



## **Fifty Shades of Feminism**

*Lisa Appignanesi (Editor) , Rachel Holmes (Editor) , Susie Orbach (Editor) , Sharon Haywood (Contributor)  
 , Tahmima Anam (Contributor) , Joan Bakewell (Contributor)*

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The antidote to the idea that being a woman is all about submitting to desire. There are many more shades than that and here are fifty women to explore them.

Fifty years after the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, have women really exchanged purity and maternity to become desiring machines inspired only by variations of sex, shopping and masochism - all coloured a brilliant neuro-pink?

In this volume, fifty women young and old - writers, politicians, actors, scientists, mothers - reflect on the shades that inspired them and what being woman means to them today.

Contributors include: Tahmima Anam, Joan Bakewell, Bidisha, Lydia Cacho, Nina Power, Shami Chakrabarti, Lennie Goodings, Linda Grant, Natalie Haynes, Siri Hustvedt, Jude Kelly, Kathy Lette, Kate Mosse, Bee Rowlatt, Elif Shafak, Ahdaf Soueif, Shirley Thompson, Natasha Walter, Jeanette Winterson - alongside the three editors.

## Fifty Shades of Feminism Details

Date : Published March 28th 2013 by Virago (first published March 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781844089451

Author : Lisa Appignanesi (Editor) , Rachel Holmes (Editor) , Susie Orbach (Editor) , Sharon Haywood (Contributor) , Tahmima Anam (Contributor) , Joan Bakewell (Contributor)

Format : Hardcover 324 pages

Genre : Feminism, Nonfiction, Writing, Essays, Womens

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# From Reader Review Fifty Shades of Feminism for online ebook

## Alison says

My son bought this book for me - knowing how annoyed a certain book and film with a similar title have made me recently! It sometimes feels these days that people don't like to admit to being feminists, that it's somehow overly political and radical - but I am a feminist and I'm proud to be one and proud that my son has the feminist symbol tattooed on his arm (brought him up right!). And I'm angry, very angry, at the way feminism is currently portrayed and diminished, with terms like feminazis and bleating 'whatabouttery' every time someone mentions that domestic violence is wrong and that there is still a pay gap in 2015! 2015! I read a lot, mostly fiction, and have a TBR list that I doubt will ever be finished, so I haven't read any political/cultural/social books in a long time. Of course, when I was younger I read lots of feminist works - Naomi Wolf, Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinman, I even struggled through Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex'. But the world has changed and feminism has changed too, so 'Fifty Shades of Feminism', is a timely collection of essays that provides a small window on feminist thoughts and ideas today. And the format meant that I could dip in and out of it, reading when I had the time - a real bonus for me.

This compilation comprises of essays written by many different women from different cultures, with different experiences and different opinions about feminism and what it means to be a feminist. With contributions from women working as novelists, barristers, politicians, comedians, and doctors, among others, and featuring such well-known women as Joan Bakewell, Diana Quick, Meera Syal, Kathy Lette and Sandi Toksvig (her description of the young girl in high heels at the graduation ceremony is brilliant) there are definitely fifty shades of feminism here. Some of it I agreed with whole-heartedly - nodding along as I read, glad to see that other women feel the same way as I do. There were other contributions that made me cross and that I really didn't enjoy - but I'm glad that the editors gave space to such a diversity of opinion and experience.

I have a sixteen-year-old daughter and the world she's about to set out in is a scary place. It seems unimaginable to me that women are still treated like second class citizens (and they really are, and too many of us are far too complacent about it) and it frightens me that some young women think that they no longer need feminism. This book shows that they do - and is a fantastic way to introduce young women (and men) to the ideas behind feminism.

Read it, enjoy it and pass it on to your daughters and your sons.

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## Alex Reborn says

Yes, yes, yes! 50 times yes!

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## Emily W says

**The Concept:** 50 women, 50 experiences, 50 stories about journeys through feminism.

**Favourite Stories:** Sharon Haywood - *"I was always a feminist... I just didn't know it"*, because I feel like this statement definitely applies to me and my views on feminism; Martha Spurrier - Women in Law, being a law student myself; and Alice Stride's short story, because being an older sister, I can relate to the desire of

wanting the best for my younger sister.

**Pros:** This book presented a diverse range of stories, especially with regards to cultural background.

**Cons:** This book did not contain any stories (as far as I'm aware) or transgender women, even though transfeminism is coming to the spotlight.

**Overall Opinion:** I found this book interesting, and really enjoyed seeing the way that feminism has shaped and played a role in all these different women's lives, crossing a variety of times, countries, sexualities, religions, and professions.

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## **Beth (bibliobeth) says**

I attended a meeting recently in London for The Fawcett Society which campaigns for equal rights for women in the UK on issues such as pay, pensions, poverty, justice and politics. The meeting featured talks by popular authors Kate Mosse and Lisa Appignanesi, both of whom were truly inspirational and we had an opportunity to buy their books afterwards over drinks and nibbles, obviously an opportunity I jumped at! Fifty Shades of Feminism appealed to me immediately as it features short essays from fifty women all from different cultures, religions and professions on what feminism means to them personally.

Generally speaking, the book was fantastic although certain essays spoke more to me than others, but they were all interesting and it was fascinating to read all their points of view. It was only after I finished the book that I realised that feminism and equality for women is still such a real issue today obviously enough for some developing countries where religion and culture may be an issue, but certainly still today in Western society. Equality is STILL a huge problem in certain industries, some of which may be a surprise like in the literary world, but others like law and politics perhaps less so and where women are sorely under-represented.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a bit of a myth or stereotype about feminism in that we are all butch, angry man-haters. Yes, there will always be extremes of the scale but this book proves the stereotype completely wrong. There's something for everyone in this book and it ranges in emotion from melancholy and serious to very humorous. Jeanette Winterson writes a very funny piece on the porn industry for example which had me chuckling and shaking my head in disbelief at the same time. Jane Czyzselska, the editor of Diva magazine wrote a wonderful piece about the stigma she receives for being a heterosexual-looking lesbian which proves that prejudice is rife even within the gay community. I was a bit shocked by this particular article and perhaps a bit naïve as I did not think that this sector (who are often subject to gross mistreatment themselves) would be so discriminatory.

Other favourites included Sandi Toksvig's essay which explored the reasons why women continue to wear high heels that cause them pain and rip their feet to shreds and the final entry written by Alice Stride who won a competition to write a short piece for the book. She wrote a short rant about how she convinced her younger sister not to shave off all of her pubic hair just to make it more appealing to men. It was hilarious, poignant and very, very honest and I challenge anyone to read it on public transport while maintaining a straight face. I failed miserably of course!

This is a book I will definitely be keeping and it's the sort of book that you can just dip in and out of at your own leisure. It was only after I had finished it that I realised that equality for women is still a contentious

issue and we need to carry on fighting for the female sex not only here, but round the world so that we are no longer seen as “the second” and inferior sex. My only slight niggle is that I would have loved to see a few opinions from men for comparison and because I realise there are some wonderful male feminists out there who support the cause. Apart from that, it’s a brilliant read that I would recommend to anyone interested in the topic and for all young girls everywhere as a must read.

Please see my full review at <http://www.bibliobeth.com>

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## **Sarah says**

This book was kind of disappointing. The first 15 essays (not sure what else to call them, though the longest isn't more than 5 pages long) were pretty boring to be honest and felt like filler - not sure arranging these alphabetically by author was the best way to format the book. I found the other 35 more interesting, I just felt that with the pieces all being so short, none of the authors had a chance to even scratch the surface, and they ended up being a little repetitive at times. I really liked a handful, but overall this collection fell flat for me.

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## **Paul says**

4.5 stars

This is an interesting collection of brief vignettes by fifty women commissioned in the wake of the fuss over *Fifty Shades of Grey*. They examine in very different ways the state of feminism and the progress of justice and equality. Inevitably there are gaps; as the editors say, they could have come up with a list of five hundred, never mind fifty. As it originates from Britain (published by Virago) there is a something of a bias towards British writers; but there are writers from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. I think that most people will think of ways the list could be broadened or improved. That is a minor point though. The book shows that feminism is a broad church and some of the articles are brilliant. There is humour, tragedy and some perceptive reflections on the current state of things.

Tahmima Anam kicks things off with; "Things Your Mama Never Told You (for fear you would demand a sex change)", explaining that however difficult things are for western women, there are those who are worse off. Naomi Alderman, a novelist and computer game designer, concludes that she finds more sexism in the literary world than in the gaming world. Laurie Penny's poetic offering is brilliant. Juliet Stevenson and Meera Syal make some perceptive comments about women in film and theatre. Jeanette Winterson's analysis of porn is all the more scary because of the way she includes adverts and language found on the net in her arguments. Xinran examines five Chinese characters and how they impact on the way women are treated in Chinese culture (this is one of the best essays in the book). There is a heartfelt and well-reasoned statement by the members of Pussy Riot at the very end of the book. Barrister Martha Spurrier talks with great feeling about her work with rape and abuse victims; juxtaposing it with her first day as a lawyer and an awful joke told in a lift.

All of the contributions are worth reading and sometimes, because of their brevity there can be a sense of frustration that arguments are not developed, but that is a small caveat and it is easy to dip in and out of it as a result.

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## **Emilia Muller says**

În limba română? - <http://bombitaluivladmusatescu.blogspot...>

In English - <http://bombitaluivladmusatescuenglish...>

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## **Kirsty says**

"In my understanding, the women's movement is first and foremost about memory. It is about remembering the women who lived, struggled, worked and loved before us, including those we have never heard about. The women's movement is a sense of continuity in time, knowing that you are part of a river, constantly flowing, changing, expanding." – Elif Shafak

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## **Jessica Gaskin says**

The title of this book put me off and caught my eye at the same time. In the end, I'm glad I picked it up and had a look at the contributors. Big names such as Jeanette Winterson, Susie Orbach and Margaret Atwood, drew me in. But it was the women and stories that I hadn't read before that ended up being the best part of this book. For example, Naomi Alderman's piece comparing the game and book industries' forms of sexism highlighted some quite honest truths which I'd never considered before. There were many others deserving a mention, but I'm awful with names so I'll update this when I've got the book next to me to remind me. Suffice it to say, there are lots of excellent takes on feminism presented here. Also, the inevitable not-so-good ones (samey, trying to be too different, etc.). All are easy to dip in and out of and therefore great for commutes when you can't get into something longer. Also brilliant: The looks on people's faces when they try to figure out what you're reading...watch it change at That moment!

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## **Claire says**

There were some outstanding essays in this anthology - thoughtful, bold, challenging, clever. It was a delight to read the perspectives of so many women in one collection. But it left me with one question: where are the Black women? There are women of colour in this collection. It's not all white. And there was a non-apology in the introduction saying the book made no claims about being representative. But basically overlooking the perspectives of Black women when compiling a sampler of worthwhile feminist voices says very little about the feminist principles that went into editing this book.

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## **Marla Haasz says**

The last 10-15 pieces were the most hard hitting imo. I almost feel honored to have had the pleasure to read these stories from women all around the world. If you're looking for a collection of stories by women that only exist to be told to praise Feminism as this perfect movement, you should turn around. The writers were self critical not self indulgent, and not only about feminism in general but about their own specific brand of

feminism. Feminists are people, not saints, and it is important we don't bestow a blanket perception on movements and the supporters of movements (ie, feminism and feminists) We will fuck up, and that's totally chill, you can quote me on that. 4.5/5

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### **Olariu says**

putin cam ciudata pentru gustul meu...cred ca n-am inteles in totalitate anumite pasaje... anumite parti mi-au placut foarte mult, am empatizat cu ideile si argumentarile acelor femei, altele mi s-au parut usor exagerate si prea pline de un ceva subtil-confuz care m-a lasat total nedumerita...per total, o carte interesanta, de citit incet, cu mintea deschisa si cu pixul in mână.

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### **Jo (That book-hoarding geek) says**

This book contains a collection of stories from fifty women from around the world and they talk about what Feminism means to them. They explain to us why feminism is needed more than ever, when at the present time, some consider it as a "Dirty" word.

These short essays are thought provoking, but also rather frustrating to read too. I found myself reading these and thinking " Thank f\*\*k, someone has put how I feel into words"

I particularly enjoyed reading this, as it was different opinions and voices on Feminism, from different women, from all walks of life. It has given me fuel and passion so to speak, to be prepared the next time an individual wishes to discuss the aspect of being a Feminist.

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### **Deirdre says**

Not perfect but close, more thought provoking than thought providing it's 50 opinion pieces with other scattered snippets, quotes and some cartoons about feminism, some of them explore the elephant in the corner of 50 Shades of Grey but many of them just talk about their experience of feminism and what it is to be female in the 20th and 21st Century. Many of them are asking why it's so hard for some people to see that it's still necessary and that maybe, just maybe, we're walking into another series of problems instead of solutions.

The last quote: 'You can tell whether some misogynistic societal pressure is being exerted on women by calmly enquiring, "And are men doing this, as well?" If they aren't, chances are you're dealing with what we strident feminists refer to as "some total fucking bullshit".' by Caitlin Moran, resonated particularly with me. All of it opened up some thinking, some of which will take me a while to process.

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### **Pardina says**

A good friend got this for me for Christmas because she knows I like puns and feminism! This book is an awesome collection of feminists from all walks of life, exploring the myriad of reasons why we all need feminism in our lives. It's an easy way to get exposed to different thoughts and experiences that I quite

frankly will never experience. We should all be feminists: but how we do so is up to us.

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