

I • Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler

# "WOMAN," "FEMINISTS," AND "FEMINISM"

## ON "WOMAN"

Is a "slave who has chains to break." (Margaret Fuller, 1843)

Is "in her sufferings bound hand and foot, unprotected by the law or public sentiment, dumb alike in Church, State, and at the domestic hearth." (Susan B. Anthony, 1852)

Regarded by men "as a breeding-machine and the necessary adjunct to a frying-pan." (Cicely Hamilton, 1909)

Is economically invisible. "To the androcentric mind she does not exist—women are females, and that's all." (Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 1911)

"A woman, unless she submits, is neither a mule nor a queen though like a mule she may suffer and like a queen pace the floor." (Alice Walker, 1975)

Has been "obsolete since the beginning of the Glorious Age. Considered by many companion lovers as the most infamous designation. This word once applied to being fallen in an absolute state of servitude. Its meaning was, 'one who belongs to another.'" (Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig, 1976)

"Jill-of-all-trades  
Lover, mother, housewife, friend, breadwinner  
Heart and spade  
A woman is a ritual  
A house that must accommodate  
A house that must endure  
Generation after generation . . ." (Genny Lim, 1981)

"From father's house to husband's house to a grave that still might not be her own, a woman acquiesces to male authority in order to gain some protection from male violence. She conforms, in order to be as safe as she can be." (Andrea Dworkin, 1983: 14)

• "What is a woman you ask. . . . Una mujer? . . . Are you like me, are you proud, brown, bilingual, confused and anxious? . . . The voices of our culture—our mothers and grandmothers—filter through the cracks of our personal feminism. . . . Independence. We want to be our mothers . . . crochet like our grandmothers—abuelita—and write reports and analytical studies." (Gladys Benavides Corbit, 1984)

## ON "FEMINISM" AND "FEMINISTS"

Has as its goal to give every woman "the opportunity of becoming the best that her natural faculties make her capable of." (Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 1878)

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat. . . ." (Rebecca West, 1913)

"Mother, what is a Feminist?"

✓ "A Feminist, my daughter, Is any woman now who cares To think about her own affairs As men don't think she oughter." (Alice Duer Miller, 1915)

"Begins but cannot end with the discovery by an individual of her self-consciousness as a woman. It is not, finally, even the recognition of her reasons for anger, or

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• DOING FEMINIST THEORY

the decision to change her life, to go back to school, to leave a marriage. . . . Feminism means finally that we renounce our obedience to the fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world. . . . Feminism implies that we recognize fully the inadequacy for us, the distortion, of male-created ideologies, and that we proceed to think, and act, out of that recognition." (Adrienne Rich, 1976)

A person who knows that we hold up half the sky and who is going to make everyone else notice it. (Dawn Russell, 1979: 75)

"Feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement." (Barbara Smith, 1979)

"Is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various

levels—sex, race, and class, to name a few—and a commitment to reorganizing U.S. society, so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires." (bell hooks, 1981)

"Is an entire worldview or *gestalt*, not just a laundry list of 'women's issues.' Feminist theory provides a basis for understanding every area of our lives, and a feminist perspective can affect the world politically, culturally, economically, and spiritually." (Charlotte Bunch, 1983)

"A set of beliefs and theoretical constructions about the nature of women's oppression and the part that this oppression plays within social reality more generally." (Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, 1983)

"Well, I'm convinced that many frustrated and crabby women are merely feminists in restraints." (Diane E. Germain, 1983)

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