



# Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom

By Linda M. G. Zerilli

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**Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom** By Linda M. G. Zerilli

In contemporary feminist theory, the problem of feminine subjectivity persistently appears and reappears as the site that grounds all discussion of feminism. In *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, Linda M. G. Zerilli argues that the persistence of this subject-centered frame severely limits feminists' capacity to think imaginatively about the central problem of feminist theory and practice: a politics concerned with freedom.

Offering both a discussion of feminism in its postmodern context and a critique of contemporary theory, Zerilli here challenges feminists to move away from a theory-based approach, which focuses on securing or contesting "women" as an analytic category of feminism, to one rooted in political action and judgment. She revisits the democratic problem of exclusion from participation in common affairs and elaborates a freedom-centered feminism as the political practice of beginning anew, world-building, and judging.

In a series of case studies, Zerilli draws on the political thought of Hannah Arendt to articulate a nonsovereign conception of political freedom and to explore a variety of feminist understandings of freedom in the twentieth century, including ones proposed by Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, and the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective. In so doing, Zerilli hopes to retrieve what Arendt called feminism's lost treasure: the original and radical claim to political freedom.

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## Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom By Linda M. G. Zerilli Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"This is an exciting and exhilarating book, clearly destined to have a lasting influence in feminist theory. Here, Zerilli makes a serious effort to go beyond the terrain of identity politics and its critics. The emphasis is put, on the contrary, on political judgment as the basis for forming political communities and on practices of freedom." - Ernesto Laclau, University of Essex"

#### From the Inside Flap

In contemporary feminist theory, the betterment of society and the problem of feminine subjectivity persistently appear and reappear as the site that grounds all discussion on feminism. In *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, Linda M. G. Zerilli argues that the persistence of this social- and subject-centered frame severely limits feminists' capacity to think imaginatively about the central problem of feminist theory and practice: a politics concerned with freedom.

Offering both a discussion of feminism in its postmodern context and a critique of contemporary theory, Zerilli here challenges feminists to move away from a theory-based approach, which focuses on securing or contesting "women" as an analytic category of feminism, to one rooted in political action and judgment. She revisits the democratic problem of exclusion from participation in common affairs, and elaborates a freedom-centered feminism as the political practice of beginning anew, world-building, and judging. In a series of deeply textured readings, Zerilli draws on the political thought of Hannah Arendt to articulate a nonsovereign conception of political freedom and to explore a variety of feminist understandings of freedom in the twentieth century, including ones proposed by Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, and the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective. In so doing, Zerilli hopes to retrieve what Arendt called feminism's lost treasure: the original and radical claim to political freedom.

#### From the Back Cover

"This is an exciting and exhilarating book, clearly destined to have a lasting influence in feminist theory. Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom tries to move the feminist debate from the two approaches which have dominated feminism from its inception: the subordination of politics to the social question and the centrality of the question of subjectivity. Here, Zerilli makes a serious effort to go beyond the terrain of identity politics and its critics. The emphasis is put, on the contrary, on political judgment as the basis for forming political communities and on practices of freedom." --Ernesto Laclau, University of Essex

"With a courage and conviction befitting its subject-matter, Linda M. G. Zerilli's fresh, agile, and illuminating book urges contemporary feminists to break the bonds of subject-centered theorizing and begin anew, by imagining possibilities in the practices and politics of freedom. Working through the inspiration of Hannah Arendt, and powered by an ingenious array of contemporary thinkers, she creatively interprets sexual difference as a political practice, and theorizes feminism as a freedom-centered politics animated by action, speech, individuality, plurality, and political judgment. The aftereffects of this book are sure to be profound and long-lasting, for feminism and contemporary political theory alike." --Mary Dietz, University of Minnesota

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**William Sanchez:**

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