

Fanny Fern and Marie Catherine Ochs, Bunnies by Any Other Name: Feminist Ideologies Through Pseudonyms

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Abstract: *A Bunny's Tale* tells the story of freelance writer Gloria Steinem's journey as she discovered the dark underbelly of New York's Playboy Club. Steinem's ideas of uncovering women's issues did not begin with her undercover research or the other 1960s feminists. In the 19th century, Sara Willis Parton became well known for her pseudonym Fanny Fern, which she used to publish articles concerning different struggles featured in the daily lives of women. The act of assuming a *nom de plume* in order to publish has become somewhat of a common practice. However, in the 1800s it was a different society, and women like Parton did what they had to in order to survive, even if it meant being known as someone else. Other than Parton's Fanny Fern and Steinem's Marie Catherine Ochs, many other female writers have taken up their own pennames. These pseudonyms helped to shape them into the women that history reflects them as. Without Fanny Fern, Parton would have more than likely not survived, and her ideals concerning women would have never come to light. Without Marie, Steinem would have continued to write as a journalist, but she would have never seen how far women can sink without even realizing, and her work as a feminist would have never touched the lives of those who continue to look up to her. These two very different women had one thing in mind: the success of women. The final line in *A Bunny's Tale* sums up Steinem's philosophy and puts a modern spin on Fanny Fern's ideology: "...what I gained was far more important: my own voice as a writer, a subject that needed writing about—women's lives, and the knowledge that all women are bunnies. But it doesn't have to be that way." In a world that claims to value stories for their ability to draw attention, both Parton and Steinem used pseudonyms to disguise

themselves while bringing awareness to the side of womanhood that society generally overlooked.

Keywords: *Pseudonyms in Women's Journalism; Fanny Fern (Sara Parton); Gloria Steinem; Feminist Writing Strategies; Social Criticism.*

Pseudonyms provide writers with a tool that can grant protection, freedom, or even inspiration for the writer. Newspapers and magazines published, and continue to publish, stories that catch people's attention in order to attract customers, and informing readers remains a secondary goal. However, reporters themselves contribute to the success or failure of their stories depending on the names they use, due to biases and politics of the time. In the 1800s, misogynistic critics rarely embraced female writers. Many female journalists and authors began implementing *noms de plume*. The meaning behind these pseudonyms highlighted what the person behind that name valued and also the importance of women's rights. In nineteenth-century newspapers, a social taboo persisted in journalism: a woman's name must never appear in print (Gottlieb 601). Using a pen name instead of a real name gave an author a measure of privacy and freedom while writing stories. Sara Payson Willis Parton began publishing articles in 1851 under the *nom de plume* Fanny Fern. For Sara Parton, "Fanny Fern" gave her an outlet to explore the world of journalism and authorship, and she suffered heavy criticism from society in doing so. Critics believed female writers were not suited to speak about politics, so the subjects that female authors often discussed revolved around the home (Wood 6). Sara Parton ultimately rejected topic regulation and focused much of her writing on social justice issues surrounding poverty, divorce, and the discrimination of women.

Carrying on Parton's legacy a century later, Gloria Steinem created an alternative identity for her undercover work as a journalist. "Marie Catherine Ochs" allowed Steinem to mask her identity when she discovered the foundation of what ended up being the most significant part of her career: feminism. Marie Ochs presented an opportunity for Steinem to gain acceptance in a small area of society otherwise

unknown to her. Steinem claimed that *Pygmalion* gave her the idea for this reversed transformation from upper-class journalist to lower-class waitress (Steinem 103). In an interview with Minnesota Public Radio, Steinem said that she took the assignment as a lark, but she soon became invested in the lives of the women in the club¹. Those women believed that working at a Playboy Club would lead to a better future, a “glamorous, well-paying job, which of course, it wasn’t”. By creating a secret identity, Steinem thought this assignment would be revolutionary for not only herself but those who would read it. The 1985 film *A Bunny’s Tale* further immortalized Steinem’s journey in a similar way that *Ruth Hall* did for Sara Parton.

Both Sara Parton and Gloria Steinem focused much of their research, writing, and discussions on the everyday injustices of working-class women. Between Parton and Steinem, a century passed; however, the issues discussed in Fanny Fern articles did not completely disappear from the notice of Marie Ochs in the Playboy Club. The discrimination, difficulties, and danger of a woman working as a Playboy bunny echoed and magnified the same elements of womanhood throughout the United States in the 1960s. However, these issues did not begin in the 1960s, nor did women initially write about them in the 1900s. Female writers a hundred years earlier wrote about the same or similar problems, just in different areas of society. Both of these female journalists simply focused on different groups of working women a hundred years apart. In fact, in a review of Parton’s novel, *Ruth Hall*, the *Times* questioned, “[H]ow could a *woman* write such a book” (“Introduction” ix). Gloria Steinem witnessed similar injustices while undercover at the Playboy Club, and they weighed heavily on her. Steinem found that she began to think of the other Playboy bunnies even when she was away from the club, and, in the film, her character poignantly said, “I used to think about writing a novel, and now all I think about are my feet. And the women at the club. God, they work so hard. I think about them” (*A Bunny’s Tale*). Women in both

¹ “For feminist Gloria Steinem, the fight continues.” MPR News, 12 June 2009, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2009/06/15/midmorning1>

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries experienced discrimination and unfair expectations, and while society evolved between the lives of Parton and Steinem, the struggles did not simply disappear. More updated expectations replaced them. As society and technology evolved, so did discrimination. Publishing articles about these discriminatory expectations proved one of the most effective ways to affect change in American society. Both Sara Parton and Gloria Steinem used pseudonyms to explore the elements of womanhood that society tended to overlook and brought that awareness to the public in order to enact change through their work in the male-dominated literary and journalistic spaces, even though working with pseudonyms functioned differently for both women.

For female journalists, the struggle to educate and inform the public about the various aspects of the world around them proved a difficult task, especially because patriarchal society did not want to see or acknowledge these struggles. A *nom de plume* allowed Parton to create space within journalism that typically ignored women or rejected injustices done to women due to misogynistic ideologies. With the disparagement Parton received, she used the inspiration she gained from those criticisms for other articles such as “Male Criticism on Ladies’ Books.” Parton frequently commented on the critiques of male critics: “Whether ladies can write novels or not, is a question I do not intend to discuss; but that some of them have no difficulty in finding either publishers or readers is a matter of history” (“Male Criticism on Ladies’ Novels”). Historically, women struggled to find traction in publishing; however, some female authors found great success, often using pseudonyms or pen names to counteract misogynistic practices. Unlike Parton’s Fanny Fern, Steinem’s Marie Ochs allowed her to act differently than she normally would have while uncovering her story. Where Fanny Fern was a *nom de plume*, but Marie Ochs was a secret identity. Without the use of her false name, Steinem would not have been able to achieve that level of access within the complex and dramatic society of gentlemen’s leisure clubs such as the Playboy Club. Sara Parton’s pen name allowed her to create

a space for women to be accepted as journalists in the future. Fanny Fern appeared in print for the first time in 1851, and readers clamored to know her real identity (“Introduction” x). Many believed that Fanny Fern was a *nom de plume* for a male writer due to the indelicate topics covered in her pieces. At the beginning of women’s journalism, asterisks signified which articles had a female author, and Parton’s work established Fanny Fern as one of the first female names in print (Gottlieb 601). Parton chose the name Fanny Fern for its obvious feminine aspect and its imagery of plants or flowers. Most often, when women used pseudonyms for writing, they took male names, like George Eliot or Vernon Lee. Having a male name allowed for more freedom in publication and writing topics. However, Parton deliberately chose a female pseudonym in order to highlight the necessity for women to write about the world around them. Steinem wrote about her experiences in *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, a collection of essays. She explained her choice of pseudonym: “I’ve decided to call myself Marie Catherine Ochs. It is, may my ancestors forgive me, a family name. I have some claim to it, and I’m well versed in its European origins. Besides, it sounds much too square to be phony” (Steinem 97).

Sara Parton struggled to find success as a journalist, and her *nom de plume* helped create a space for her work. Her first true attempt to become a paid journalist ended in perceived betrayal. Parton sent several articles to the New York *Home Journal*, the journal edited by her brother N. P. Willis; however, he refused to help her and claimed she had shamed him with her vulgar and indecent topics (“Introduction” xiv). Despite this betrayal, Parton refused to surrender her dream of being a journalist. She began to write several articles each week for the publications *Olive Branch* and *True Flag*. Many other magazines and newspapers pirated her work to reprint for themselves, and *Home Journal* was one of them. Parton’s articles inspired a following, including another editor for *Home Journal*, James Parton, who would eventually become Sara Parton’s third husband. According to Joyce W. Warren, Parton’s increasing popularity led to her becoming “the first...columnist in the twentieth-

century sense of the word: a professional journalist paid a salary to write a regular column expressing the author's opinions on social and political issues" ("Introduction" xv). Before Parton, a few women worked as correspondents or editors; however, journalism remained mostly closed off for female writers until Parton broke through that barrier. Parton used her false name to achieve success as a writer, and even though she did write novels, her primary area of success was as a journalist. Without a pen name, Sara Parton could not have published her work since her entire family, who owned a magazine and proved successful journalists, constantly rejected her work. Parton's contributions under the name Fanny Fern highlighted the need for answers to social issues that did not come from an organized movement. She wrote about poverty, divorce, labor, and prostitution.

Marie Ochs as a pseudonym acted as a mask for Gloria Steinem and allowed her to find her breakout story. Similar to the discrimination that Parton faced in the 1800s, Steinem also had trouble finding work as a journalist: "The cultural upheaval in the United States in the 1960s was slow to benefit female journalists, who were often limited to jobs writing for women's sections in newspapers and women's magazines or told they could not be hired for gender-related reasons, such as the possibility that they would have a baby" (Phillips 78). Steinem spent several years in search of work as a journalist, and she did not receive her "first serious assignment" (81) until 1962 where she covered the impact of birth control on the daily lives of women for *Esquire*. She then moved to work for *Show*, an arts and culture magazine, and that publication led to the Playboy Club article "A Bunny's Tale." According to Lisa Phillips, "Steinem produced groundbreaking journalism on the working conditions of servers at New York's Playboy Club" (78). A pseudonym provided Steinem with an entry into the heavily guarded Playboy Club. Supervisors and even other employees working undercover surveilled the bunny servers, hoping to exploit or control them in ways considered inappropriate by those outside the club. Steinem

used her experience as Marie to focus her journalistic endeavors moving forward, including founding *Ms. Magazine*.

Once they found their place as journalists, both Sara Parton and Gloria Steinem experienced discrimination and injustice from which their pseudonyms only partially protected them. A pseudonym provided protection for a brief time from those who criticized Sara Parton's opinions on her male-dominated surroundings. In the 1800s, the preset standards of women's literature strictly guided what women should write about and even why they should write (Wood 4). Parton challenged those preconceptions with not only her articles but also her novel *Ruth Hall*, "because it was largely autobiographical, and Fern, believing her incognito to be safe, had mercilessly portrayed the unkind treatment she had received at the hands of her father, brother, and in-laws" ("Fanny Fern" 212). Essentially, Parton believed that women should be able to pursue a writing career if they wanted, and the terrible treatment of her family nearly prevented her from achieving that goal, so in her writings as Fanny Fern, she presented an undoctored view of the challenges she faced at the hands of her family. The use of a penname for Parton gave her the ability to hide her identity to save her private life and the reputation of her daughters, as well as to declare herself a woman and that women could also be educated and publish articles just as well as men. Steinem's contribution to feminism produced criticism after her undercover assignment ended, but using a false name during the assignment helped protect her from remaining in that life. Her assignment preceded a court case unrelated to her experience, except that it happened at a Playboy Club: "[A] Playboy Club lawyer had spent cross examination time trying to demonstrate that I was a liar and a female of low moral character" (Steinem 174). Steinem found that using a false name only protected her as long as she actively used the name. The moment she published her story under her real name, that protection disappeared. For a time after acting as Marie Ochs, Steinem believed the entire experience to be a mistake; however, "[i]t was only later that she understood the usefulness of the ruse to allow her to expose Playboy's 'phony glamour and

exploitative employment policies” (128-129). Steinem used her Marie Ochs experience to connect to working women across the country, and they shared their own experiences of discrimination and abuse.

By hiding their identities, Parton and Steinem both gathered experience and presented in writing the everyday injustices that women face. In *Ruth Hall*, Sara Parton, as Fanny Fern, heavily drew inspiration from her own life, including the poor treatment at the hands of her family, the deaths of her first daughter and later her husband, and the desperation of barely surviving in poor boarding houses on nothing but bread. In her articles, Parton focused on the injustices of working women, and believed women should have access to their own independence: "She had seen too many people—particularly working women—struggling against impossible odds. She felt a kinship with suffering humanity and believed that society had a responsibility to help 'life's unfortunates'" ("Introduction" xxi). Gloria Steinem's approach to covering similar injustices was to create a secret identity. She used that identity to work undercover at a Playboy Club in order to gain insight and experience. Her experience at the Playboy Club revealed the struggles of the women working not only at that club but in similar positions around the country. Despite the expectations of social change, the "social revolution that engulfed the 1960s had yet to trickle down to women" (Kroeger and Hamill 129). Both women wrote about how society discriminated against women. Parton, in both *Ruth Hall* and her journalistic pieces, "describes how women are deprived of the dignity, respect, and treatment they deserve in the male-controlled society and inclines to transform this reality" (Mahmoud et al. 1358), and Steinem "has spent the last five decades on the road, lecturing and organizing around issues of equality" (Duncan 193).

Using alternate names allowed both women to avoid internalizing every injustice. In *Ruth Hall*, Parton described the circumstances that led her to want to become a successful writer; her previous experience while in boarding school gave her the idea. And when her brother rejected her articles, she became overcome with

outrage: “[I] shall soon be heard of... sooner than he dreams of, too. I can do it, I feel it, I will do it, but there will be a desperate struggle first...Pride must sleep! but...it shall be done. They shall be proud of their mother” (*Ruth Hall* 116). Her pride, as well as her belief in her own success, drove her to continue to search for a job at a newspaper or magazine. The struggle of female authors to find a writing job and succeed in that job exemplified the larger struggle of women attempting to find achievement in traditionally male roles. Even with a history of women writing poetry and novels, journalists and their companies continuously refused to allow women to write articles during the 1800s. Parton’s struggles, immortalized in her writing, provided women with an example of female success in a patriarchal society; however, that success did come with great hardship and grief. Steinem encountered many obstacles in her search for her story; for instance, *A Bunny’s Tale* presented arguments between Steinem and her boyfriend, where they frequently argued about the undercover work to write the article. They also argued about their respective jobs, including which one held more significance: his job as a playwright or Steinem’s job as an undercover journalist (*A Bunny’s Tale*). Steinem’s undercover work found women at their most insecure and most used, a part of the world that society never sees. In *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, Steinem remarked that the bunny costume paired with the treatment from club members made her feel like “a nonperson in a Bunny suit” (138). Not only did Playboy bunnies work as waitresses, cigarette girls, and various other roles that essentially provided club members a pretty girl to look at, but their bosses also required them to complete a full gynecological exam from a doctor’s hotel room, and the bunnies worked and moved under complete surveillance from a big-brother type figure that heavily criticized their appearance and demeanor. Both Parton and Steinem used their pseudonyms to inspire them to continue fighting against the injustices they experienced.

Success for both Parton and Steinem came in different packages; however, both women inspired feminist change through their use of alternative names. Parton’s

pseudonym allowed her to view her negative criticism without internalizing that feedback. Instead, she used the negativity to further fuel her writings. By the time Steinem became a journalist herself, she expanded on that space to fight to ensure society treated women fairly in all walks of life. Pseudonyms created a barrier of protection for the criticism these women faced, which led to the growing popularity and success of their feminist ideas.

The injustices and hatred of her family nearly destroyed Sara Parton's life and the lives of her daughters because, as a woman, Parton had limited options to provide necessities for her children or even thrive in the 1800s. However, most women writers wrote novels and did not pursue a career in journalism, so Parton's contribution to women's rights created space for women that future journalists, like Gloria Steinem, took advantage of. According to Joyce W. Warren, "Until recently, twentieth-century critics had equated 'popular woman writer' with 'sentimental nonentity,' and—without reading her work—had dismissed to popular Fanny Fern as the 'grandmother of all sob sisters'" (214). Out of the pool of women's literature, society still expected women to be soft and "vivid and accurate" (Wallace 204), and Parton attempted to break out of that preconception; contemporary critics of the time considered customary women's literature "trash" (Wallace 205). Many critics found *Ruth Hall* unworthy of praise. One reviewer from *Putnum* claimed that the novel full of "unfemininely, bitter wrath and spite," and another reviewer said she "demeaned herself as no right-minded woman should have done, and [as] no sensitive woman could have done" (Wood 3).

Steinem's secret identity of Marie Ochs provided a way to anonymously gain access to a heavily monitored misogynistic space, protecting her own life at the same time. But that access came at a price. Many bunnies frequently dealt with "sexual demands" (Steinem 177) and threats to their lives if they tried to stand up for themselves. Steinem herself experienced many threats after she revealed herself. She discovered that not only had the people in charge taught the women at the club to criticize their own bodies, but women also had so many restrictions on their income

that many of them turned to theft (Steinem 126) or prostitution with other employees or patrons (Steinem 166). These obstacles that Parton and Steinem faced highlight the inequality within the workforce, as society frequently degraded women for trying to elevate themselves or simply survive. However, because of that time spent as Marie Ochs, Steinem earned the confidence of the women in the clubs around the country. She created a temporary persona that provided a safe haven for women to share continuing criticism they received while working as a Playboy bunny. One former bunny told Steinem that she had been threatened to have acid thrown in her face if she continued to complain about sexual abuse (Steinem 177), which highlighted the prevalence of sexual abuse experienced by the women. Steinem's notes of her time as a bunny did not include any mentions of speaking with police, so it seemed like any complaints were only shared within the club itself with little to no oversight or protection.

The legacy of Sara Parton using the name Fanny Fern provided an opportunity for experimental writing that critics often denied women. In fact, “[t]he majority of [Fanny Fern’s] writings...were sharp, satirical, even outrageous. She was one of the few women writers to give free rein to a delightfully witty sense of humor. Male and female critics of the day criticized Fern’s lack of ‘delicacy,’ but her sentimental writings were seen as a redeeming grace” (214). Essentially, having a female pen name created a space for women writers that publishing lacked at the time. Parton explored not only controversial topics but tone and language as well. Parton received a lot of attention, and while positive reviews from established authors or critics were few and far between, writer Nathaniel Hawthorne held her work in high regard (Wallace 203). Ann D. Wood’s “The ‘Scribbling Women’ and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote” explores the reception that Fanny Fern received from Hawthorne, “[He] penned a protest...against the ‘mob of scribbling women’ who were, in his opinion, capturing and corrupting the literary market” (Wood 3). Wood reports that Hawthorne made an exception to his critique of women writers for Parton, and his comment about her

praised her, “The woman writes as if the devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading” (Wood 3). Many readers echoed Hawthorne’s surprising praise, and Parton’s popularity soared, leading to a future of female journalists.

Steinem absorbed the negative experiences of her undercover work without injuring herself with the use of her pseudonym, leading to a surge of popularity for feminist ideas. As a journalist in 1963, Steinem had just barely begun to gain respect as a writer; however, after the Playboy piece, she began to lose assignments: “I was supposed to’ve [done] something about the USIA (United States Information Agency)...and the kind of assignments I got were to, you know, pretend to be a hooker” (“For Feminist Gloria Steinem, the Fight Continues”). Steinem commented in an interview that “[Bunnies] were much more likely to get an advance if you were willing to go out with the guy who distributed liquor...you just saw the profoundly different circumstance from the glamorous one that was presented. I felt that it was funny...and I came out feeling unified with the women who worked there. So that in itself was a feminist experience, so now I accept [the undercover experience]” (“For Feminist Gloria Steinem, the Fight Continues”). Customers, supervisors, bosses, and vendors treated the women working in the Playboy Club so poorly that many of them did not even recognize their own objectification or see the discrimination that they faced. Steinem's choice to write her piece inspired some revisions to Playboy's policies and internal knowledge about how the clubs operated prevented more clubs from opening. Years after writing her piece, Steinem's story continued to attract women who wanted to share similar experiences. The film *A Bunny's Tale* provided another source for Steinem’s story to reach women: “Thanks to the [film], I also began to take pleasure in the connections it made with women who might not have picked up a feminist book or magazine, but who responded to the rare sight of realistic working conditions and a group of women who supported each other” (Steinem 178). Being able to connect to women and inspire change and advancement became Steinem’s legacy.

Both Parton and Steinem sought to create or expand on the space for women to achieve acceptance and reject discrimination. Parton used her pen name to achieve that space for women writers, and Steinem continued that fight as a journalist when she used her own pseudonym to make space for feminist ideals. In the eyes of the public readers, Fanny Fern was a hit. Her popularity continued to rise, and she, in turn, continued to write. Despite having some negative results, especially in terms of assignments succeeding the Playboy Club, Steinem proved popular and life-changing for many women. The reactions to both Parton's works and the article that Gloria Steinem wrote remained both powerful and very similar. Parton, already popular for her articles dealing with the issues women face in their daily lives, wrote in her preface to *Ruth Hall* “[I] have entered unceremoniously and unannounced, into people’s houses, without stopping to ring the bell” (*Ruth Hall* 3); her goal, through her novel, exemplified how very low a woman can fall through no fault of her own, and how that woman can save herself and not rely on a man’s help. She used the novel to declare vengeance on her brother and other family members who abandoned her, destitute, while trying also to raise her two daughters (Wallace 205). In “The ‘Scribbling Women’ and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote,” women’s literature takes center stage in the article, “There was clearly a conventional set of preconceptions as to why women should write and what kind of literature they could write which...Fanny Fern challenged and even attacked in her novel about a woman writer” (Wood 4). Wood states that *Ruth Hall* was a “test case, questioning the validity and value of genteel tradition” (4). Parton hosted interviews with herself and said, “When we take up a woman’s book, we expect to find gentleness, timidity, and the lovely reliance on the patronage of... [the male] sex which constitutes a woman’s greatest charm—we do not desire to see a woman wielding the...blade of sarcasm” (5). Similarly, Gloria Steinem claimed her undercover work remains successful: “My exposé of working in a Playboy Club has outlived all the Playboy Clubs, both here and abroad” (Kroeger and Hamill 129). In ways that Steinem did not initially perceive, her work highlighted

many injustices acted upon working women; however, her short time acting as Marie Ochs yielded many positive results. According to “The Color Factor,” “The [*Show*] magazine is long forgotten but not that story; it lives on among the most amusing and talked about of undercover exploits. It was instrumental in stopping Hugh Hefner’s clubs from giving physical examinations to applicants. It also made Steinem a celebrity” (Kroeger and Hamill 128). Steinem went on to lead many feminist charges, including founding the National Women’s Political Caucus and the Women’s Action Alliance. Gloria Steinem’s success as an undercover Playboy bunny forecasted her success as a feminist icon, much in the same way that Sara Parton championed the freedom and success of working women in the 1800s.

The act of assuming a *nom de plume* in order to publish articles and novels has become somewhat common practice in the present world; however, in the 1800s, it was a different society, and women like Sara Parton did what they had to in order to survive, even if it meant being known as someone else, someone like Fanny Fern. Other than Sara Parton's Fanny Fern and Gloria Steinem's Marie Ochs, many other female writers have taken up their own pen names, such as Sara Clarke's Gracie Greenwood in the nineteenth century (Wood 5) and today's Howard Allen O'Brien's Anne Rice, A. N. Roquelaure, and Anne Rampling. For Parton and Gloria Steinem, their pseudonyms helped shape them into revolutionary women reflected in history. Without "Fanny Fern," Parton would have likely not even survived, and her ideals concerning women would have never come to light. Without "Marie Ochs," Gloria Steinem might have continued to write as a journalist; however, she would have never seen how far women can sink without even realizing, and her work as a feminist would have never touched the lives of those who continue to look up to her. In the 1960s, Gloria Steinem experienced her own transformation into not only another person but also into another part of society when she assumed the name of Marie Ochs, which started as a simple story to pay her rent. Both women adopted false names in order to afford to stay where they were in not only society but also to survive. Both Parton and

Steinem changed their lives by changing their names. Parton still lives today through her work, and she still continues to influence her readers. Steinem's undercover project helped her to not only identify with other women who are exploited but also to have a focus on her future career as a feminist. Leah Fritz wrote in a review that Gloria Steinem was declared "a hero to Middle America" (7) for her contributions to feminism. These two very different women had one thing in mind: the success of women. The final line in *A Bunny's Tale* sums up both Gloria Steinem's philosophy and puts a modern spin on Sara Parton's ideology: "[W]hat I gained was far more important: my own voice as a writer, a subject that needed writing about--women's lives, and the knowledge that all women are bunnies. But it doesn't have to be that way."

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