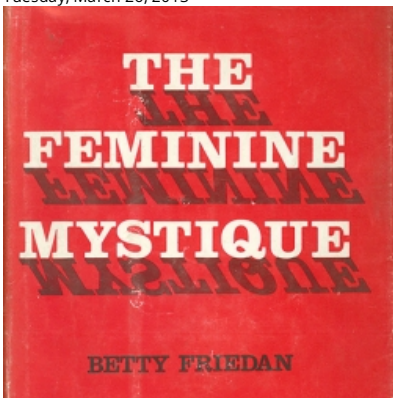




## ONE ACTIVIST TO ANOTHER: ALICE PAUL READS THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE

Tuesday, March 26, 2013

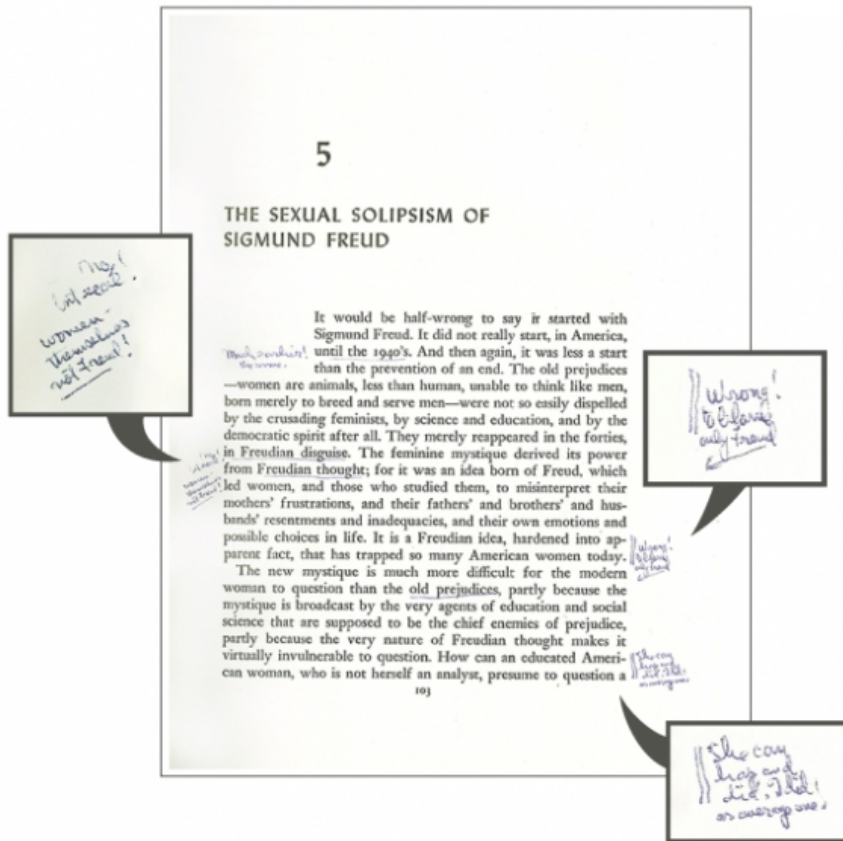


Last month we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. In addition to [Friedan's papers](#), which include her research notes and handwritten drafts of *The Feminine Mystique*, the Schlesinger Library owns several editions of this groundbreaking title. Among the most interesting is a copy of the 1963 edition formerly owned by the women's rights activist Alice Paul (1885–1977).

Quaker, lawyer, founder of the National Woman's Party, and author of the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, Alice Paul worked for American women's suffrage and for equal rights for women around the world. In 1987, the Alice Paul Centennial Foundation purchased [Alice Paul's papers](#) for the Schlesinger Library

from her nephew's estate. The papers contained several books, including [Paul's heavily annotated copy of \*The Feminine Mystique\*](#).

At times, Paul wrote notes critical of Friedan's views. For example, at the start of Chapter 5 (page 103 in Paul's copy), "The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud":



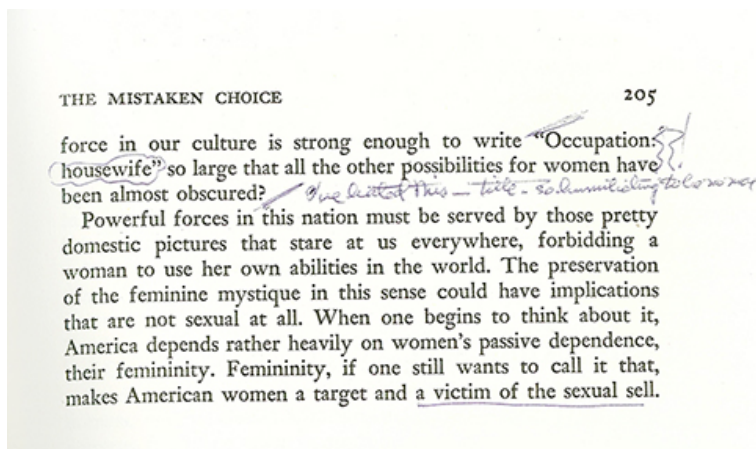
- **Betty Friedan (BF):** It would be half-wrong to say it started with Sigmund Freud. It did not really start, in America, until the 1940s
- **Alice Paul (AP):** Much earlier! The same.
- **BF:** The old prejudices . . . were not so easily dispelled by the crusading feminists, by science and education, and by the democratic spirit after all. They merely reappeared in the forties, in Freudian disguise.
- **AP:** No! but real.
- **BF:** The feminine mystique derived its power from Freudian thought...
- **AP:** Women-themselves, not Freud!
- **BF:** It is a Freudian idea, hardened into apparent fact, that has

page 103 from Alice Paul's copy of *The Feminine Mystique* (click for a larger view)

trapped so many American women today.

- **AP:** Wrong! to blame only Freud.
- **BF:** How can an educated American woman, who is not herself an analyst, presume to question a Freudian truth?
- **AP:** She can, has, and did. I did, as average one!

Elsewhere, Paul notes her agreement with Friedan's views, sometimes with a one-word comment ("Righto!"), a single exclamation point, or a star. In chapter 8, Friedan asks: "What force in our culture is strong enough to write 'Occupation: housewife' so large that all the other possibilities for women have been almost obscured?" Paul marks this sentence, circles the word "housewife" and includes an exclamation point along with a note: "I've hated this—title—so humiliating to women."



This conversation throughout the volume between reader and author gives insight into how *The Feminine Mystique* spoke to so many. The notes and markings in an individual copy provide a unique record of a reader's experience. Taken as a group, annotated volumes in a collection such as the Harvard libraries' become rich evidence that can be used to construct multiple histories.



Alice Paul, ca. 1963 (detail of MC399-50-2)



Betty Friedan, ca. 1965 (MC575-6-5)

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Alice Paul's autograph on her copy of *The Feminine Mystique*