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Cambridge Elements

Elements in Publishing and Book Culture

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VIRAGO REPRINTS AND MODERN CLASSICS

The Timely Business of Feminist Publishing

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University of Reading



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The Timely Business of Feminist Publishing

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ABSTRACT: Reprinting, republishing and re-covering old books in new clothes is an established publishing practice. How are books that have fallen out of taste and favour resituated by publishers, and recognised by readers, as relevant and timely? This Element outlines three historical textures within British culture of the late 1970s and early 1980s – History, Remembrance and Heritage – that enabled Virago’s reprint publishing to become a commercial and cultural success. With detailed archival case studies of the Virago Reprint Library, *Testament of Youth* and the Virago Modern Classics, it elaborates how reprints were profitable for the publisher and moved Virago’s books – and the Virago brand name – from the periphery of culture to the centre. Throughout Virago’s reprint publishing – and especially with the Modern Classics – the epistemic revelation that women writers were forgotten and could, therefore, be rediscovered, was repeated, again and again, and made culturally productive through the marketplace.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/withers

KEYWORDS: Virago, reprints, Virago Modern Classics, timeliness, marketing

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