



Agatha Beins, *Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity*

Agatha Beins. [*Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity*](#). Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017. 240p., ill. ISBN 9780820349510. US\$ 84.95 (hardcover). ISBN 9780820349534. US\$ 32.95 (paperback).

In the opening pages of *Liberation in Print*, Agatha Beins observes that during the early years of women's liberation, "networks formed idiosyncratically, and information travelled unpredictably" (2). As Beins notes, this meant "periodicals were especially important mechanisms for creating and sustaining communication amongst feminists throughout the United States" (2).

In many respects, to conclude that periodicals were integral of the women's liberation movement is an understatement. Between 1968 and 1973, more than five hundred feminist newsletters and newspapers were published nationwide. Beins wisely avoids attempting to write about all these publications and instead focuses on just a few key periodicals, including *Distaff*, *Valley Women's Center Newsletter*, *Female Liberation Newsletter*, *Ain't I a Woman?* and the *L.A. Women's Liberation Newsletter*, which would later be published as *Sister*. The publications in question were produced by women living across the United States and covered a wide range of issues from sexual liberation to abortion rights to racism. The publications' collective histories also reveal why feminist periodicals mattered and continue to matter.

Liberation in Print is an important work of feminist scholarship. Like several other recent titles in feminist history, it focuses on just a few years from the late 1960s to early 1970s when women nationwide and globally came together to demand rights they had historically been denied. Beins' book successfully captures why this specific era was critical to the feminist movement, but it also provides an outstanding publishing history that demonstrates the critical role that publishing so often plays in social transformation.

Among the many strengths of Beins' book that will be of specific interest to SHARP members is the close attention it pays to both materiality and publishing as a collective practice or action. For example, Beins emphasizes that the content of many early feminist periodicals was largely contingent on the decisions feminist collectives made about their mode of production. Throughout the book, Beins pays specific attention to the essential role the mimeograph machine played in the early women's liberation movement. As she notes, by mimeographing rather than offsetting newsletters and periodicals, many

early feminist organizations were able to maintain a higher degree of control over what they printed and when.

Beins also takes great care, often through her close readings of mastheads and other supplemental features of the periodicals, to draw attention to the fact that feminist periodical publishing was not just about documenting the era's activism or putting political aspirations into print. The act of publishing was itself a powerful form of collective action. As Beins writes, "Professional publishing erases traces of those bodies 'bent over the layout table,' whereas these feminist periodicals highlighted the labors of publishing to bring them to readers' view" (72). Reading Beins' study one comes to appreciate how the act of publishing itself is not only a form of collective labor but also a form of collective action.

In addition to being meticulously researched, *Liberation in Print* is a well-written book and a compelling read. It will no doubt find a home in gender studies and book and publishing history courses and become essential reading for anyone interested in exploring the women in print movement.

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