

FEMINISMS

A Reader

Edited and Introduced by
Maggie Humm



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**Coordinator of Women's Studies
University of East London**



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Preface

The basic premise of this reader is that, in this century, it is feminism which represents *the* major change in social thinking and politics because only feminism *radically* questions our understanding of 'men' and 'women' and the social structures which maintain their differences.

Feminisms is an interdisciplinary reader containing extracts from a wide range of past and present feminist writers, many of which are collected together for the first time. It aims to provide within the covers of a single book a selection of some of the important ideas of Western feminism.

While including writing from well-known feminists such as Adrienne Rich and Kate Millett, the Reader aims to encapsulate the diversity of feminist views – about race, sexuality, language and creativity, politics and class – and the many challenging feminist questions about the continued subordination of women.

The collection does not pretend to be representative of the *whole* spectrum of feminism. Inevitably one effect of the years needed to collect multiple individual author, publisher and translator permissions and clear American, British and French rights, not to mention Japanese and the Philippine rights, is my inattention to newer developments such as ecofeminism, and feminist writing about theology and about technology. In addition, the Reader is theory and not practice orientated; academic and not movement based; first world and not third world directed.

The Reader is a collection of some aspects of Western feminist thinking. I hope to co-edit a second and larger volume of feminist thinking from outside that diurnity. I have attempted to display the excitement of feminism and the debates which keep it alive by offering a very general map of first and second wave feminisms. In addition the book is organised into some of the major areas in feminist thinking. Before each debate I offer a brief summary of the main issues and before each extract a brief introduction to the ideas of each writer with suggestions for further reading. Editorial comment has been kept deliberately brief in order to give as much space as possible to the source material.

In Britain, Women's Studies proliferates in higher education, non-degree work in further and adult education and schools, thanks to the hard and pioneering work of women teachers and the Women's Studies Network (UK), yet in 1992 the Polytechnic of East London is the first and

currently only institution in Britain offering a *full* degree in Women's Studies. The absence of Women's Studies as an undergraduate area of study goes along with the absence in Britain of any full collection of feminist thought. (The very different, and expansive model of American Women's Studies is highlighted in Chapter 17, Feminism and education.)

Some Readers have already appeared, for example, Sneja Gunew's *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge* (Routledge, 1991) and while welcome and valuable these are often discipline bound, or address only *current* feminist theory and seem pitched at graduates with a high level of feminist knowledge.

What is not absent, of course, in the academy or outside it are women of disparate ages, ethnicities and sexualities who have a high level of interest in other women and are eager to know about the whole spread of feminist knowledge. This Reader is for them. It is for young women who may never have heard of Kate Millett, for instance, and want a book which clarifies the immense volume and diversity of thought and ideas which have come out of Women's Liberation. It is for black women and women of colour for whom the category of 'black feminism' is itself a challenge to the homogeneity associated with white writing. It is for black lesbian and white lesbian women who know that heterosexual feminists often emphasise the institutions which oppress *them* – glass ceilings – but who often cannot 'see' how they benefit from the institution of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. It is for Marxist and socialist women, black and white, who understand the economics underpinning students' need for cheap, accessible and comprehensive Readers in a country which allows only 20 per cent of 18-year-olds into higher education and deprives them of the money and the support to keep them there. Therefore, most of all, this Reader is for my students whose responses to some of this material helped to change my own.

I would like to thank the authors here in this volume and not only to acknowledge them in the conventional way. It was their letters of permission, often adding best wishes and good luck, wanting to know more about British Women's Studies, dialoguing with my ideas, and praising the volume which sustained me through the horrendous task of clearing rights and permissions. I must thank Jackie Jones of Harvester Wheatsheaf for her commitment to this project and for her splendid and professional editing skill, and the careful readers of the manuscript.

The book is dedicated to my students who are my constant source of stimulation but it could not have been edited without the interest and support of my son Dan Humm, my keenest and best critic. The Reader could not have appeared at all without the careful and expert work of Joyce Lock.

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| CR | Consciousness raising |
| ERA | Equal Rights Amendment |
| NAWSA | National American Women's Suffrage Association |
| NOW | National Organisation of Women |
| NUWSS | National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies |
| OWAAD | Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent |
| WFL | Women's Freedom League |
| WILPF | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom |
| WLM | Women's Liberation Movement |
| WPU | Women's Political Union |
| SWPU | Women's Social and Political Union |

Chronology of events and texts from 1900 to the present

| | Feminist politics | Feminist writing |
|--------|--|--|
| 1903 | Women's Social and Political Union, Britain (WSPU) founded by Pankhursts. | |
| 1904 | Hubertine Auclert tears up Code Napoleon at Vendôme Column. | |
| 1905–7 | Suffrage struggles, Russia. | |
| 1908 | Congress of Russian women. | |
| 1910 | Feminist demonstrations during Mexican revolution. Second Conference of Socialist Women, Germany when Clara Zetkin names 8 March International Women's day. | |
| 1911 | Seitoshcha (Blue Stockings) an independent feminist group formed in Japan | Olive Schreiner: <i>Woman and Labour</i> |
| 1912 | Teresita dei Bonifatti's pacifist campaign Milan, Italy. | |
| 1913 | | Rebecca West: 'The Life of Emily Davison'; 'Mr Chesterton in Hysterics'. |
| 1914 | Congressional Union, later the American Women's Party founded by Alice Paul. | |
| 1917 | Muslim Women's Conference, India calls for abolition of polygamy. | |
| 1919 | National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, Britain formed. | |

| | Feminist politics | Feminist writing |
|------|--|---|
| 1921 | British Six Point Group founded. | |
| 1923 | Egyptian Feminist Union founded by Huda el-Sha'arawi. Equal Rights Amendment proposed to American Congress. | |
| 1926 | | Winifred Holtby: 'Feminism Divided'. |
| 1927 | | Vera Brittain: 'Why Feminism Lives'. |
| 1928 | | Ray Strachey: <i>The Cause</i> . |
| 1929 | | Virginia Woolf: <i>A Room of One's Own</i> . |
| 1938 | | Virginia Woolf: <i>Three Guineas</i> . |
| 1942 | Death of Franciska Plamnikova founder of Czech feminism in a concentration camp. | |
| 1944 | Egyptian Feminist Party founded by Fatma Nimat Rashid and Doria Shafik's Bint-el-Nil Movement. | |
| 1949 | Rachel Kagan, first feminist elected to Israeli Knesset. | Simone de Beauvoir: <i>The Second Sex</i> . |
| 1951 | 1,500 women storm Egyptian Parliament. | |
| 1956 | Women's hunger strikes cause granting of suffrage, Egypt | |
| 1963 | | Betty Friedan: <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> . |
| 1966 | National Women's Organisation (NOW) founded in America. | Juliet Mitchell: <i>Women: The Longest Revolution</i> . |
| 1968 | First equal pay strike in Britain (Ford sewing machinists). May/June mass student/worker strikes (France). Demonstration at Miss America pageant. Man-Vrouw-Maatschappij (Men-Women-Society) founded in Netherlands. | |
| 1969 | Juliet Mitchell teaches Britain's first Women's Studies course at London's Anti-University. | Redstockings' <i>Manifesto</i> (New York). |

Feminist politics

- 1970 Monique Wittig, Rochefort and other women place wreath dedicated to 'Unknown wife of the Soldier' on tomb of Unknown Soldier, Paris. MLF becomes name of French Women's Liberation Movement. Britain's first Women's Liberation Conference, Ruskin College, Oxford. Disruption of Miss World contest, London. Irish Women's Liberation Movement founded. Dolle Mina founded in Netherlands.
- 1971 First National Women's conference, Frankfurt Germany.
- 1972 First Women's Refuge opened (Chiswick, London) 41 organisations found Black Women's Federation in South Africa.
- 1973 Indian 'Chipko' movement tie their bodies to trees. First Black British Women's Group founded – Brixton. First British Women's Theatre Festival.
- 1974 Simone de Beauvoir founds Ligue Françoise pour le droit des femmes. First British National Lesbian Conference. Working Women's Charter and TUC Women's Rights Conference.
- 1975 Women's International Year British National Abortion Campaign founded. Virago launched.

Feminist writing

- Anne Koedt: *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm*.
 Germaine Greer: *The Female Eunuch*.
 Kate Millet: *Sexual Politics*.
 Shulamith Firestone: *The Dialectic of Sex*.
 Mary Sherfey: 'A Theory on Female Sexuality'.
 'Personal is Political' coined by Carol Hanisch.
- Adrienne Rich: 'When We Dead Awaken'.
- Joyce Ladner: *Tomorrow's Tomorrow*.
 Phyllis Chesler: *Women and Madness*.
 Sherry Ortner: 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture'.
- Sheila Rowbotham: *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*.
- Adrienne Rich: 'Toward a Woman-Centered University'.
 Juliet Mitchell: *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*.
 Luce Irigaray: *Speculum de l'autre femme*.
 Dorothy Smith: 'Women's Perspective'.
 Sheila Rowbotham: 'Search and Subject, Threading Circumstance'.
 Gayle Rubin: 'The Traffic in Women'.
- Hélène Cixous: 'Le Rire de la Médusa'.
 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg: 'The Female World of Love and Ritual'.

Feminist politics

- 1975
(*cont.*) Wages for Housework demonstrations.
First Women's Liberation Conference Spain.
- 1976 UN Decade for Women (1975–85).
Britain's first Rape Crisis Centre.
American Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media founded.
- 1977 Northern Ireland Peace Women awarded Nobel Prize.
Reclaim the Night first demonstrations.
USA National Women's Conference, Houston with 20,000 delegates.
Israeli Women's Party founded by Marcia Freedman.
- 1978 Chilean women's *arpilleras* woven, over which women pour blood symbolically.
AWAZ first British Asian Women's Group.
OWAAD (Organisation of Women of Asian and African descent) formed.
- 1979 Canadian Feminist Party founded.
15,000 women seize the Palace of Justice, Teheran.
First TUC demonstration in support of feminism – National Abortion Campaign.
Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Lesbian declaration.
First picket of Armagh Irish Women's Prison.
Partido Feminista de España (Feminist Party) formed in Spain.

Feminist writing

- Susan Brownmiller: *Against Our Will*.
Laura Mulvey: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.
- Adrienne Rich: *Of Woman Born*.
Dorothy Dinnerstein: *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*.
Jean Baker Miller: *Toward A New Psychology of Women*.
Joan Kelly-Gadol: 'The Social Relation of the Sexes'.
Heidi Hartmann: 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex'.
- Barbara Smith: *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism*.
Julia Kristeva: *Desire in Language*.
Luce Irigaray: *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*.
- Susan Griffin: *Woman and Nature*.
Audre Lorde: 'Uses of the Erotic'.
Nancy Chodorow: *The Reproduction of Mothering*.
Combahee River Collective: 'A Black Feminist Statement'.
Mary Daly: *Gyn/Ecology*.
- Elaine Showalter: 'Towards a Feminist Poetics'.
Julia Kristeva: 'Le Temps des Femmes'.
Carol Gilligan: 'Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle'.
'Political Lesbianism'.
Gerda Lerner: *The Majority Finds Its Past*.
Heidi Hartmann: 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism'.

Feminist politics

- 1980 Brazilian women's graffiti campaign against sexual violence.
Women Against Pornography March, New York: 71,000 women. United Nations World Conference on Women. Pentagon encircled by thousands of women.
British Women Against Violence Against Women founded.
Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* opens in San Francisco.
National Front for the Liberation and Rights of Women founded, Mexico.
- 1981 Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.
National Women's Strike, Holland against Abortion Law.
Australian women anti-rape demonstrations.
Migrant women's strike, Kortex Textiles Australia.
- 1982 30,000 women encircle Greenham Common Camp.
Outwrite British Black Women's Paper launched.
GLC establish the first Women's Committee.
- 1983 Women surround missile base Comiso, Italy.
Feminists organise candlelight vigil to protest gang rape, New Bedford, Mass.

Feminist writing

- Adrienne Rich: 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existences'.
Michèle Barrett: *Women's Oppression Today*.
Ros Coward: 'Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?'.
Sarah Kofman: *L'Enigme de la femme*.
Rachel Blau DuPlessis: 'For the Etruscans'.
Audre Lorde: 'An Open Letter to Mary Daly'.
- Angela Davis: *Women, Race and Class*.
Andrea Dworkin *Pornography*.
Zillah Eisenstein: *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*.
Susan Griffin: *Pornography and Silence*.
Rosario Morales: 'I Am What I Am'.
Gloria Anzaldúa: '*La Prieta*'.
Mitsuye Yamada: 'Asian Pacific American Women and Feminism'.
- Gloria Hull and Barbara Smith: 'The Politics of Black Women's Studies'.
Evelyn Fox Keller: 'Gender and Science'.
Zillah Eisenstein: 'The Sexual Politics of the New Right'.
Carol Gilligan: *In A Different Voice*.
Catharine Mackinnon: 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State'.
Marcia Westcott: 'Women's studies as a strategy for change'.
Charlotte Bunch: *Learning Our Way*.
Alice Walker: *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.

Feminist politics

- 1984 Tens of thousands of Iceland women in 24-hour strike to protest at discrimination.
Second Equal Pay Strike by Ford Sewing Machinists.
Women Against Pit Closures founded.
Argentinian women protest 'the disappeared'.
First National Women's Conference, Taiwan.
Kadin Cevresi (Women's Circle) founded in Turkey.
- 1985 South African Women hold National Consumer boycott.
15,000 people tie ribbon 15 miles long around the Pentagon.
- 1986 National Pro-Abortion marches in Washington and Los Angeles.
Women Rising in Resistance reclaim the Statue of Liberty.
First Conference of Arab feminists, Arab Women's Solidarity Association founded.
- 1987 Mass demonstrations by Palestine women in occupied territories.
Katya Komisaruk destroyed missile guidance computers at Vandenburg Air Force Base.
- 1988 Palestinian women protest with their bodies in occupied territories.
- 1989 Women Against Fundamentalism 6 May launched to challenge fundamentalism in all religions.
Independent Women's Federation of East Germany founded.
- 1990 Feminist Network and Szegedi (women's organisations) founded, Hungary.
Movement for the Emancipation of Women in Bohemia and Moravia founded.
- 1991 Women's Strike 14 June, Swiss
TUC Nationwide Women's Strike.

Feminist writing

- Sara Ruddick: 'Preservative Love'.
Gayle Rubin: 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality'.
Teresa de Lauretis: *Alice Doesn't*.
Amina Mama: *Black Women, the Economic Crisis and the British State*.
- Gisela Ecker: *Feminist Aesthetics*.
Rosalind Petchesky: *Abortion*.
- Sandra Harding: 'Epistemological Questions'.
Griselda Pollock: 'Feminism and Modernism'.
- Amina Mama: 'Violence Against Black Women'.

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