



Hope and Feminist Theory

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Hope is central to marginal politics which speak of desires for equality or simply for a better life. Feminism might be characterised as a politics of hope, a movement underpinned by a utopian drive for equality. This version of hope has been used, for example in Barack Obama's phrase 'the audacity of hope' – a mobilisation of an affirmative politics which nevertheless implies that we are living in hopeless times. Similarly, in recent years, feminism has seen the production of a prevailing mood of hopelessness around a generational model of progress, which is widely imagined to have 'failed'. However, as a number of feminist theorists have pointed out, the temporality of feminism cannot be conceived as straightforwardly linear: feminism can only be imagined as having failed if it is understood as a particular set of relations and things.

This collection grapples with the question of hope: how it figures and structures feminist theory as both a movement towards certain goals, and as inherently hopeful. Questions addressed include: Does hope necessarily imply a fantasy of perfectibility, a progression to a utopian future? Might it also be conceived in other ways: as an attachment? A lure? Does life tend towards hope, happiness, optimism? And, if so, what are the consequences when hope fails? Who decides which hopes are false? What is the cost of giving up hope?

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