

WOMEN IN SOCIETY
A Feminist List edited by
Jo Campling



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The last 20 years have seen an explosion of publishing by, about and for women. This new list is designed to make a particular contribution to this continuing process by commissioning and publishing books which consolidate and advance feminist research and debate in key areas in a form suitable for students, academics and researchers but also accessible to a broader general readership.

As far as possible, books will adopt an international perspective incorporating comparative material from a range of countries where this is illuminating. Above all they will be interdisciplinary, aiming to put women's studies and feminist discussion firmly on the agenda in subject-areas as disparate as law, physical education, art and social policy.

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Published

- Christy Adair **Women and Dance: sylphs and sirens**
Sheila Allen and Carol Wolkowitz **Homeworking: myths and realities**
Niamh Baker **Happily Ever After? Women's fiction in post-war Britain**
Jenny Beale **Women in Ireland: voices of change**
Valerie Bryson **Feminist Political Theory: an introduction**
Ruth Carter and Gill Kirkup **Women in Engineering**
Angela Coyle and Jane Skinner **Women and Work: positive action for change**
Gillian Dalley **Ideologies of Caring: rethinking community and collectivism**
Leonore Davidoff and Belinda Westover (editors) **Our work, Our Lives, Our Words: women's history and women's work**
Emily Driver and Audrey Droisen (editors) **Child Sexual Abuse: a feminist reader**
Elizabeth Ettore **Women and Substance Use**
Lesley Ferris **Acting Women: Images of women in theatre**
Diana Gittins **The Family in Question: changing households and familiar ideologies**
Eileen Green, Diana Woodward and Sandra Hebron **Women's Leisure, What Leisure?**
Tuula Gordon **Feminist Mothers**
Frances Heidensohn **Women and Crime**
Ursula King **Women and Spirituality: voices of protest and promise**
Muthoni Likimani (*Introductory Essay by Jean O' Barr*) **Passbook Number F.47927: women and Mau Mau in Kenya**
Jo Little, Linda Peake and Pat Richardson (editors) **Women in Cities: gender and the urban environment**
Susan Lonsdale **Women and Disability**
Sharon Macdonald, Pat Holden and Shirley Arden (editors) **Images of Women in Peace and War: cross-cultural and historical perspectives**
Mavis Maclean **Surviving Divorce: women's resources after separation**
Shelley Pennington and Belinda Westover **A Hidden Workforce: homeworkers in England, 1850-1985**
Vicky Randall **Women and Politics: an international perspective (2nd edn)**
Diane Richardson **Women, Motherhood and Childrearing**
Rosemary Ridd and Helen Callaway (editors) **Caught up in p. + Conflict: women's response to political strife**
Susan Sellars **Language and Sexual Difference: feminist writing in France**
Patricia Spallone **Beyond Conception: the new politics of reproduction**
Taking Liberties Collective **Learning the Hard Way: women's oppression and men's education**
Clare Ungerson (editor) **Women and Social Policy: a reader**
Kitty Warnock **Palestinian Women**
Annie Woodhouse **Fantastic Women: Sex, Gender and Transvestism**

Forthcoming

- Eileen Aird and Judy Lown **Education for Autonomy: processes of change in women's education**
Jennifer Breen **In Her Own Write**
Maria Brenton **Women and Old Age**
Valerie Bryson **Feminist Political Theory**
Joan Busfield **Women and Mental Health**
Betsy Ettore **Women and Substance Abuse**
Tuula Gordon **Single Women**
Frances Gray **Women and Laughter**
Annie Hudson **Troublesome Girls: adolescence, femininity and the state**
Ruth Lister **Women and Citizenship**
Diane Richardson **Women, Motherhood and Childrearing**

Women's Worlds

*Ideology, Femininity and the
Woman's Magazine*

Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham,
Elizabeth Frazer and Sandra Hebron

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MACMILLAN

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Preface

This book is a collaborative effort. In 1987 all four of the authors participated in a series of seminars called 'Women's Own? Magazines and the Female Reader', organised by the Women's Studies Committee at Oxford University. Although our methods have been collaborative, the four major chapters are based on, and have been developed from, previous work we have each published or researched individually. The historical data on the eighteenth century comes from Ros Ballaster's research, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from Margaret Beetham's. The detailed analysis of twentieth-century magazines was carried out and written up by Sandra Hebron; the work with readers and the discussion of theory and method by Elizabeth Frazer. Although much discussion, drafting, re-drafting, and transfer of editing responsibility has had a certain unifying effect, our different writing styles are, we think, still detectable, and rightly so. The theory, argument and analysis are ours collectively – the product of conversations, meetings, phone calls, letters, drafts and criticism.

Our emphasis here is on mass market women's magazines, the 'mainstream' popular form. Thus, small circulation 'alternatives' such as *Spare Rib* or *Shocking Pink* receive relatively little attention. We have attempted to make our methods of analysis, explanatory theory and understanding of the intersection and conflicts of race, class and gender, clear in our first chapter. Subsequent analyses of historical and contemporary magazines offer an unfolding illustration and exposition from this theoretical base. We do not pretend to offer a detailed history, reading or content analysis of women's magazines since their inception. Rather, we have produced a range of critical readings which we attempt to situate historically.

What we have omitted here has been admirably committed by others. Cynthia White provides a detailed publishing history in her *Women's Magazines 1693–1968*, Janice Winship and Angela McRobbie closer readings and analyses of samples from main-

stream magazines. We are particularly indebted to Janice Winship's ground-breaking *Inside Women's Magazines*, an examination of individual current titles, which addresses a range of issues to do with women's magazines' constructions of gender. These texts have constituted the point from which our own research began.

We have compiled an appendix which lists the magazines we have analysed and discussed in the body of the text, together with a certain amount of information about their dates of publication, ownership, editors, and so on. Our selective bibliography points to the many more exhaustive analyses and histories.

Our collaborative methods have meant that we have been relatively slow workers. We would like to thank Jo Campling, Dilys Jones and Steven Kennedy at the publishers for their patience and flexibility in dealing with multiple authorship. Our most grateful thanks are due to the women who met for discussions and responded to questionnaires: members of the New College women's group and the Feminist Theory Group at Oxford University; students of the Faculty of English and Humanities at Manchester Polytechnic and Oxford Polytechnic; Doreen Essex, Rosemary Popplewell, Claire Pierce, Sybil James, Jean Gregory, Mina Temple, Alison Jones, Liz Whiteside, Janet Jacobs, Lynne Dewberry. Also to the women who participated in the original seminar series, where discussion was always lively, and which engendered the questions we seek to address in a different format here. Most important of all we wish to recognise the contribution of Kate Mertes who helped to devise that seminar series but had to withdraw from the project of the book. Certain themes central to this book – the making and fragmentation of a female readership, the magazine's construction of an imaginary female community, the politics of fashion photography – were articulated by her in our first discussions.

Our work has been further slowed by a number of practical and emotional problems of the sort that jostle with one another in the pages of the magazines we analyse: the trauma of new jobs, old jobs, commitments to family and friends, the sexual double standard, crises of confidence, the ending, beginning or lack of 'relationships'. If we were to turn to the magazines in search of solutions we would find, as we document in what follows, that our troubles are represented as 'ours', individually, although they are also, by a bizarre and unexplained coincidence, also experienced by

millions of other women throughout the western world and through the ages. By contrast, it is our profound conviction that 'our problems' have political and structural roots, that their solutions lie in political struggle and transformation. That so many women have such similar experience is a political matter. The struggle must be in the arena of sexual politics (for sexuality *is* political), the politics of social identity and difference, and the politics of economic relations.

Nevertheless, supportive personal relations have been of immeasurable value and we do not hesitate to thank personally the numbers of people who have given help – intellectual, emotional and personal. We are indebted to: David Beetham, John Campbell, Niki Lacey, Andrew Milton, Jenefer Sargent, Jessica Search (who made dozens of ingenious suggestions for the title), Louise Kanas, Brian Maidment, Jeri Johnson, and Dianne Chisholm.

ROS BALLASTER
MARGARET BEETHAM
ELIZABETH FRAZER
SANDRA HEBRON