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Editorial

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Feminism(s) in the Media: Public Outreach and Cultural Transformation

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This special issue is the outcome of the international conference *Feminism(s) in the Media: Public Outreach and Cultural Transformation*, which took place in Ghent, Belgium, on 14–15 September 2023. The interdisciplinary conference aimed to engage participants in exploring how the concept of feminism has been reshaped in the media over time and across linguistic and geographical boundaries, fostering a rich dialogue on feminism(s), a theme examined by keynote speaker Lucy Delap in her book *Feminisms: A Global History* (2020). Attending the conference was an experience full of discoveries and surprises. From the very first sessions, it became clear that the exchange went beyond abstract debate: the personal reports of scholar-activists brought a vivid immediacy to the discussions, offering insights into the lived realities of women across very different cultural and political contexts, from Europe to North Africa, to China, Brazil, North America, or New Zealand. These testimonies, grounded in experience, reminded us that feminism is never only theoretical; it is enacted, contested, and negotiated in real-world settings, often under challenging conditions that demand both resilience and creativity.

Equally striking was the energy brought by the younger generation of scholars. There was a palpable sense of purpose and commitment: these emerging voices were eager not only to engage with feminist theory but to explore its practical applications. They blended with more seasoned scholars and activists, who could relate to them and share their own experience and expertise. All the participants demonstrated a readiness to connect ideas with action, to communicate across borders and disciplines, and to forge networks that could foster meaningful change. The combination of experience, insight, and ambition created a dynamic atmosphere that made it clear: feminist scholarship is vibrant and driven by the desire to make a difference and change.

Alongside these dynamic discussions, some conference contributions explored the history of feminism, particularly the meaning of feminism(s), tracing its evolution across different countries, media, and social contexts. These historical perspectives offered more than a retrospective glance: they illuminated the roots of contemporary debates and showed how past struggles, strategies, and ideas continue to resonate today. By examining historical examples, such as periodicals, photographs, strikes, or book fairs, these articles demonstrate the enduring relevance of feminist activism and scholarship, offering lessons that can inform both theory and practice in the present. Most contributions present case studies that highlight national, international, and transnational forms of public outreach employed by women's rights activists across Europe and the United States, including journalists, editors, photographers, social activists, and writers.

The articles address central issues, including various forms of feminisms, their relationship to women in the press, their perception through the lenses of nationalism and class struggle, and their connection to the management of diversity. How did feminists 'reach out', from local women's centres to international book fairs, or 'reach in,' drawing on influences from other countries, keeping in mind that all these questions are subject to a specific national and/or political context? Through diverse methodologies, ranging from close and distant reading to archival research, gender analysis, and personal experience, the articles highlight the multiple meanings of feminism.

Georgeta Fodor examines nineteenth-century Romanian periodicals to explore the gendered representation of women and the framing of the 'woman question', as it was shaped both internally and through Western interpretations of feminism, alongside a strong nationalist undercurrent. **Matrona Paleou** explores the re-interpretation of the 'woman question' in the nineteenth-century Greek context by examining the magazine *Elliniki Epitheorisis*. Through women's writing and the professional career of pioneering editor Evgenia Zografou, she shows how this early perspective took on a rather conservative form, as the very idea of feminism was emerging in Greece. **Brecht Deseure**, **Florence Le Cam**, and **Isabelle Gribomont** analyse Belgian newspapers between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, contrasting representations of female journalists with broader discourses on feminism through both distant and close readings. Moving into the twentieth century,

Marie Cabadi studies women's centres and local papers in Belgium, France, and England, highlighting grassroots voices and strategies of outreach. **Carol Quirke** focuses on the U.S. photographer Bettye Lane, whose socialist vision documented everyday struggles, gatherings, and demonstrations, placing feminist photography at the heart of political activism. **Dominique Lysser** and **Pauline Milani** examine the conservative dimensions of Swiss feminism through the two SAFFA (*Schweizerische Ausstellung für Frauenarbeit* "Swiss Exhibition for Women's Work") exhibitions (1928 and 1958), which reveal a backlash movement in early- to mid-twentieth-century Switzerland. **Anne-Valérie Zuber**, on the other hand, foregrounds Swiss working-class women, analysing the 1976 Neuchâtel strike and its relation to the broader women's liberation movement, with particular attention to political agency from the working class. Finally, **Gail Chester** provides an insider perspective on late twentieth-century *Feminist Book Fairs*, reflecting on their role in fostering diversity and transnational feminist exchange.

Written by scholars from around the world, these studies illuminate the multiplicity of feminist expressions and strategies, showing how activism and ideas were mediated across magazines, newspapers, newsletters, photography, exhibitions, strikes, and book fairs in different historical and geographical contexts. They open up avenues for further exploration, inviting reflection on how these local and transnational feminist practices continue to shape public discourse, cultural production, and political engagement today.

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