



New Woman & the Aesthetic Opening: Unlocking Gender in Twentieth-century Texts (Sodertorn Academic Studies)

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Is there such a thing as an aesthetic feminism? How has the poetics of gender changed since the beginning of the twentieth century? Starting with the Modern Breakthrough and the fin de siècle and ending with a discussion of contemporary literary feminism, this anthology attempts to redirect the study of the interrelation of aesthetics and gender by giving historical perspective to twentieth century literary works.

Its approach invites a de-centering of modernist aesthetics and a revision of the canon with its persistent cult of the male genius at the expense of the more dialogical model of women's literature. By following the course of women's and men's literature throughout the period, gently unlocking the gridlock of gender and aesthetics in high modernism, it traces a forgotten dialogue between the sexes.

The New Woman should be understood as a figure connecting nineteenth-century discourses of sexuality and the feminist movement(s) in a discursive response. Her brave redefinition of the gender contract is an indispensable gateway to modern culture. The fin de siècle anticipated postmodernist themes such as unstable male-female identities, the importance of Eros, a queer fantasy of a neuter gender, and the narcissistic game of self-invention as a response to the feeling of loss of collective values.

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