



Finn Mackay

Radical Feminist: Feminist Activism in Movement

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This book is a highly informative historical resource. Just as the title suggests, the book talks about the radical feminist movement in the UK from 1970's to the present. Mackay presents the feminist movement in waves. The book is organized into two phases. The first phase presents the events that led to the first RTN (reclaim the night) protest in the U.K. In the second phase, Mackay talks about postmodern theories within the feminist movement. While many people may view violence against women as a new phenomenon, Mackay makes it clear that violence targeting women dates back to the dawn of humanity and ending it needs banding together of women. Overall, the book attempts to distinguish the second and third feminist movement waves. As such, the book is very relevant to historians and educators who would want to promote discourse about the differences between the second and third waves of the feminist movement.

The first portion of the book presents a very compelling argument regarding the movement, with the events leading to the first RTN in the U.K organized in a chronological order. According to Mackay, the second wave developed out of necessity. In the 1970's, there was pronounced domestic, sexual, physical and even verbal violence against women and women could not hold it anymore. According to Mackay, this fight in U.K was directly inspired by fight for equality among white and Black Americans initiated and propagated by the Civil Rights Movement, which had stimulated the emergence of women activists in the U.S. According to the author, female activists in the United States is what inspired women in the U.K to start fighting against violence.

The second portion of the book presents personal views regarding inclusion of men and trans people on RTN. She holds that men are responsible for women's plight and ought not to have been included in the feminist movement. She uses arguments embedded on various theories, which increase legibility of her opinions. For example, she refuses early activists that feminism is a social movement and men should never be included in this movement. Defending her thesis that men are responsible for women's plight, Mackay argues that women's plight is a patriarchal construct. According to this construct, men view women as men's object and a natural object of sex. Based on this model, Mackay shows that men are to blame for women in prostitution, which is debatable.

The major strength of this book is featuring how leaders of the Women's Liberation Movement inspired women in U.K to actively participate in the feminist movement. According to the text, the leaders used papers from the New Left of the U.S., which talked about the fight for equality without borders of race, gender, color, etc. The papers contradicted with the reality in the New Left; just as it is today that women's anger won't be taken serious, women who voiced their views regarding equality within the New Left were hushed and brushed off. Suppressing of women's voice in the New Left led to the branching off of the women in the new left. Women took to organizing separately to obtain their own political autonomy. To inspire its members, the women began to publish their opinions about female equality. They protested, for example, beauty reagents and fought for their voices to be heard. Feminist movement texts from America began to be published in the U.K. Women in the U.K read the radical opinions and watched their counterparts on televisions as they protested in the American streets. This electrified women in the U.K to fight for their freedom too.

What makes this textbook compelling is its use of cases to link the feminist movement in the U.K with social context in the 1970s. For instance, Mackay features Sheila Rowbotham. According to the text, Sheila held that the WLM grew from working class women, sewing machinist particularly, who wanted equal working conditions as their male counterparts.



These women marched in streets to reclaim the night (RTN) severally but the process was not easy. Many were killed, raped and beaten alongside other injustices from men. However, with the persistence of violence against them, women could not relent. Through cohesion and persistence, women in U.K succeeded in fighting violence against women. Though the author succeeds in proving that the feminist movement resulted from necessity, the book does not draw a clear line between the second and the third feminist movement waves. The author should have focused on the third wave, which would have made the argument in the first portion of the book more compelling.

Another weakness of this book is the reliance on theory to tackle very sensitive questions presented in the second half of the book. The main question, which all readers of this book would want be interested to answer is where is RTN marching heading to in the modern society when men are secluded from these movements? The author uses some interesting such as the post-modernism theory and others, which in my view drive her from addressing the underlying questions realistically. For example, her believe that violence to women is a patriarchal construct informs her decision that men should not be included in feminist movements. Though there may be traces of men dominance in some communities in the 21st century, Mackay's basing her conclusions on male constructivism is a bias, which misinforms her argument about the way to address forms of violence to women in the present age. As a writer, she should overcome such bias. But all in all, the uses of theories make the textbook a useful resource for educators.

Meltem Ince Yenilmez

Associate Professor

Yasar University, Turkey

meltem.ince@yasar.edu.tr & meltemin79@gmail.com