oppression (figure 1) because it also means Catherine and her socially appropriate choice of husband (Edgar) were not right for each other after all, and suggests she might be happier with Heathcliff, who was of lower social status.

Catherine does share her worries with her nanny Nelly, saying;

That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there, had not brought Heathcliff so low I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire (p. 86)

This passage illustrates Catherine’s inner battle with choosing a husband, and her reasoning for choosing Edgar too. She indirectly says she is not worth Heathcliff when saying “he’s more myself than I am”. Also, she points to the socially expected decision (type F, figure 1) of her degrading herself by “marrying down”. Catherine’s indecisiveness in choosing husband is one of the reasons why this novel was considered controversial. In Catherine’s indecisiveness, Pykett (1989) argues that her limitation to influence a man - as a woman - becomes visible, by

pointing towards Catherine's desire to assist Heathcliff through influencing her husband Edgar to help Heathcliff, which did not work (Peterson, 2003, p. 472).

Pykett (1989) argues that another role of the female (other than that of experiencing both class and gender expectations) in *Wuthering Height* is how feminine influence and power is represented, which Cathy experiences and also (ab)uses. Cathy becomes both stealthy and manipulative, and dominates her husband Hareton through sexual control and exploitation (Peterson, 2003, p. 476). Her journey takes her through experiencing the "limitations of feminine gentility" to her controlling her own life for better or worse (Peterson, 2003, p. 476). The fact that Cathy manages to break free of her gender expected behaviour is a progress for her as a woman, but it is questionable that in doing so, she turns into a manipulative dominator. Here, we can introduce Ahmed's theory (2010) of being perceived as either oppressed or a difficult person, seeing as Cathy moves from the former to the latter. This is what I want my students to detect.

In this chapter, I have explored some of the most important struggles women live through, pointing towards both theorists and actual happenings. I have discussed oppression of different types, illustrated both through literary analysis and real events. I have chosen this as a strategy because I believe in making material **relatable for my students** to secure better learning, and also with an overall aim to enlighten them about these situations, and thereby (hopefully) also teaching them to not oppress women. I introduced figure 1 to help sort the different types of oppression and also of the oppressors. What I have found is that gender based oppression is a structure that is incorporated in society on multiple levels, from daily comment based oppression from people you meet in your day-to-day life (type G-H) to systematically and institutional oppression such as that of how victims of violent oppression is met by both the systems (legal system and army authorities as examples etc; type C oppression, figure 1), by groups in society (like the town McGavin (2013) speaks of; type B oppression, figure 1), and by other individuals (type A oppression, figure 1). The reason I chose to make a framework (figure 1), is because it illustrates the two-dimensional way oppression can work, due to there being two actors in such event; the oppressed and the oppressor. I find that figure 1 is useful to structure oppression both for myself and for my students, and can help people to understand how oppression is connected in a larger structure (Frye, 1983, p. 15).



## 2. Intersectionality

Even though 2017 was the first time many of us heard of #metoo, Alyssa Milano is not the founder of the movement, but an important promoter. Tarana Burke, the founder of Just Be Inc., amongst others, a non-profit organisations working with victims of sexual harassment and assault, named her movement “Me Too” more than ten years ago (Garcia, 2017). Even if Milano can be credited for bringing the movement one step further, we can ask ourselves why people suddenly listened when a white, young Hollywood star promoted it, and not when Tarana Burke, a black woman in her forties, tried to get the same response. I will try answer this question in this chapter.

I’ve used the word *feminist* as if all women are included within that term, but there are many who argues that the feminist debate we have today is for *white* women only. Amongst them, we find Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and Audre Lorde (1981), who both advocate for feminism not belonging only to the white woman. In this chapter, I will explore Crenshaw’s theories (1989) on **intersectionality** which concerns women with several identities. Then, I will turn my focus towards Audre Lorde (1981), who through her literature (poems, speeches etc.) expresses how being a black woman makes her a victim of oppression different from what that of “regular” feminism explains. I will then research “A Rose for Emily” (1931) and “Ain’t I a Woman” (Davis, 2016) with a perspective on intersectionality to research how womanist practice can transform literary analysis.

Crenshaw (1989) has contributed to feminist theory and holds the focus of including *all* women. She is crucial in modern feminist theory. Her work with critical race studies has led to her being a developer and a number one in Critical Race Theory and **intersectionality**, which she teaches at both UCLA and Columbia School of Law along with Civil Rights studies (UCLA School of Law, n.d.). In 1989, Crenshaw published a paper where she introduces the theory of intersectionality. Merriam-Webster defines intersectionality as “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups” (Intersectionality, n.d.). This means that even if you are discriminated as a woman, for instance a **white woman** belonging to the **upper class** would not be oppressed in the same way as a **black woman** belonging to the **lower class** due to the difference in their combination of different labels in which one is oppressed by. In some way, both women will probably

experience some of the same oppression or discrimination due to the fact that they are **women**, but the black woman would also be a victim of **racism** and **classism**. Even without the social classes, the black woman will still experience discrimination both towards her sex and skin colour (type D-I, figure 1). Intersectionality explains why it is not relatable for many black women who experience other kind of discrimination when for example white Hollywood stars are the ones advocating feminism, seeing as that white star has no clue as to how it feels to be discriminated on the basis of one's skin colour. However, intersectionality and holding more identities does not have to mean being black is one of them. You can also hold the identity of a gay, white woman from a lower class; a straight, white woman from the middle class; a bisexual Hispanic from the upper class; a transgender, heterosexual person etc.; point being there are **endless** combinations.

When reading about intersectionality through Crenshaw (1989), we see that she mostly discusses race. In her paper, Crenshaw (1989) argues that there is a tendency where one cannot see gender and race as a one, but “treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories” (p. 139). This is problematic because the black woman often is the one left behind. Crenshaw (1989) points to the term “Blacks and women” as problematic, seeing as the tendency when using this term is to speak of black men and white women; not including black women in either category (p. 139). Before Crenshaw introduced her theory of intersectionality, there was a way of discussing which only could undertake one “issue” at a time. Being a black woman, that would mean having to choose between marching in the “fight for women's rights” parade or the “fight for black people's rights”, never having a “fight for black women's rights”.

Already in 1851, this issue was raised by a famous black activist called Sojourner Truth. She was a black woman born into slavery, later becoming both an abolitionist and an activist for women's rights. In 1851, she became famous for holding an improvised speech which later was given the title “Ain't I a Woman” at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851 (Sojourner Truth, Biography, n.d.). Speaking from **affect** after having been exposed for white men claiming that all women were too fragile to be involved in political activities, Truth pointed to her having had to undergo hard work as a slave side-by-side men (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 153). She repeats the now very famous phrase “Ain't I a Woman” several times in her speech, raising the issue of her being robbed of being a woman because she first and foremost is a slave. The speech was her reaction of not being included in the group “women”, and has later become a famous slogan for not only black women's rights, but the whole women's movement



(Palmer, 1983, p. 4). However, white feminists who now cherish Truth and use her slogan does so without recognising that Truth in fact was urged to keep silent by white women, who feared that Truth would ruin the debate by shifting focus from the “women’s suffrage to emancipation” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 153).

Crenshaw (1989) also problematises the role white women has played in feminist theory and for feminism, explaining how women’s rights actually can overlook black women, therefore becoming **white women’s rights**, which again can vacant the whole space in the feminist debate and thereby force black women out. She explains:

When feminist theory attempts to describe women’s experiences through analyzing patriarchy, sexuality, or separate spheres ideology, it often overlooks the role of race. Feminists thus ignore how their own race [woman] functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women. (p. 154)

It is evident that black women fight alone if we look at for example the history of women’s right to vote, where black women would face severe obstacles when trying to execute their right to vote. Seeing as the subject I will be teaching is called “English Literature **and** Culture”, this short note on historical context to illustrate the differences between oppression of black and white women is relevant in this thesis too as an example to use in class.

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (1998) has studied how different women were treated until and after the Nineteenth Amendment passed, which states that you are not allowed to deny someone their vote based on their sex (“Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution”, n.d.). Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (1998) found that as a reaction to there being more black women executing their right to vote than white women, white southerners targeted the voting process for black women (p. 153). Some of what they experienced were physical obstacles such as having to queue for twelve hours, bodily harm and bogus charges which enabled them to vote, but also non-physical presumably sudden random rules like those concerning taxes and how much property a black woman would have to earn to be allowed to vote, perform tests like reading and interpreting the Constitution etc. with the singular aim of preventing black women their Constitutional right to vote (Terborg-Penn, 1998, p. 153). Note that none of these “rules” were expected to be followed by white women, the latter often being prioritised over the black women, not having to stand in line, take the random tests etc. The fact that also some white women (those believing in white supremacy) were involved in creating obstacles for black

women to vote is coherent with Crenshaw's statement (1989) of white women in some cases working against black women (Terborg-Penn, 1998, p. 108). The Nineteenth amendment itself was passed in 1920, but the obstacles would last well into the 1960s (!), when President Johnson passed the Voting Rights Act (1965) to ensure that (black) people were able to execute their right to vote (Voting Rights Act, Our Documents, n.d.).

The fact that this Act had to be strengthened several times, the latest one in 1982, suggests there are strong forces behind trying to affect black people not to vote, and arguably still is. If women as a whole were united and supported each other, it is likely that this hindering of black women voting could have been stopped earlier. In the documents I have read surrounding the discussion of voting, white men are the protagonists, which begs the question "where were the white women?". This history shows how black women can be left alone in on the battlefield by not only other people, but by other women too. Also Sojourner Truth experienced this as she was hushed by white women not to make the meeting in 1851 a "race thing" as mentioned. This indicates that white women were afraid of losing some of their goods and/or advantages, having to sacrifice some of their privilege for the greater good of feminism, an indication Crenshaw (1989) claims still was alive in 1989 when she published (p. 154). Due to this word "woman" generally concerning white women, Crenshaw (1989) stresses that black women continue to ask "Ain't we Women [too]" when hearing generalisation about women in conversations and discussions (p. 154). I will come back to how this famous phrase can be used in the classroom to raise awareness later in this chapter.

Audre Lorde (1934-1992) advocated for focusing on women of colour's rights, and diverge herself from the term of feminist, instead defining herself as a **womanist**; womanism being defined as "a form of feminism focused especially on the conditions and concerns of black women" (Merriam-Webster, womanism, n.d.). . She was a poet and essayist who contributed to feminist work through her writing. As Crenshaw (1989) discusses, Lorde (1981) too illustrates how women are not working across race to achieve a common goal. She tells the story of being asked to downplay her anger, anger that she in **affect** has reacted with against racism (1981). As Ahmed (2010) also stresses, comments like those makes the emotional person the problem, either it is the killjoy or "the angry black woman" (para. 19). We cannot say this label is only gender expectations, but race **and** gender expectations, making it intersectional. Lorde's keynote presentation at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in 1981 addresses this misunderstanding, or misperception of black women being

angry due to anger itself, and not the reason behind the angry reaction (Lorde, 1981). She defends the right to use anger as a tool to discuss racism towards women of colour, claiming it can be “translated into action” (Lorde, 1981, para. 18). Where Ahmed (2010) identifies and problematizes that other people might perceive feminists as angry, Lorde (1981) advocates that those people should handle the “angry black women’s” anger differently, welcoming it and learning to “learn within it” and see the anger as a “source of empowerment” (para. 28). Instead of white women becoming silent when faced with or overhearing racism, Lorde (1981) wants them to act. There is no help in feeling **guilty** over women of colour’s anger or the unfair treatment they undergo, Lorde (1981) states (para. 29). Guilt is useless in the racism towards women-debate, seeing as it immobilizes and takes over the place where **action** should take place (Lorde, 1981, para. 29). In other words, the white woman complies with the oppression of the woman of colour, being silent as Frye (1983) points to (p. 2). Further, why white women chose to later “hurl” out her experience to the first woman of colour she meets - which is useless when being silent in the first place (Lorde, 1981, para. 17).

Lorde (1981) provides several examples of oppression in her speech. One is her experience in a supermarket in 1967, where a young, white girl pointed at Lorde’s daughter (who is black), and outed “Oh look, Mommy, a baby maid!” (1981, para. 11). As if the young girl’s statement was not bad enough, with its correlation back to the slave time, the white mother did not correct her daughter. This experience correlates with Crenshaw’s (1989) mentioned observations of white women not being supportive of black women, and is a type G oppression (figure 1). Lorde (1981) also experiences type E oppression (figure 1), where she explains overhearing groups of scholars in different campuses discussing how they can address racism when not having a woman of colour to teach it - as if a problem only can be discussed by those who experience racism (para. 8).

In this paragraph, I want to turn the focus towards what kind of literature I can teach my students which can represent the struggles of holding several labels. If we look towards the representation of women with several identities in literature, applying an intersectionality perspective makes for some interesting reads. Intersectionality is especially interesting when adding a feminist perspective to literature where the woman/women holds several identities. In the short story “A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner (1931), we meet Emily, an upper class white lady who experiences different treatments due to her belonging to different identities. The story is told to us from an observing perspective, and is told in past

tense. The main plot is Miss Emily's life, and how she due to her upper class privileges is "allowed" by both the authorities and the town to hide in her big house with her (later revealed to the reader) big secret. Her secret is that the man she married, and that the town people assumes ran off because of her age and family history of craziness, is lying dead in the house and has been for decades (Faulkner, 1931, p. 8). We also learn that she most likely is his killer, seeing as she bought arsenic shortly before his disappearance, and that she has lied in bed with him for all the years that followed his death (Faulkner, 1931, pp. 5, 8). The reason why she killed her husband, however, is not revealed to us, but there are several indications that her mental health, her loneliness after losing her father, combined with a desperate need to not be alone, is what makes for her actions. There is also mentioning of her husband not being "a marrying kind", and that he in fact "liked men", making the town people pity her (Faulkner, 1931, p. 5).

This short story is a classic, and it is therefore interesting to apply a contemporary theory to it. Firstly, we read Southern states, old, traditional America from the story, with its traditions ("confederate uniforms" p. 7 amongst other). We are given the setting in the first sentence, which tells us that Emily has died. The fact that the "whole town" went to her funeral provides the reader with a hint that she was an important person of some sort (Faulkner, 1931, p. 1). We are also given the information that she has a man-servant, and that the house in which they live is referred to as "her" house. This tells us that she is most likely a woman from the **upper class**, and that she has no husband, seeing as the house most certainly would belong to the man back in the 1930s. There are several indications that she belongs to the upper class during the first page, that she is to be buried "among the ranked", that she would not "have accepted charity" (being too proud), that she can call the sheriff's office "at her convenience", and that she is educated to some extent, seeing as she writes letters in a "thin, flowing calligraphy" (Faulkner, 1931, p. 1). Her coming from wealth is obvious to the reader during the first meeting with her, where she is carrying a gold chain and is "leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head (Faulkner, 1931, p. 2). However how high of a class she belongs to however, the description of the rest of her indicates an ugliness, with both her exterior (such as obesity and "fatty ridges") and her interior (her eyes being described as "two small pieces of coal", dark eyes often representing a darkness within in literature, as well as her rudeness towards visitors) being described as everything but delightful (Faulkner, 1931, p. 2). We later learn that she used to have a "slender figure", but that she starts to decay as both her father and husband leaves her life one way or the other (Faulkner, 1931, p. 4)

Emily's belonging to the upper class ensures her not being discriminated **in all areas**. She is, as mentioned, judged on her appearance by the town people, and arguably also by Faulkner (type H, figure 1). It was typical for that era that the rich would look after and take care of each other, which is also evident in the story as Emily is free from paying taxes because the major's family and her father were old friends. Emily is being done favours economically due to her class position, meaning she is **not oppressed** through her upper class identity. Still, she possesses the role of an upper class woman even when she is in fact poor. She is however pitied due to her isolating herself, her looks decaying and her house smelling. The latter being a discussion in town as a problem, her class belonging is evident yet again when a Judge is asked what they can do about the smell, and he replies by saying "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?", "lady" being the indicator of her social status, her "smelling bad" not fitting both the class and gender expectations (Faulkner, 1931, p. 3). To conclude, this short story can be used to show my students how the presumptions that follow labels can have tragic results. We can also use the story to discuss whether Emily's life would have been different, how we assume her skin colour, and if the town people would have reacted differently if she was a man.

Where "A Rose for Emily" (1931) might be a little harder to relate to for my students, we do find intersectionality and questions surrounding singular or multiple identities in more contemporary literature and contemporary forms as well. A young woman who advocates for black women and intersectionality today through the contemporary form of slam poetry, is Kai Davis. Davis (2016) wrote and performed her poem "Ain't I a woman" after experiencing being ripped of her right to hold multiple identities. With this title, she acknowledges Sojourner Truth. Both Crenshaw (1989) and Davis (2016) acknowledges Truth's speech (1851), pointing to the major impact her words both had and still has in the black womanist community.

Davis (2016) introduces herself like this:

I'm black as hell, I'm also a womanist fuck, I'm also gay as hell, y'know all things; is like multiplicities in all of its glory and that's how I feel all the time - most of the time - until some fuckshit happens, so let me tell you about this fuckshit. (00:00:23-00:00:38)

Davis (2016) explains as an intro to her performance of her poem that in a class in the subject "Black Social Political Thought", her black male professor said "the greatest like political thinkers always said "race first, gender second", to which she reacted strongly (00:01:10-00:01:17). Her professor is doing exactly what Crenshaw (1989) criticised in her theory, not allowing for a discussion which is intersectional. Davis' (2016) reaction correlates with **affect theory** in the way that her emotional reaction caused her to also react out loud, and when not being heard by either her professor or classmates, it led to her creating this poem. The response Davis (2016) got after questioning this statement, and saying one cannot suddenly put being a woman on hold, the professor replies with telling her he is wrong, and justifies his statement by telling Davis (2016) that

(...) you gotta make sure you unify, you know, we're gotta be unified, and we gotta have the same end goal. If you come in here and you a, you a feminist first, if you fight for LGBT rights first, then that means we' gonna be divided. (00:01:40-00:01:50)

After this, Davis (2016) experienced silence from the women in class "cause they're scared", yet support after class in form of supporting whispers and thumbs up. They follow their gender expected behaviour Frye (1983) discusses, not wanting to be difficult or "un-ladylike". From the men however, which made for the majority of her class, she experienced unfair treatment during class, saying they were "turning around basically spitting at me - just venom" (00:02:04-00:02:38). Davis (2016) became the problem when pointing out a problem, just like Ahmed (2010) theorizes. Further, Davis (2016) explains white feminist's lack of relating to her situation, claiming they say things like "you're a woman, I'm a woman, let's put race aside and let's fight for our own liberation" (00:03:09-00:03:16). This experience of not being allowed to be both black, a womanist and gay inspired her to write the poem.

In the poem itself, Davis (2016) raises several issues about how black women are treated. There are several references to Truth's speech (1851), for example when saying "didn't she [the white woman] sell all thirteen of my children and lynch my husband" (00:05:13-00:05:17). Truth (1851) said "I have born thirteen children, and seen most of 'em sold into slavery" (Crenshaw,

1989, p. 153), and we also know that she never saw her first love Robert again because his owner forbade it (Sojourner Truth, Biography, n.d.).

Davis (2016) addresses the issue of being both black and a woman, immediately giving her reader/listener the context of her poem. “I wake up with an apology already forming in my mouth. This is what it means to be a contradiction, too black to be a woman, and not man enough to be black” (00:03:47-00:04:00). Crenshaw’s theory correlates well with Davis’ (2016) experiences of not being included in either “black” or “woman”, as well as Truth’s (1851) experience of being too much of a slave to be a woman.

The multi-labelling not being incorporated in feminist theory, means figure 1 lacks a dimension. For it to include oppression based on both gender and race, the figure needs to be three-dimensional. Therefore, we can say that figure 1 fits within feminism, but not that well with womanism. However, we see a red thread from Truth (1851) all the way to Davis (2016) in their main argumentation. This indicates that there has been little change in welcoming the debate on oppression based on both gender and race during this time.

### 3. End discussion

We can all agree that cases like those mentioned are tragic and ought never to happen again. The *reaction* we have, like previously mentioned, tells us that this is wrong. As is the case with many of situations we hear about in the #metoo campaign. Based on this, one thinks that women speaking up in general and about gender related problems, uncomfortable situations being brought to light, and feminism in general should be a welcomed topic. But still, we have learnt that feminists and their thoughts are often not welcomed with the engagement and credit for having the guts to bring up issues that they deserve. Women experience that they are placed in one of two categories - the victim or the killjoy. This is where many women feel trapped in a standstill, where you are “damned if we do, damned if you don’t” as the expression goes. Feminists seem to not only be placed in categories that does not exactly radiate positivity, like “the killjoy”, but are also robbed of roles that are positive, for instance the role of a happy person alongside being a feminist.

We also have learnt that women may face a type of oppression even when facing the legal system. Blaming women for not speaking up and/or reporting sexual harassment or rape is problematic for several reasons: a) only one out of three sexual assaults are reported<sup>1</sup>, b) women risk being met with victim blaming when reporting sexual harassment of any kind, c) up to 75% of women experience retaliation when speaking up against sexual harassment of any kind in the workplace (Feldblum & Lipnic, 2016), d) even when a case concerning a **rape** goes to the justice system, only **6 out of 1000** rapes ends with the rapist being incarcerated<sup>2</sup>. As a result of a, b, c and d, we do not know how many women who does not dear to report either due to them not believing it will lead anywhere or in fear of suffering negative consequences. This provides us with unclear statistics; for example in the workplace situation, EEOC estimates that anywhere from 25% to 85% has experienced sexual harassment. The reason I bring this up in a literature and teaching thesis, is because these numbers are frightening to read, yet important to provide for my students so that they **fully understand** that speaking up against oppression is a complicated case, and that there are strong forces working against feminism. I also want to (in coherence with Frye (1983)) provide them with the full picture so that they can

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014 (2015)

<sup>2</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012-2014 (2015)



become able to recognise that female oppression is systematically occurring, and thereby understanding it and taking it seriously.

I have shown that identifying social structural issues like these can be done through literature. Seeing as my overall responsibility towards my students - in accordance with the General Part of the Core Curriculum in which we base our teaching on - is to promote equality and educate good citizens, I have to be creative when working within my frame which is the subject “English Literature and Culture”. This is why this thesis diverge from a “typical” literature thesis; I chose a dual focus based on the literature subject I will be teaching (English Literature and Culture) and literature, not a pure literature thesis.

Seeing as the world is becoming more multicultural, I too have to take this into consideration when teaching, seeing as will be teaching students with different backgrounds - both regarding gender, race, sexuality, cultural background etc. Therefore, it is important for this thesis to include both Crenshaw’s theory (1989) on intersectionality and also Lorde’s theory (1981) to help me as a white woman to understand how others who hold different identities than myself experience different types of oppression than I do. In class, Crenshaw (1989) and Lorde’s work (1981) can help raise awareness about the challenges people meet when feeling labelled as only a part of their identity.

## Appendix: teaching statement

Working with the Core Curriculum that is decided in Norway, is in some ways a grateful task due to its focus on human equality, human rights, and respect for other cultures. Throughout the core curriculum, these topics are mentioned several times, indicating its level of importance to be high. In the chapter Christian & Humanistic Values, the curriculum stresses the importance of these topics in relation to the human's ability to create *social progress*, indicating they value the topics as one of the main pillars in which the curriculum is built around (General Part, Core Curriculum). Fighting inequality and creating awareness about inequality certainly fits within this part of the curriculum, and provides me with the opportunity to raise awareness around that through literature.

What I have come to discover from my own observations as both a teacher and a student, is that the work of feminists and the topic of feminism and womanism itself does *not* have a crucial impact on literature and literary studies until you reach university level. In fact, there is doubtful that I would ever had met the field which is feminist theory within literature, had it not been for the focus of one contemporary professor. I find this strange, because there are so many issues one can enlighten through literature, yet one issue that concerns the majority of the world's population does not seem to have the presence it arguably should in our traditional way of teaching the English subject. If we turn to the learning/competence aims for English in-depth-studies, which "English Literature and Culture" is over the course of two years in high school, **not one point** regarding *the female* is present. But, there are mentions of equality throughout the Core Curriculum, already § 2 stating that "upper secondary education shall promote human equality and equal rights, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international co-responsibility" (General Part, Core Curriculum). The competence aims which could be suitable for teaching about the female role are quite vague, which gives me as a teacher the freedom to choose a feminist perspective. There are specifically two competence aims in the subject English literature and culture we can work within here;

- interpret literary texts and other cultural expressions from a cultural-historical and social perspective
- interpret a representative selection of texts from literary-historical periods in English literature, from the Renaissance up to the present time

(Directorate of Education, n.d.)

Now, if we apply this mentioned interpretation to a literary work, as well as a feminist perspective, we find place for discussing the representation of the female in literature.

In literature, we can find opportunity to incorporate important life skills such as those concerning how we treat each other. Often, a student will respond better to “discovering” these unfair treatments themselves rather than being told “do this, don’t do that”. Here, a teacher can influence young minds in a more stealthy way, avoiding the ever so feared parent kind of talking with students, which tends to make them less accommodating (Birketveit & Williams, 2017). Literature is perfect for the student to discover on their own. Studies show that students (actually all humans of all ages) are programmed to listen to stories as well, which means that I can perform novels and/or short stories and be likely to succeed with that as one of the strategies to teach my students literature (Lund, 2011, p. 117). In history didactics, the narrative storytelling is experiencing a comeback, and several didactic theorists are pointing to its several advantages, amongst them not being either age or level of grade dependent. Lund (2011) discusses how by telling a story about either an historical person or an everyday person can be used as a powerful tool to create both empathy and understanding for the listener, and that story-telling touches the human need and nature for curiosity (pp. 115, 117, 144).

It is easy to agree with Myklevold (2014, p. 180) who states that “literature may serve as a great source of inspiration, imagination, linguistic awareness and insight into one's own and others cultures and values”. In this thesis, I have tried to show just this, by applying different kinds of literature as sources to inspire my students.

By doing that, I am aiming to keep the openness and conversations surrounding feminism and equality alive in the classroom, and influence both the young women and men in my classroom to make good life choices for themselves and the society around them. As a teacher, both subject and an attitude to help young students become good members of society is a massive part of the job. Both these parts are compulsory by law in the Norwegian Education Act, the latter in the Core Curriculum (Directorate of Education, n.d.). In some cases, one is lucky enough to be able to incorporate these parts. As an English teacher, I have the advantage of being able to shine a light on different topics through literature to give the students a set of “tools” they are better having when meeting the adult world.

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