

Non-Guide to Feminism

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Que fut le féminisme dans l'Histoire ? Qu'est-il aujourd'hui ? Que sera-t-il demain ? Le Non-Guide du Féminisme des Scum Grrrls essaie de répondre aux deux premières questions, en vous laissant le soin de répondre à la dernière... C'est un non-guide, parce que nous ne voulons pas imposer notre vision de l'Histoire ou des définitions du féminisme !

Feminists, especially academic feminists, often talk about the “double commitment” of feminism. On the one hand, feminism is a political ideology and a radical practice against women's exclusion, for equality between the sexes, and for social transformation. On the other hand, feminism is about promoting new knowledge and criticizing standard answers about how women and men are ! Feminist knowledge is about undoing, unpacking and deconstructing what women, men and society thought they knew about women, men and society !

In our non-guide we have tried to provide you with an introduction to both feminist politics and feminist thinking. And well, one has to admit... It's a jungle ! However, as a wise feminist has said : Feminism is not about providing answers. It is about asking questions !

Activisme féministe / réflexions féministes

- **Olympe de Gouges** (*France, 1745-1793*) An early, very angry feminist who, although she almost couldn't write, wrote quite a few pamphlets, plays etc. She is probably most known for her *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (1791), which was a rather severe criticism of the more well known *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (1789).
- **Les Citoyennes Républicaines Révolutionnaires** Association de femmes qui, en pleine révolution française, combattent pour les droits politiques des femmes, y compris le droit de vote.
- **Christine de Pisan** (*1365-1430*) Une des rares figures féminines de la littérature française du Moyen Âge, elle est la première femme, auteure d'un ouvrage destiné à réhabiliter son sexe, “la cité des dames”, pamphlet en faveur des mérites des femmes. D'autres livres critiquent la misogynie de son époque, notamment dans la littérature. Une des premières à avoir dénoncé les discriminations à l'égard des femmes et à avoir pu vivre, en tant que femme, de sa plume, c'est sans doute une véritable féministe d'avantgarde.
- **Mary Wollstonecraft** (*England, 1759-1797*) One of the early English liberal feminists, who for example wrote *A Vindication for the Rights of Women* (1792). Mary noted that women of her time were stupid and vane, but she asked : How could women, who had been raised only to please men, be anything but stupid and vane ? Give women the rights of men, she said, and you will see her develop the virtues of men (or humans).
- **Citizen, or not ?** How ever could the enlightened philosophers, politicians and agitators of the late 18th century forget to include so many from natural rights and citizenship ? How could it take so long (200 years) before women became real citizens ? It's worth noting that during the last decades women's male citizenship (or liberal citizenship) has been criticised...
- **Hubertine Auclert** (*1848-1914*) Invente la propagande féministe et suffragiste.

- En 1848 à **Seneca Falls** des femmes tiennent une convention pour discuter de leurs droits et de leur condition sociale, c'est le premier regroupement féministe . Il est organisé par Elizabeth Cady Stanton (celebre féministe américaine et suffragette). Les organisatrices y dénoncent l'infériorité politique, économique et sociale de leur sexe. Suivi en 1854 par la première pétition pour le droit de vote des femmes lancée par Susan B. Anthony, qui fut la compagne de Stanton.
- **Ellen Key** (*Sweden, 1849-1926*) A Swedish women's rights advocate ! She did contribute to changing many discriminating laws. Without Ellen Swedish women might, still, not have the right to study, own businesses, or vote...
- **Marguerite Durand** (*1864-1936*) Journaliste féministe et directrice du quotidien féministe, La Fronde, qui n'employait que des femmes et a duré 6 ans. Marguerite Durand considère que la femme doit se prendre en charge, être typographe, maîtriser toutes les étapes de la publication d'un journal. Surtout, à ses yeux, la presse féminine ne doit pas se limiter à des articles ciblés sur le rôle social de la femme, les femmes doivent oser parler de politique, de finance.
- **Sojourner Truth** (*America, 1797-1883*) An early black feminist, a former slave, who argued that if white women and black slaves cooperated, then the white man would have to give up his privileges pretty soon...
- **Louise Michel** (*1830-1905*) Dénommée la "Pétroleuse" ou la "Vierge Rouge" et grande figure de la Commune, elle n'a cessé de se battre, par écrit et en actes. Révolutionnaire française, pour les droits des femmes, contre la prostitution et pour la justice sociale.
- **Alexandra Kollontai** (*Russia, 1873-1952*) Marxist and feminist ! One of the early one's to recognize that while men were divided by class they were united in their oppression of women !
- **Elin Wägner** (*Sweden, 1882-1949*) Marxist-feminist journalist and writer... She wrote heaps about the impossible lives of working class women ! She was also a forefront figure in the suffragette movement... and many are, still, members in the Elin Wägner Society
- **Patriarchy, what is it ? Can we get rid of it ? "Patriarchy"** is what feminists have explained all evil with ! But patriarchy has been explained very differently... It has been the King, the father, the husband, all men, a structure that works together with capitalism, that is separate from capitalism, that exists only in backwards societies, that is a thing of the past, that is a symbolic order, that is an order that we reproduce after having noticed that we have penises or vaginas (the latter is a lack) and so forth... However, whatever patriarchy is, it's not dead !
- **Zoé Gatti de Gamond** (*1806-1854*) & **Isabelle Gatti de Gamond** (*1839-1905*) Deux des grandes féministes belges, mère et fille ont mené de nombreuses luttes pour le droit des femmes et la suppression des inégalités dans le code civil. En 1864, Isabelle ouvre le premier cours d'éducation pour les filles, laïc et de qualité. Les catholiques dénoncèrent cette avancée en disant qu'on allait doublement pervertir les femmes, par l'éducation et la laïcité. Le Pape même s'en plaignit. En 1893, Isabelle fonde les Cahiers Féministes
- **Les Suffragettes** Les suffragettes sont partout, de la France à l'Angleterre, en passant par les Etats-Unis ou la Suède. Elles se battent pour le droit de vote avec humour et férocité, surprenant souvent par leurs actions originales et pour beaucoup "si peu féminines". Un des grands combats et victoires du féminisme.
- **Madeleine Pelletier** (*1874-1939*) Psychiatre, suffragiste et membre du parti socialiste, s'est battue pour la contraception, l'avortement, l'éducation des filles. Elle s'habillait en homme et considérait que la femme ne peut vivre qu'à condition de renoncer à l'amour et à la maternité, crédo qu'elle appliquait en personne. Sans doute la première féministe radicale.
- **Sex Class ? Sex and Class ? Sex or Class ?** At one, quite long-lasting, point the workers' movements in Europe firmly opposed any talk about oppression on the grounds of sex...and argued that all and everyone could count on liberation, once the big Struggle between classes was solved. It was only after a long struggle of the intrinsic linkages between class oppression and sexual oppression were acknowledged by at least parts of the workers' movement.
- **Virginia Woolf** "Une chambre à soi" (1929) et "Trois Guinées" (1938) restent toujours parmi les plus fortes dénonciations d'une société misogyne et guerrière.

- **Mujeres Libres (Free Women)** A group of Anarcho-Feminist women who fought in the Spanish Civil War. They did not believe that the oppression of women could be addressed separately (or later) than other social injustices !
- **Activisme féministe** En 1966, à la fabrique d'armes d'Herstal en Belgique, 3800 ouvrières refusent de travailler. C'est le premier mouvement revendiquant l'application du principe « à travail égal, salaire égal ». De leur propre chef et indépendamment de toute consigne syndicale, les femmes proclament que « l'émancipation des femmes sera l'oeuvre des femmes elles-mêmes ». Un mouvement de solidarité féministe sans précédent se déclenche.
- **Separatism – Still a destabilising and subversive strategy !** Separatism has been a great strategy for the feminist movement ! Consciousness- raising groups in the 1970s and women's shelters today use men free spaces where women can think, talk and become strong ! Feminist separatism continues to be a highly attacked form of activism... which should maybe be taken as an indicator to its high level of subversiveness ?
- **Betty Friedan (USA)** The mother of Second Wave Feminism ! She crushes the myth that women are content with a house, a husband and a few children. In *A Feminine Mystique* (1963) she tells the story about the bored housewife.
- **Simone de Beauvoir (France, 1908-1986)** She never called herself a feminist, but she created it ! Every feminist after her has probably at least once said “One is not born a woman”, a famous phrase from *Le deuxième sexe* (1949).
- **Shulamith Firestone (USA)** Patriarchy is dead, she says, as soon as there are machines that can make babies and all women find their way into lesbian sisterhood and love... Do read *The Dialectic of Sex* (1979) it's so much fun !
- **Consciousness-raising groups !** It started in the U.S. in the 1970s and spread throughout Europe, the consciousness-raising movement ! Women got together in groups to talk about their experiences of love, sex, family life, children, work, violence..., and they realized that their individual experiences of discrimination and oppression were not so unique – but shared !
- **“Un homme sur deux est une femme”** Autre slogan du MLF. Sans commentaires.
- **Le Manifeste des 343 salopes (1971)** 343 femmes, souvent célèbres, signent ce manifeste avouant avoir avorté alors que c'était punissable d'emprisonnement. Elles réclament le libre accès à l'avortement.
- **“Le privé est politique”** Slogan repris par le MLF dans les années 70 en France pour contester la volonté politique de ne pas interférer avec le domaine privé, celui de la famille, celui où justement sont confinées les femmes. Permet d'amener dans le débat public les questions de l'avortement, de la contraception, de la violence conjugale, du partage des tâches domestiques, etc.
- **Kate Millet – Sexual politics** Ce livre, à l'origine thèse de doctorat en littérature, est devenu un des livres clés du féminisme qui théorise le patriarcat.
- **Valerie Solanas – Scum Manifesto (1970)** Un des manifestes féministes le plus radical qui soit.
- **Lesbian Feminism – the advantages of not sleeping with the enemy' ?** Lesbians were (and still are) key actors to 'inform' the mainstream women's movement that patriarchy is also based on strong norms and control of sexuality – namely hetero-sexism ! And that breaking these norms destabilises the whole system...Lesbian feminist activism remains one of the motors of radical feminist political action...although a worrying number of lesbians seem to be drawn to gay-male-stream politics today.... ?!
- **Anti-prostitution and Anti-porn Campaigns !** Women or women's bodies should not be for sale ! Women have the right to their bodies and to their own sexuality, they are not men's sexual objects ! Men's right to women's bodies and the Mostly for Men, global sex market has been targeted by much feminist activism and many feminist campaigns. More is needed... unless we want to capitulate in front of patriarchal, capitalist market forces !?
- **Monique Wittig (1935- 2003)** Romancière et essayiste, dont les écrits sont plus célébrés par les féministes américaines que par les françaises. C'est elle qui a écrit que les lesbiennes ne sont pas des femmes tant elles dérogent à la norme hétéropatriarcale qui définit les femmes dans nos sociétés. Militante du MLF, elle était parmi celles qui déposaient en 1970 une gerbe à la femme du soldat inconnu, événement considéré comme le geste fondateur du

mouvement féministe français des années septante. Membre ensuite des Gouines Rouges, groupe séparatiste lesbien. Ses écrits sont essentiels à la pensée féministe actuelle.

- **Luce Irigaray** Philosophe, psychanalyste et linguiste, son oeuvre décortique la sexualité de la femme, et conteste le discours patriarcal qui instaure le masculin comme unique modèle universel.
- **Catharine MacKinnon (USA)** A radical radical feminist ! She's great, although everybody seem to hate her ! She argued that Sex is to feminism, like class is to Marxism ! In a patriarchal society, men possess women and women's sexuality, they profit from it – and we, still, do not know the potential of women's sexualities...
- **Eco-feminism !** Ok, throughout patriarchal history women have been described as closer to nature than men. Eco-feminists (almost...) agree ! Women's spirituality is natural and women understand nature and sustainable development better than men. I don't agree (and I don't understand nature), but Eco-feminists have delivered some great critic on the dominant forms of (capitalist) production and economy, and points to alternative ways of doing economy and secure livelihoods !
- **Feminist and Anti-militarism !** The Guerrilla girls have proposed the Estrogen Bomb as a new weapon in all these new wars ! Estrogen might make soldiers hug each other and say that they didn't mean to be aggressive... The Guerrillagirls are of course ironical, but women are, still, those most active in peace movements and as is feminism with anti-militarism !
- **Les Chiennes de Garde** Elles font suite à des attaques publiques contre des femmes ministres et dénoncent le machisme ambiant dans l'espace public.
- **The 3 Waves of Feminism ?** The first wave is everything before the 1960s, the second wave is almost everything till the end of the 1980s and the third is now ? The 3 waves is an American invention and an attempt to fit us neatly into categories corresponding to dominant political ideologies and historical epochs. Each wave is also allegedly better than the previous, and have worked just that much harder for liberating women and breaking down patriarchal structures. The third wave (?) poses a bit of a classification problem though, as it is 'post-modern' and rejects modernist notions of 'development'
▶ and thus defies the waves...
- **Judith Butler (USA)** Some say that Gender trouble (1990) created queer feminism ! According to Judith sex and gender does not exist, but we learn to perform them – as we are caught up in patriarchal structures that force oppressive sexes and genders on us... Judith is definitely liberating, but difficult !
- **Post-colonial feminist struggles** A serious critique of mainstream western feminism and politics ! That has developed feminist thinking and action, highlighting the effects (both in the west and in the developing countries) of the colonial past, and present continuous neo-colonial structures and mechanisms of domination. The movements of women in the South/development world are at the forefront in making the world and its feminist inhabitants understand the complex mechanisms of domination and exclusion !
- **Reclaim the night manifestations !** The first one was organized in Rome in 1976 ! Since then, women have reclaimed, forced their presence into urban nights everywhere ! Women should not have to be afraid of sexual harassment or of rape ! We should be able to move freely everywhere and all the time !
- **Anarcha-Feminism lives on !** There are many followers in the footsteps of Mujeres Libres and others... As long as society and its laws are patriarchal, women should aim at breaking out of society and its unjust laws !
- **Feminist Vegetarianism or Veganism** Can one be a feminist and eat animals, drink milk or wear leather pants ? Quite a few would say NO ! There's no real difference between the sex industry and the rest of the meat industry ! I mean, can we fight one oppression and contribute to others ?
- **Rosi Braidotti** (Italie, France, Pays-Bas etc.) Une des plus célèbres féministes poststructuraliste du moment ! Elle a fait du « sujet nomade » un sujet féministe. Elle a aussi ramené le corps (ou le fait que nous sommes « embodied ») dans la pensée féministe...
- **Guattari Chakravorty Spivak** (India, Great Britain, USA etc.) Post-structural, post-colonial, posteverything subaltern scholar and feminist (who does not want to be defined). It

was she who told us that feminists might have to be “strategic essentialists” and that we can never understand the Other woman, as her language does not exist within our world.

- **Feminisms and Difference** Black and ethnic minority women, together with lesbians, were among the first to point out that the agenda of the mainstream feminist movement did not take into account their perspectives and concerns. Sometime in the late-1980s it became politically incorrect to speak about feminism (in singular). Feminisms (in plural) seemed to be a much more correct representation of the many feminisms with the many goals ! Feminism (in singular) had been represented by the dominant feminism (white, western, middle class, and heterosexual...) - and had implicitly or explicitly excluded black, third world and lesbian feminists. Using feminisms (in plural) also shows that you are politically aware of the diversity within the feminist movement and that you are open to differences (also in plural). Different feminists (with some exceptions), still, like each other and can form temporary, strategic alliances when fighting for a common goal... but the reconstruction of feminist solidarity and action in this complex contexts we inhabit remains a challenge !