

Cambridge University Press

0521592259 - Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism

Sara Ahmed

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Differences that matter

Feminist Theory and Postmodernism

Differences That Matter challenges existing ways of theorising the relationship between feminism and postmodernism which ask 'is or should feminism be modern or postmodern?' Sara Ahmed suggests that postmodernism has been allowed to dictate feminist debates and argues instead that feminism must itself ask questions of postmodernism. In other words, feminist theorists need to speak (back) to postmodernism, rather than simply speak on (their relationship to) it. This 'speaking back' involves a refusal to position postmodernism as a generalisable condition of the world, and uses close readings of postmodern constructions of rights, ethics, 'woman', subjectivity, authorship and film. Moreover, the differences that matter are shown to concern not only the differences between feminism and postmodernism, but also the differences which define the terms themselves. How to do justice to these differences while 'speaking back' is a question central to the ethics of close reading offered in this book.

SARA AHMED is Lecturer at the Institute for Women's Studies at Lancaster University. Following her first degree at the University of Adelaide, she undertook doctoral studies at the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory, Cardiff University before taking up her present post. She has published widely on feminist and critical theoretical themes, and is editor of the newsletter of the Women's Studies Network (UK) Association, of which she has been an executive committee member since 1996.

Cambridge University Press

0521592259 - Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism

Sara Ahmed

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Differences That Matter

Feminist Theory and Postmodernism

Sara Ahmed



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
0521592259 - Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism
Sara Ahmed
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
<http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA <http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Sara Ahmed 1998

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1998

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in 10/12pt Plantin [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Ahmed, Sara.

Differences that matter : feminist theory and postmodernism / Sara Ahmed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0 521 59225 9 – ISBN 0 521 59761 7 (pbk.)

1. Feminist theory. 2. Postmodernism. I. Title.

HQ1190.A35 1998

305.42'01-dc21 98-20051 CIP

ISBN 0 521 59225 9 hardback

ISBN 0 521 59761 7 paperback

Cambridge University Press

0521592259 - Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism

Sara Ahmed

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For my mother

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page</i> viii
Introduction: Speaking back	1
1 Rights	23
2 Ethics	45
3 Woman	68
4 Subjects	94
5 Authorship	119
6 (Meta)fictions	142
7 Screens	166
Conclusion: Events that move us	191
<i>Notes</i>	198
<i>References</i>	204
<i>Index</i>	214

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my aunt Gulzar Bano, who was the first woman who spoke to me about feminism (although we didn't express it in those terms) and whose work, both creative and political, remains an inspiration to me.

My appreciation to my first feminist teachers at university, Rosemary Moore and Penny Boumelha, for all their help and encouragement. Thanks also to Chris Weedon for her support. I would like to acknowledge my enormous debt to all my colleagues at the Institute for Women's Studies at Lancaster University, especially Celia Lury and Beverley Skeggs. I remain very grateful that I have had the good fortune to share coffee and cakes with you all. A very big thanks to Celia Lury and Jackie Stacey for taking the time to read my work and providing me with some engaging feedback. Thanks to Catherine Max for her excellent editorial advice. And thanks to Simon Spooner for a far superior knowledge of the English language.

My appreciation to all of my family whom I have missed very much during the writing of this book, especially my mother, Maureen, my sisters, Tanya and Tamina, and my father, Saed. Thanks to Don, Jen and Caroline for being there in the past few years.

I have met some wonderful people in Cardiff and Lancaster, with whom I have danced and drank and who have helped remind me of the importance of having a life beyond being an academic (as if I need reminding!). Cheers to you all, especially: Anna, Amanda, Anne, Clare, Fred, Jon, Julie, Imogen, Lorna, Mariam, Matt, Nicole, Sue and Simon O. And a special thanks to Simon.