

= Big Girls Don 't Cry (book) =

Big Girls Don 't Cry : The Election that Changed Everything for American Women is a 2010 non-fiction book written by American journalist Rebecca Traister and published by Free Press . The book discusses women 's contributions to and experiences of the 2008 United States presidential election . Traister places particular focus on four main political figures ? Hillary Clinton , Sarah Palin , Michelle Obama and Elizabeth Edwards ? as well as women in the media , including Katie Couric , Rachel Maddow , Tina Fey and Amy Poehler . She also describes her personal experience of the electoral campaign and her shift from supporting John Edwards to Hillary Clinton .

Traister began writing about the presidential election while working as a political columnist for Salon ; her coverage for Salon provided much of the book 's content . She aimed to write an account of the election from a feminist perspective , focusing on events that she felt were otherwise underreported in the media . The book was generally well received by critics .

= = Background = =

Rebecca Traister described the 2008 presidential election as " a completely gripping narrative " during which " everything in America was busted open " , but was disappointed by the way it was covered in the mainstream media . She felt that some " big stories " ? such as Hillary Clinton becoming the first woman to win an American presidential primary ? had been underreported , and that many misogynistic and racist remarks made by commentators had gone unnoticed . By writing the book , she wanted to defend the feminist perspective of the election against its Democrat and progressivist critics " who continue to write off concern with these issues " . Asked about what she intended for readers to [take away from] the book , Traister said :

I want those people who lived through the 2008 election ? and in many cases suffered through it , on one end or the other ? to think about the history that we all made and we all witnessed . I really want those of us who were pained by it or who were exhausted by it to understand the way that living through that election changed our country . Because I believe it did .

Traister chose the title Big Girls Don 't Cry when it was suggested by a friend , before she began writing the book ; she thought it was " the perfect ironic reference to Hillary [Clinton] ' s (non-) crying moment in New Hampshire " , as well as a reference to her own response of " gulp [ing] out sobs " when Clinton lost the Democratic primary . She said that , after interviewing women who described crying at various moments during the election , " I realized that the title was more prophetic than I knew " . Some of Traister 's political views expressed in the book contradict those she expressed when writing for Salon , such as her support for Clinton and her defense of Michelle Obama in the book ; throughout the book she describes the transformations of her opinions .

= = Content = =

Big Girls Don 't Cry is divided into twelve chapters , telling a roughly chronological recount of the 2008 election , interwoven with Traister 's own experiences and perspectives as well as analysis from other political commentators . She focuses on four key women involved in the election : Hillary Clinton , Sarah Palin , Michelle Obama and Elizabeth Edwards .

In 2008 Clinton , a Senator and candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination , became the first American woman to win a presidential primary . Traister discusses Clinton 's political campaign , which did not focus on her gender , and the misogynistic reactions she received from the media and political opponents . She argues that the Democratic Party 's lack of response to the sexism of Clinton 's opponents led a large number of liberal female voters to abandon the party , and blames Mark Penn for advising Clinton not to advertise herself as a feminist . Although she originally supported John Edwards ' candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination , she became a strong supporter of Clinton .

Palin was the Republican Party nominee for Vice President and then @-@ Governor of Alaska . Traister criticises Palin 's " faux feminism " , as she claimed to be a feminist despite running under a

party whose policies did not align with feminist ideals , and claims that her strong conservatism led Clinton supporters to back Barack Obama rather than John McCain after Clinton 's withdrawal from the race . Despite this , Palin was celebrated by Republican women voters ; Traister argues that this inspired a wave of feminism which focused on political empowerment but neglected other values such as reproductive rights .

Traister also discusses the wives of men involved in politics : Michelle Obama , the wife of Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama , and Elizabeth Edwards , the wife of John Edwards , another candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination . Traister contrasts the Obamas ' relationship with that of Hillary and ex @-@ President Bill Clinton . She argues that Michelle Obama 's candidness led many women voters to feel they had more in common with her than Hillary Clinton . She compares Elizabeth Edwards ' public image to that of Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton , and criticizes her for " enabl [ing] her husband 's deception " about his extramarital affair .

In addition to female political figures , Traister also discusses women in the media who played influential roles in the election coverage . These include Rachel Maddow , whose political commentary led to a surge in her popularity ; television journalist Katie Couric , who led a critical interview with Sarah Palin ; and Tina Fey and Amy Poehler , who parodied Palin and Clinton , respectively , in several Saturday Night Live skits .

The book is written from a feminist perspective ; Traister recounts her own experiences with the women 's liberation movement , identifying with neither second @-@ wave nor third @-@ wave feminism . She notes the various responses to the election and candidates from different generations of feminists , and argues that for older feminists the main priority was the election of a female President , while younger women were less inclined to automatically vote for a female candidate . She concludes that the 2008 election marked the year that " the women 's liberation movement found thrilling new life " .

= = Reception = =

Big Girls Don 't Cry was deemed a New York Times Notable Book of 2010 and the winner of the Ernesta Drinker Ballard Book Prize .

It also received positive reviews from critics . In a review for Foreign Affairs , Walter Russell Mead described Traister as " one of the most powerful voices in a new generation of American feminist writers " , while Liesl Schillinger of The New York Times called the book " a passionate , visionary and very personal account " of the 2008 election . Maureen Corrigan of NPR praised the " superb " book , and concluded that " Girls , these days , can not only run for president ; they can brilliantly analyze presidential campaigns , too . " The Washington Post critic Connie Schultz felt that at times Traister 's writing at times seemed to " alienate every female reader over 40 " , but wrote that the book was " in its best parts ... a raw and brave memoir " . A writer for Kirkus Reviews praised Traister 's arguments and summarized the book as " nuanced look at how the recent election shaped ? and was shaped by ? gender " . Lynda Obst wrote for The Atlantic that the book served as a satisfying explanation to " mystified " Obama supporters " what the hell all the crying was about " after Clinton conceded from the Democratic primary . Slate reviewer Hanna Rosin questioned the relevance of some chapters but overall concluded that " Traister can be clever , caustic , wickedly funny , and as cynical as the next blogger , but it 's always clear that in her heart she cares . "