The agenda of contemporary western feminism focuses strongly on women's equal participation in work and education, reproductive rights and sexual freedom. But what does feminism mean to the women of rural India who work long hours in someone else's fields, young Thai girls working in the sex industry in Bangkok servicing Japanese, American and Australian men, or Filipino girls working as maids for wealthy women in Hong Kong? Chilla Bulbeck presents a bold challenge to the hegemony of white, western feminism in this incisive and wide-ranging exploration of the lived experiences of 'women of colour'.

Bulbeck examines debates on human rights, family relationships, sexuality and notions of the individual and community to show how their meanings and significance in different parts of the world contest the issues which preoccupy contemporary Anglophone feminists. She then turns the focus back on Anglo culture to illustrate how the theories and politics of western feminism are viewed by non-western women.

Chilla Bulbeck is Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Adelaide, and was previously at the Faculty of Humanities at Griffith University. She is the author of One World Women's Movement (1988), An Introduction to the Social Sciences (1993, 2nd edn 1997), Australian Women in Papua New Guinea (Cambridge, 1992) and Living Feminism (Cambridge, 1997). She has written for Women's Studies International Forum and Australian Feminist Studies. She taught Australian studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1991 and 1993, and was director of the Australian Institute for Women's Research and Policy in 1992–94.
Europe supported by Africa and North America.
Ascribed to William Blake.
RE-ORIENTING
WESTERN FEMINISMS

WOMEN'S DIVERSITY IN A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD

CHILLA BULBECK
For Alison, Rebecca, Madelaine and David
Rather than imagining that women automatically have something identifiable in common, why not say, humbly and practically, my first obligation in understanding solidarity is to learn her mother-tongue. You will see immediately what the differences are. You will also feel the solidarity every day as you make the attempt to learn the language in which the other woman learnt to recognize reality at her mother’s knee. This is preparation for the intimacy of cultural translation.

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### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATO</td>
<td>Alternative Trading Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>Community Aid Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>non-English-speaking background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-government organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEWA</td>
<td>Self-Employed Women's Association of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICH</td>
<td>Women in Industry, Contraception and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLUML</td>
<td>Women Living under Muslim Laws</td>
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