Feminism: Act Four

Feminism – in general, looks at how women are portrayed, in mainly “male-dominated” texts, that are, mainly, written by men; as a Literary Theory, it is usually connected to other studies:

- New Historicism & Feminism: role of women in Elizabethan & Jacobean times: forced to act in accordance with others’ wishes (father or husband), submissive, uneducated, most often unable to express opinions. Shakespeare “subverts” norm; for example, Lady Macbeth (in addition, roles were played on stage by men.)

- Psychoanalysis & Feminism: effects of empowering women, ex. Lady Macbeth and witches affect Macbeth’s state of mind: questions his manhood, questions yet bolsters his courage, inverts the traditional masculine & feminine roles

- Deconstruction & Feminism: typical “roles” and definitions of female characteristics are subverted/deconstructed; ex. Lady Macbeth’s character is not “too weak” to hear news of Duncan’s death… she planned it.

- Dialectic & Feminism: (dichotomy – opposite), feminine dichotomy/opposite: women are viewed as either “Mary” (mother, lacking in sin, lacking in power, held apart, on a pedestal, isolated, religious, holy… Lady Macduff); or “Eve” (introduces sin into the world, cause of Fall, negative, evil, associated with Satan, luring, temptress… Lady Macbeth & witches)

- Cultural Materialism & Feminism: study a group of people who are “outcasts”/outside power hierarchy (materialism = value, hierarchy), ex. the witches, and women – these “outcasts” subvert the power structure because they have a great deal of power