

FEMINISM'S HISTORY AND HISTORICAL AMNESIA

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Nancy Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010)

Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1782 to the Present* (New York: Modern Library, 2011)

Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Every author who writes about the history of feminism laments the historical amnesia that separates each new generation of activists from those who have gone before. Because the tradition of thinking about women's rights and women's nature is at the center of public discourse so episodically, generation after generation has the experience of discovering and explaining the realities of gender-based inequality anew, and too often they remain poorly informed about both the achievements and the mistakes of those who have gone before.¹ Given the massive intellectual energy of the field of women's history since the late 1960s, it is puzzling that we have not had a scholarly synthesis of the struggle for women's rights in the United States since Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* in 1959. Feminist historiography, however, tracks right along with the concerns of particular generations.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s feminism had everything to do with the emergence of women's history as a field within the discipline. Historians of women, themselves committed to and imprinted by the recent upsurge in feminist activism, were less concerned with the ideas and activism of the woman suffrage movement, however, than with unearthing the daily lives of ordinary

¹ Gerda Lerner, in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York, 1987), blames this phenomenon over centuries and even millennia on women's lack of education and isolation from the world of ideas. It is doubly ironic to discover a similar amnesia in a time of near-universal literacy.

women and exploring the links between women's rights, abolition, and other social movements. And for the most part they left documentation of their own movement to political scientists, sociologists, and journalists. Whatever was going on around them in the 1970s was not yet "history" in the sense that anyone could know where it would lead.² And yet, that movement generated the questions that shaped the field. In order to make history thousands of young scholars believed it important to reunderstand the past in a way that made visible not only the lives of women but also their impact on their particular times and places.

In the fall of 1974, still a graduate student, I presented my first two professional papers at the Southern Historical Association and the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. Each panel featured graduate students presenting material from dissertations then in progress and soon to be published. At the former, my paper on the links between women's experience in the civil rights movement (especially the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and the emergence of women's liberation was paired with a brilliant paper by Jacqueline Dowd Hall drawn from her study of Jesse Daniel Ames and the Southern Women's Campaign against Lynching in the 1930s.³ Our session title, "Race and Sex," was a little bit scandalous to some of the old guard. At the Berkshire Conference, my copresenters were Ellen Dubois and Mari Jo Buhle, with Mary Ryan as commentator.⁴ DuBois made a case for the radicalism of woman suffrage in the context of the post-Civil War conflicts over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution to guarantee suffrage rights to black men; Buhle explored the history of women's self-organization in the Socialist Party of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ryan's contribution to our discussion reflected her research on the dynamic emergence of a new middle class in the mid-nineteenth century using the lenses of gender and class to illumine the upsurge in voluntary associations in the 1830s that created new forms of civil society.

With the rest of our cohort we were all grappling with the intersections of gender, race, and class and the dynamics of social movements. The breadth of our questions was foreshadowed in an early collection of documents, *Root of*

² I was one of the few working on the history of contemporary feminism but my work focused on the origins of the women's movement in the 1960s and I did not try to write a history of that movement itself for more than two decades.

³ See Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, 1979); and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jesse Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York, 1979).

⁴ Ellen Carol Dubois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, 1978); Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism: 1870–1920* (Urbana, 1981); and Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (New York, 1981).

Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women, compiled by Nancy Cott while she was a graduate student at Brandeis in 1972.⁵ Family roles, sexuality, life cycle, and work (defined broadly to include housework as well as labor outside the home) were themes as important as women's rights activism, imbedding the latter in a broader context. All of us, and hundreds more, were inventing a field by teaching ourselves and each other in the absence of academic advisers, courses, or programs.⁶ We also built on and then joined forces with the previously isolated voices of an earlier generation, Eleanor Flexner, Gerda Lerner, and Anne Firor Scott, whose pioneering works suddenly became intensely relevant and inspiring.⁷

The new field was driven first by the effort to find women in the past and write them back into history. The links between women's history and other versions of what we then called the "new social history" created a synergistic exploration of history "from the bottom up"—rethinking the meaning of race, class, work and the dynamics of gender. Feminist historians were not interested in a simplistic retelling of the struggle for the right to vote, but they did search for roots, foremothers, and perhaps cautionary lessons for their own commitment to radical change.⁸ The objective of discovering women's agency, rather than simply describing a kaleidoscope of victimizations, led to explorations of women's participation in the creation of middle-class culture and the "ideology of domesticity" which prescribed separate spheres for women and men around the overlapping binaries of male–female, work–home, and public–private.

Christine Stansell and Nancy Hewitt played key roles in this genealogy. Both creators of the field, they were nonetheless a kind of "second generation" who entered graduate school in the 1970s at schools where pioneering feminist historians had established some of the earliest curricula in US women's history: Stansell at Yale, where Nancy Cott had joined the faculty in 1974, and Nancy Hewitt at Penn, where Carroll Smith-Rosenberg was on the faculty. They also benefited from the vibrant intellectual community at the periodic Berkshire

⁵ Nancy Cott, *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women* (New York, 1972).

⁶ Many of those are now seen as giants in the discipline and they include numerous presidents of the leading professional associations.

⁷ Flexner was no longer interested in our project, perhaps because of age and her old-left distaste for new-left politics, but Lerner and Scott remained major figures in the evolution of the field.

⁸ Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage*, was one of the few to study the suffrage movement per se. Her subject was the split between women's rights activists and their erstwhile allies in the abolition movement when the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed the right to vote to newly freed African American males, thus detaching women's rights from the struggle for racial equality.

Conferences on the History of Women. The first of those, in 1972, drew eight hundred, to the astonishment of its organizers. Just two years later 1,800 showed up, and by the end of the decade every conference drew more than two thousand, rivaling attendance at the largest meetings of professional historians.

Smith-Rosenberg's early influential article, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America" argued for a separate women's culture in nineteenth-century America, a position that resonated deeply with the contemporaneous emphasis on cultural feminism and separatism within the women's movement.⁹ Nancy Cott's *Bonds of Womanhood* (1977) explored the emergence of a "cult of domesticity" in a newly forming middle class between 1780 and 1830. For Cott, the worlds of men and women were not so much separate as interdependent and constituent of middle-class identity. Inhabiting a "separate sphere" gave women a shared identity with paradoxical consequences. Middle-class domesticity undergirded a radical ideological separation of "true women" from the emerging public sphere of the new republic. At the same time, it provided women with a shared identity based on womanhood, that "essential fiction," to use Stansell's phrase, that is a prerequisite to collective action.

Stansell and Hewitt continued and complicated this conversation. Stansell's *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1790–1860*, published in 1986 but drafted in dissertation form at Yale in the late 1970s, brought a subtle class analysis to the impact of gender ideology as it had evolved into antebellum New York. She traced the gritty lives of poor and immigrant working women in New York who resisted efforts of middle-class reformers, both female and male, to enforce conformity to the norms of domesticity. Nancy Hewitt's *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York 1822–1872* (1984), also based on a dissertation written in the 1970s, similarly challenged any romanticized or universalized notion of "separate spheres" by complicating it with careful attention to class. Her meticulous community study revealed that women's voluntary associations shared the values and perspectives of their class origins and only a small group of radical Quakers directly challenged the hierarchies of gender and race.

Both Stansell and Hewitt have gone on to produce additional volumes of pathbreaking social history and are widely admired as key leaders in the field of women's history. Hewitt's *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida 1880s–1920s* explores the social history of Latina, black, Anglo, and immigrant women's self-organization in a southern city, greatly complicating a biracial (as well as a male-dominated) version of the post-Civil War South. Stansell led the way into the history of sexuality as a coeditor (with Anne Snitow

⁹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1 (1975), 1–29.

and Sharon Thompson) of *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, and went on to explore the lives of writers, artists, and political activists in Bohemian Greenwich Village in *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*.¹⁰ While Hewitt has stayed firmly rooted in social history, challenging feminist historians to attend to diversities of race and class as well as international linkages and contexts, Stansell moved toward intellectual history and gender analysis focused on men as well as women. Her trajectory traces broader shifts in the discipline. In the 1980s historical studies of the social construction of gender emerged in response to the turn toward gender and sexuality in the interdisciplinary fields of women's studies and cultural studies.¹¹ The intense attention to texts in postmodern theorizing brought ideas back to center stage, sidelining social historians' focus on material conditions. Intellectual history, however, in the hands of major feminist historians like Linda Kerber, Ruth Bloch, Mary Kelley, Ann Douglas, and others, reemerged deeply inflected by social context. Stansell is an exemplar of this development and the challenges it poses.

Both Stansell's and Hewitt's most recent books, under review here, demonstrate a renewed interest in the long history of feminism in the United States. Hewitt's edited collection, *No Permanent Waves*, calls for a new synthesis that incorporates the complexities of race and class and shatters the simpler, more monochromatic renditions that abound in American popular culture. Christine Stansell's *The Feminist Promise* attempts to accomplish just that.

No Permanent Waves offers a sustained argument for a multicultural rendition of the history of feminism in the United States. This history, Hewitt argues, is not well served by the "wave" metaphor—most commonly used to designate the struggle for woman suffrage as the "first wave" and the eruption of feminist activism in the 1960s and 1970s as the "second wave" followed in the 1990s by a self-designated "third wave" among young women:

The script of feminist history—that each wave overwhelms and exceeds its predecessor—lends itself all too easily to whiggish interpretations of ever more radical, all-encompassing, and ideologically sophisticated movements. Activists thus highlight their distinctiveness from—and often superiority to—previous feminist movements in the process of constituting themselves as the next wave.¹²

¹⁰ Christine Stansell, *The Powers of Desire* (New York, 1983); Stansell, *American Moderns* (New York, 2000).

¹¹ A key leader of this turn from social history to post-structuralist theorizing was Joan Wallach Scott. See her *Gender and the Politics of History*, revised edn (New York, 1999).

¹² "Introduction," Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 4–5.

The studies in this collection clearly demonstrate “the messy multiplicity of feminist activism across U.S. history and beyond its borders.”¹³ Race, class, sexuality, and national boundaries no longer limit the story.

The most sophisticated and wide-ranging piece in the book is Hewitt’s own essay “From Seneca Falls to Suffrage? Reimagining a ‘Master’ Narrative in U.S. Women’s History.” The narrative in question opens the story with the first women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and follows a seemingly inexorable arc from that point to the successful passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution that enfranchised American women in 1920. The key actors in this story, despite the inescapable recognition of its grounding in antislavery activism before the Civil War (1861–65), were white and middle-class. Few serious historians would settle for such a simple rendition, though textbooks often do. Even so, Hewitt unearths a tangle of little-known feminist efforts among black, working-class, Native American, Mexican, and immigrant women beginning well before 1848 and extending into the twentieth century. Many of those struggles for sex equality were localized within particular communities. Awareness of that complexity, in turn, can reshape the telling of canonical events. Hewitt points out, for example, that the Seneca Falls convention was linked to a network of radical Quakers who had long histories of activism not only against slavery but also for peace, for improved working conditions, and for respectful relations with Native Americans who provided influential models for women’s civic empowerment: Four of the five organizers of the convention and at least one-quarter of those signing the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments were part of this network of radical Friends. Several were in correspondence with Seneca Indians, and the Motts had visited one of their reservations just before traveling to Seneca Falls . . .

Hewitt pursues this more complex chronology through the nineteenth century, demonstrating the possibility of retelling the story with “a wider geographical focus and a broader definition of politics than is allowed by the conventional Seneca Falls-to-suffrage framing.”¹⁴ The second article in *No Permanent Waves*, Becky Thompson’s “Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism,” makes a similar claim for feminism in the late twentieth century.¹⁵

Stansell, probably doing her research and writing at about the same time as Hewitt and her colleagues, takes up this challenge to some degree. Her definition of feminist politics is not as broad as Hewitt’s, in part because Stansell is engaged in writing an intellectual history of ideas about women’s rights as much as a history

¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹⁴ Nancy Hewitt, “From Seneca Falls to Suffrage? Reimagining a ‘Master’ Narrative in U.S. Women’s History,” in Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 15–38, 32.

¹⁵ Thompson’s article, which continues the “wave” metaphor that Hewitt decries, was originally published in *Feminist Studies* in 2002. Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 39–60.

of social movements.¹⁶ While Native American, Latina, and immigrant women are less visible in her account than Hewitt would demand, African American women are frequently center stage. She pays homage, for example, to Maria Stewart as “the first American woman to speak out publicly on the woman question” and devotes several pages to analyzing Stewart’s writings and the responses she received. As Stewart preached and wrote in the early 1830s, her positions on women, especially black women, became central to her work. “In this she foreshadowed a line of black women to come who did not separate their commitments to the race from their grievances on their own behalf.” Indeed, it is Maria Stewart who coined the famous question attributed to Sojourner Truth two decades later: “What if I am a woman?”¹⁷ Of course, the resonance of this famous question changed dramatically with the context. In the 1830s Stewart challenged restrictive ideas about women’s proper place, anticipating the arguments of Sarah and Angelina Grimke who were similarly attacked for speaking before “promiscuous” audiences of men and women. Truth, in the 1850s, ridiculed the protections of that “proper place” intended only for women who were white and middle-class.

Stansell also recognizes the international dimension of US feminism at least in the beginning and again at the end of her story. Mary Wollstonecraft, writing in England in the 1790s, was widely read in the early years of the United States, and North Americans were also aware of feminist writings during and after the French Revolution. Once her story gets going, however, Stansell’s focus for the most part is decidedly American. Even so, the task she assumes is vast and extremely complex. That she has written a coherent, clear, and lively narrative is both marvelous and intellectually brave. Her achievement will provide a new grounding for further explorations.

Three lines of investigation thread through the book, allowing comparison of extremely different contexts and social movements. One is the change in family structures and the power relations of “family government.” This, she argues, links the grievances of nineteenth-century feminists about married women’s property rights and late twentieth-century concerns about domestic violence. The second is a recognition that feminism—though deeply connected to the democratic left—has many political allegiances and has been employed at both ends of the political spectrum. Stansell is careful to avoid presenting a romanticized version of

¹⁶ The trajectory of the first half of Stansell’s book traces the path of an early and wonderful collection of documents compiled by Alice S. Rossi, *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir* (New York, 1973).

¹⁷ Stansell, *The Feminist Promise*, 35. See also Nell Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (New York, 1996) for a full discussion of the complexities of Truth’s speech and the phrase “Aren’t I a woman?” attributed to her in a white suffragist’s transcription of Truth’s speech in 1851.

feminist history that omits efforts to achieve suffrage for some women (white and middle-class) at the expense of other women (racial minorities and immigrants) or its uses in colonial expansion that sought to remake other cultures by imposing Western definitions of propriety and domesticity.

Of a different order, but perhaps most important as a unifying theme, is Stansell's use of the metaphor of mothers and daughters as a central way to describe the changing nature of movements for and thinkers about women's rights throughout United States history. In her view, "mothers" are pragmatic. They seek to increase women's power and their legal rights "without radically challenging the way things are."¹⁸ Daughters, by contrast have "contempt for the status quo." Their demands and methods are "utopian, flamboyant, [and] defiant . . . animated by imagining a kind of equality that would free women to act in the world exactly as men do." It is a useful metaphor that Stansell agrees is more descriptive than analytic. It fits best when describing actual age cohorts with different political agendas: e.g. younger women in the 1910s and 1970s flaunting rules and demanding freedom in every dimension or older women wielding maternal politics in the 1890s through organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union or the aging membership of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). It becomes complicated when the daughters in one generation—for example the post-1968 Women's Liberation Movement challenging the liberal "mothers" of the National Organization for Women—became "mothers" in the perception of a "third-wave" generation writing in the 1990s. Stansell, however, tells us very little about feminism in the United States after 1980, so this conundrum is never faced. Instead, her final chapter traces the dramatic growth of feminism around the globe at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, sparked in part by a series of conferences organized through the United Nations and then a proliferation of NGOs. This is, in fact, where the feminist impulse has gone in the past thirty years, and it offers a fascinating paradox as it employs that fictive category "woman" on an international stage where the fundamental reality of a breathtaking range of cultural and economic differences is inescapable.

It is hard to fault Stansell for the difficult choices she had to make in order to write a single volume covering several centuries. The coherence of her work rests in large measure on the fact that it is framed as intellectual history, focused on ideological challenges to cultural and political definitions of womanhood and the movements that sometimes grew around those challenges. All of those thinkers and movements deploy the "useful fiction" of a universal womanhood that underlies collective action. As Stansell notes, that universal fiction—so

¹⁸ Stansell, *The Feminist Promise*, xvi.

difficult in the American context riven by race and class—has moved to the international arena, where it coexists with even greater degrees of difference in religion, ethnicity, nation, urban/rural, and extremes of wealth and poverty.

Hewitt's collection, read together with *Bodies of Knowledge*, Wendy Kline's study of feminist interventions in health care in the 1970s and 1980s, proposes that the task for current research, leading eventually to yet another synthesis, will be even more complex. The table of contents in *No Permanent Waves* suggests that few are taking Hewitt up on her challenge to develop a broader and more inclusive narrative of nineteenth-century American feminism (only three of seventeen articles, including Hewitt's essay, address the nineteenth century). The remainder of the volume, however, points to an emerging scholarship on feminism in the United States after 1960 that reveals a story that is enormously diverse in terms of race, class, generation, and region. Hewitt's call for a more capacious definition of feminism is reflected in a book with articles on welfare rights, labor feminism, peace activists, tenant movements, hip-hop, Chicana feminism, and the "cultural geography" of young feminists in the age of the Internet.

In *Bodies of Knowledge*, Wendy Kline explores a key dimension of the intellectual history of feminism in the late twentieth century, illuminating some of the dilemmas Stansell has chosen to ignore. Kline examines one of the most radical approaches of the women's liberation movement: its challenge to the patriarchal roots of medical "science" regarding women's bodies with the claim that the most authentic knowledge is rooted in the body. That claim, which grew from early conversations in feminist consciousness-raising groups, entered the public discourse with the publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a collectively edited self-help book that is still in print. It produced a brilliant critique and a variety of activist challenges to the power of the medical establishment to control women's reproductive experience (childbirth, birth control, abortion). These ranged from an underground abortion service in Chicago known as Jane, to lay midwives assisting home births, to an effort to reshape medical education by having women serve as both models and instructors to students learning to conduct pelvic exams. Kline describes both the radical decentering of scientific knowledge that resulted from the feminist critique and the dilemmas the movement faced as it entered the arena of public policy. Challenging laws and regulations required a response to scientific claims with equally "scientific" critiques rooted in expertise and professional credentials rather than the body itself. Kline argues, "Thinking *through* the body, rather than around it, remained a neglected yet central component of female empowerment."¹⁹ But that approach to knowledge also rested on an assumption that the experience of the female body

¹⁹ Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge*, p. 1.

“provided incontestable evidence of a universal ‘sisterhood,’ [which] ultimately stymied women’s health activism.”²⁰

Bodies of Knowledge provides an excellent example of the power of ideas, both to build a movement and to confound it. The idea of a universal sisterhood, so essential to a social movement of and for women, proves incapable of sustaining a movement when the fiction that it is becomes self-evident. The history of twenty-first-century feminism will have to wrestle with this quandary that is part and parcel of every movement for women’s rights on the globe.

Given this reality, it is of interest to ask why the history of feminism is so in vogue at the moment. One answer is simply that scholars are not immune to the growing popular interest in the longer history of women’s rights. The resurgence of feminist activism in the early 1990s in the aftermath of Anita Hill’s testimony about sexual harassment by a nominee to the Supreme Court generated a renewed interest in the history of women’s rights. A series of documentaries and docudramas on the struggle for woman suffrage appeared at five-year intervals: “One Woman One Vote,” on PBS’s *The American Experience* in 1994; Ken Burns’s *Not For Ourselves Alone: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* in 1999; and *Iron Jawed Angels*, a 2004 Hollywood drama in which Hillary Swank played suffragist Alice Paul. These, perhaps, are the strongest evidence of the Seneca Falls-to-Suffrage chronology that Hewitt critiques. In those same years, however, a new generation of historians began to explore the history of the American women’s movement in the late twentieth century.²¹

The motivations of these authors are clear. They continue to identify with the feminist project, and they are concerned that future generations will lose connection with a long and rich heritage. Stansell and Hewitt, in particular, themselves products of the feminist upsurge in the 1970s, clearly long to transmit

²⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

²¹ Stephanie Gilmore, *Feminist Generations: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana, 2008); Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington D.C.* (Urbana, 2008); Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space and Feminist Activism* (Durham, NC, 2007); Jo Reger, ed., *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women’s Movement* (New York, 2005); Judith Ezekiel, *Feminism in the Heartland* (Columbus, OH, 2002); Carol Giardina, *Freedom for Women: Forging the Women’s Liberation Movement, 1953–1970* (Gainesville, FL, 2010). Note also that several scholars from the first generation of feminist historians wrote broader syntheses or created edited collections of documents: Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century’s End* (New York, 2003); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York, 2000); Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: A Memoir of a Revolution*; Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow, eds., *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women’s Liberation* (New York, 1998); Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon, eds., *Dispatches from the Women’s Liberation Movement* (New York, 2000).

to future generations a story (or stories) that can sustain them. Nancy Hewitt, addressing the multicultural realities of contemporary American life, argues,

Until we recognize the breadth and depth of woman's rights activism in previous eras, many contemporary feminists will continue to teeter atop the fragile legacy of a nineteenth-century movement dominated by white, middle-class women focused on the single issue of enfranchisement. Far broader landscapes and richer legacies are available to support and to caution us.²²

In a similar vein, Christine Stansell concludes,

The copious feminist past, replete with achievements and fluent adaptations—as well as mistakes and second thoughts—has often dropped out of sight. Historical amnesia always has consequences, and feminism has suffered through compulsive repetitions of old mistakes, old arguments, old quandaries.

She yearns for a time when new generations can challenge inequalities and injustices

with a sense that the past was backing them up . . . I've written this book for the twenty-first century, that it may transport the riches and assurances of the past, along with its sobering lessons, to the women and men who now take up the task of making good on feminism's democratic promise.²³

In the twenty-first century, no one can imagine that the struggle for a more democratic future will be simple. Feminism, especially, as it advocates for the rights of half of humanity, will always be a complex of ideas and actions fraught with immense differences. These books, products of four decades of scholarship, make it clear that the legacies of the past are also multifaceted and that there is more to be learned. Perhaps they also signal the possibility that historical amnesia is not inevitable.

²² Hewitt, *No Permanent Waves*, 33.

²³ Stansell, *The Feminist Promise*, 399.