

## Pași spre instituționalizarea feminismului în Norvegia

### Steps towards the institutionalisation of feminism in Norway

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*“The personal is political”*

#### Abstract

*The present article discusses important issues related to the institutionalisation of feminism in Norway, by providing a case study on the country's first feminist magazine, Sirene. The first part of the article focuses on the political and historical context which favoured the emergence of the magazine, and insists on a series of legal measures taken in the twentieth century – suffrage rights, equal payment, political representation, etc. – which provided the institutional framework for the women's movement. The more comprehensive second part of the article focuses on Sirene itself: it analyses the magazine's structure and key concepts, its political agenda, its aims, but also the branch of feminism to which Sirene adheres. The article concludes that the magazine represented an influential alternative to the mainstream press of the time, and contributed greatly to achieving the goals of women's liberation movement.*

#### Rezumat

*Prezentul articol tratează probleme importante legate de instituționalizarea feminismului în Norvegia, prezentând un studiu de caz asupra primei reviste feministe din țară, Sirene. Prima parte a articolului se concentrează pe contextul istoric și politic care a favorizat apariția revistei, și insistă pe o serie de măsuri legale luate în secolul XX – drepturi de vot, plată egală, reprezentare politică etc. – care au pus bazele cadrului instituțional al mișcării feministe. Cea de-a doua parte a articolului, mai cuprinzătoare, se concentrează pe revista Sirene însăși: aceasta analizează structura revistei și conceptele cheie, agenda sa politică, țelurile sale, însă și ramura feminismului la care aderă Sirene. Articolul conchide că revista a reprezentat o alternativă influentă la presa dominantă a vremii și a contribuit mult la realizarea scopurilor mișcării de emancipare a femeii.*

**Key words:** *Second wave feminism, Sisterhood, Radical feminism, Alternative press, Women's literature vs. Popular literature*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *al doilea val al feminismului, „frăție” a femeilor, feminism radical, presă alternativă, literatură feminină vs. literatură populară*

With the 1960s and the universal movements towards liberation of knowledge (student riots, the questioning of the socialist establishment, the sexual revolution, movements of independence of former colonial states, etc.), the world has witnessed an increased emergence of the voices of “the other”: feminism, post-colonial theory, ethnic and sexual minorities, ecology, etc. All of them imply an extension of social conflict to a wide range of areas, as they share a disdain towards authority and a rejection of “grand narratives”. With the increasing reluctance in the face of universal(ist) theories, the role of literature and, implicitly, of press is changing as it relentlessly splits the monolithic construction of (social, sexual, religious, and thus, fictional) identities into discursive strands, developing an almost protean nature. Literature and mass media today are faced with the difficult task of incorporating minorities of all kinds and of defining themselves in the process. Postmodernism – understood here as subsuming poststructuralism – can be seen as a form of scepticism: scepticism towards authority, universal theories, wisdom or norms. The anti-

foundational and anti-normative stances of postmodern fiction call for openness to alterity and gives voice to marginality.

The current attitude of dissent has led to a re-evaluation of all types of discourses – understood according to the Foucauldian acceptance of the term discourse: a matrix of *texts*, a network of power relations that functions in a given field, while at the same time determining it[1]. The visible result is that the “centre” is being devaluated, while the “periphery” is becoming increasingly salient to the point to which marginal cultures and literature may have the most spectacular contributions. From this point of view, my choice to focus on a Norwegian feminist magazine, *Sirene*, reflects an interest in a somewhat double marginality and dissent: that of an ideologically charged feminine writing and that of the (seemingly) marginal Scandinavian culture.

Firstly, choosing to concentrate on a Norwegian magazine, *Sirene* may by itself represent an act of rejection of (in our case) European discourses, since the media of the Scandinavian Peninsula draws extensively on national characteristics to build an authentic identity. Following political and economic arguments (of which Norway’s rejection to become a member of the European Union is crucial), one may claim that Ibsen’s country, even more than the other Scandinavian states, dismisses the possibility of fully integrating the European model into their national identity. Their refusal to adhere to the “nucleus” can be interpreted either in terms of fear of losing the relatively recently gained coherence of a national identity (after centuries of lagging behind in unfavourable unions with Denmark and Sweden), or in terms of an oblique elitism resulting from rapid social, political and economic developments that took place in the second half of the twentieth century. A certain sense of efficiency and “know-how” are transparent in Norwegian fiction, which is, however, highly critical to the injustices and drawbacks of society. One might argue that the roots of this criticism and of the sober depiction of the ills of the country lie in the belief in the political, if not even messianic nature of literature. This general feature is also visible in the Norwegian magazine, where feminist convictions blend with social activism.

Secondly, focusing on a feminist publication may represent an act of dissent, since feminism offers an alternative discourse on the traditional representation of reality. This trend of thought resists categorization, as its plethora of ideas, programmes and manifestations do not fall into rigid classifications, but rather escape attempts to essentialize them, to fix their meaning into ideological templates. Nevertheless, feminism is old enough to have evolved towards various directions, whose comprehensiveness cannot be entirely grasped simply by nominating its subgroups: liberal, radical, socialist/ Marxist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, third wave/ poststructuralist and eco-feminism, just to name a few of the most important directions. *Sirene* can be roughly classified as a left-wing, socialist publication, although many times it diverges from the general characteristics one would expect from a magazine of such orientation.

Furthermore, the article argues that *Sirene* is an excellent example of how an ideology can be institutionalised. The ideology – in our case feminism – takes the form of an incisive discourses (articles, interviews, but also paraverbal material: photographs, sketches, etc.) with the aim of raising awareness about women’s oppression and directing the public towards social activism. As I will demonstrate later on, these discourses are used in order to appeal to the majority or to the generic female individual, to relate to her experiences, to her problems and interests. This results in an awakened consciousness and in a consequential pressure on the existing structures of society. Slowly, the new demands are institutionalised and turned into political agendas, whilst at the same time affecting the norms and values of society. Like many other socially engaged publications, *Sirene* brings out the structure - agency debate. Social scientists still dispute whether social change is brought about by bottom-up transformations: through the norms and values instilled in a society and the resulting accumulated pressure on the system as a whole, or, on the contrary, by a downwards transformation: through the institutions and formal bodies employed for a particular goal. In many ways, this debate resembles the chicken and egg dilemma as it is almost impossible

to determine the relation of causality between the two. My opinion is that the dynamics between institutions and norms are not unilateral, but mutually constitutive. Therefore, one can view *Sirene* both as a disseminator of norms and values and as an institution fighting for women's liberation. But before going further into the form and content of the magazine, it may be helpful to recreate the historical and socio-political context which favoured the emergence of *Sirene*.

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## Context

The Scandinavian countries today are acknowledged models for gender parity, with reference to the status of women in society, their political involvement, and family-related legislation. Women in the Nordic countries have gained both formal and legal recognition of equality in ways in which the rest of the world, even Western European states, can only dream of. However, there are still disparities between the two genders, especially concerning childcare or equal pay: in 2009, women in Norway (including the employed immigrants) earned roughly 84.7% of men's average income. In addition, Norway remains one of the most sex segregated labour markets in the world[2].

According to the Gender Gap rankings, Scandinavia today occupies the leading positions in gender parity worldwide: in 2009, Iceland was on the first position, closely followed by Finland, Norway and Sweden, while Denmark was situated on the seventh place[3]. However, in the nineteenth century, this region was as male-centred as the rest of Europe. In Norway this became even more visible since the country was struggling for centuries to gain national independence, formally achieved in 1814 with the separation from Denmark. Nonetheless, the same year, Norway entered another unfavourable union with Sweden, which lasted until 1905 when it was dissolved.

The nineteenth century, with its romantic frenzy of the newly-awakened nationalism, valued all men of letters, as literature slowly became the modern medium to disseminate the folklore and legends of a mythical past, as well as the emerging Norwegian language, creating a national ethos in the process. In an epoch when Henrik Ibsen and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson were fighting for supremacy, there was only one woman writer to become known: the naturalist Camilla Collett. After publishing her novel, *Amtmandens Døttre (The District Governor's Daughters)* in 1854-55, which brought her to the public eye, Camilla Collett soon became the leading figure of the Women's Liberation Movement, which, like liberalism in Great Britain (lead by John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft), fought to achieve suffrage rights for women. The struggles of the movement proved fruitful, as Norwegian women received the universal right to vote in 1913, second in Europe after Finland in 1906. Denmark followed in 1915, and Sweden only later, in 1921. For a period, Norway was looked up to even by U.S.A., a leading promoter of women's rights, which achieved universal suffrage later, in 1920. In Romania, women were granted voting rights in 1938. Generally, Protestant countries were more efficient in allotting this right to women, while the Catholic countries of the South: France, Italy and Spain had to wait until after the Second World War[4]. Slowly, women's position began to strengthen, and 1924 witnessed the first woman elected in the Storting, the Norwegian Parliament. The outset of the Second World War shifted the gender debate in the shadow, which was to re-emerge in the 1960s. Nevertheless, this decade was not particularly liberating for women, who were still subjects of patriarchal mentality. From a literary and political point of view, the Norwegian scene was dominated by the movement associated with *Profil* (Profile) magazine. In 1966, the publication was taken over by a group of enthusiastic writers who were to set the guidelines for synchronising Norwegian literature to European modernism. Dag Solstad, Tor Obrestad, Espen Haavardsholm, Jan Erik Vold and Einar Økland are just some of the editors and writers who dominated the literary scene for more than a decade. The group also sympathized with socialist ideals, as Solstad, Obrestad, Haavardsholm and Økland became members of the AKP (m - 1), the Marxist-Leninist Workers' Communist Party. Despite the fact that several women were associated with both *Profil* and AKP – Liv Køltzow, Eldrid Lunden and

Cecilie Løveid were to become successful writers – they did not turn out to be leading figures of the groups. But if women were not active politically in the 1960s, they were so from a literary point of view. The decade witnessed a fast expansion of female authors: apart from the three names mentioned above, Torborg Nedreaas, Ebba Haslund, Ingeborg Refling Hagen, Marie Takvam, Gunvor Hofmo, Halldis Moren Vesaas and, importantly, Bjørg Vik are just some of the important women writers of the 1960s and the decades to follow. Another important contribution to literature – in particular the one written by women – is the introduction of “innkjøpsordningen” in 1965, an agreement that the state would buy 1000 copies of any literary work for distribution to libraries.

The second wave of feminism was slowly emerging in Europe and U.S.A., but it was only a decade later that it would establish itself as one of the most influential directions in Norwegian thought. The 1970s breakthrough was institutionalised with two organisations of feminists: “Nyfeministene” (The new-feminists) and “Kvinnefronten” (The Women’s Front).

The former came together in 1970 as a middle-class movement which focused on liberal ideals such as freedom of the individual and human rights. Their liberalism reflected also in the way they organized themselves: the new-feminists followed the American pattern in building a loose, flexible structure whose aim was to raise awareness about important social and political aspects of the time. For a decade, they reached thousands of people and awakened women’s consciousness through their main publication, *Sirene* magazine. Due to differences in ideology and a need of sexual minorities to gain a voice of their own, the group “Lesbisk bevegelse” (The Lesbian Movement) broke away in 1975.

Women’s Front was established in 1972, with a more defined political agenda. Its members were engaged political activists with strong leftist beliefs. Therefore, the organization had a strong centralised leadership whose aim was to fight against the system which oppressed women and the working classes alike. In fact, Women’s Front applied a socialist analysis on the women’s oppression, linking it to the structural dynamics of capitalist societies. Like it had happened with the new-feminists, 1975 witnesses another group breaking away from Women’s Front: “Brød og roser” (Bread and Roses)[5].

Despite their ideological differences, the organisations were held together by a strong sense of solidarity and a belief that change will eventually take place. The new-feminists and the followers of Women’s Front fought together for gender parity, for the right to abortion, for better pay and working conditions for women and, slowly, they made their way up, achieving goals that even other western countries are still fighting for.

The increasing pressure from these organizations paid off and in 1972 the Equal Opportunities Commission was created, which provided the legal basis for fighting against an unbalanced social system. The Commission issued the Equal Status Act, which was to become law in 1979. Achieving gender equality required more than impartial legislation, therefore the law allowed for positive discrimination. In addition, amendments were added in 1981 – stating that all public bodies must have female representatives – and in 1989 – calling for at least forty per cent female membership in any public body with at least four members. Further progress was made in 1978 when women were finally given the right to abortion on demand. Feminism slowly became institutionalised as several Women’s Studies departments were being created: for example, 1978 was also the year when the Institute of Women's Law – a premiere in the world – was set up at the University of Oslo[6]. In the 1980s and 1990s, women’s literature became an important topic of research and feminist literary criticism was grounded as a discipline. Women gained increasing political power, visible also in Gro Harlem Brundtland’s appointment as a prime minister (1986-1989). She was the first head of executive to nominate eight female ministers out of the total eighteen members of the Cabinet.

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## *Sirene*

1971. The journalist Astrid Brekken had recently returned from New York with a master degree in Sociology and a dream of starting a feminist magazine in Norway. While employed at NRK, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, she met Gøril Strømholm, a journalist herself, and the two slowly began planning the publication. Little did they know they would make history.

In a short time, Bitten Modal, an active new-feminist, and Sissel Biong, a graphic designer, joined them. Soon after, the artist Kari Rolfsen and the author Bjørg Vik were part of the team which published in 1973 the first number of *Sirene* magazine, supported by Cappelen Printing House. Their main source of inspiration was Gloria Steinem's American feminist magazine, *Ms.*, but *Sirene* also drew extensively on the goals and ideals of the second wave of feminism.

The first number of the magazine initially appeared in 5000 copies and vanished in a matter of hours; the public was so interested in the publication that *Sirene* had to be printed seven times. The second number enjoyed the same success and appeared in 30,000 copies. For the first three years the magazine had a circulation of 20-25,000, coming out once a month, sometimes less often. In 1977, the decrease in *Sirene*'s popularity (also due to the emerging competition), together with a need for autonomy, resulted in separation from Cappelen Printing House. In its first years, the magazine received an especially huge press coverage: it was the first of its kind in Norway, it took up delicate problems of the day and promoted feminist ideals in a witty way, reaching thousands of readers – thus, *Sirene* soon became a phenomenon.

The publication ran for a decade, when several issues lead to its dissolution. The first challenge that *Sirene* had to face was competition: it was no longer the only magazine of its kind in Norway, as *Kvinnefronten* and *Kjerringråd* were becoming increasingly popular. Secondly, the magazine became involved in a controversy around the representation of pornography, which lead to readers cancelling their subscription and, eventually, to the dissolution of *Sirene*. After five numbers in 1983, *Sirene* ceased to appear. Interestingly, the same debate was raised again, twenty years later, almost resulting in the termination of the feminist magazine *Fett*. Nevertheless, in the ten years in which *Sirene* had been active, it played a crucial role in achieving gender equality in Norway.

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The 1970s in Norway still witnessed men's and women's magazine which promoted traditional gender roles: while men would read about war, sport and sex, women would read about love, clothes and housework. The world depicted in women's magazines was the family: the goal for women was to get married and take care of their families and of their house. Women were not encouraged to pursue a career, as career women were portrayed as cold, distant and mainly unsuccessful. The only element that the glossy magazines did take up from the feminist struggles was sexual liberation. But the fact that women were encouraged to enjoy their sex lives did not bring a major change in mentality as far as women's position in society is concerned. As a result, women's magazines in the 1970s are in many ways ambivalent:

“[T]hey flirt a little bit with women's liberation, but in the same time they don't want to step on their readers' soar, antifeminist toes”[7].

In a time when most women wrote about clothes, children and food recipes, *Sirene* was concerned with delicate issues such as the right to abortion, equal payment and childcare. The new-feminists reacted in a smart, witty manner against the traditional passive role ascribed to women in the traditional glossy magazines of the time. No wonder that the publication became so famous. As Astrid Brekken explains:

“We were a new voice in defining what a woman was, we were strongly critical towards the housewife role, offensive about equal rights in the working environment, and open about sexuality. Nobody else wrote about women’s lives in a similar manner.” [8]

*Sirene* was one of a kind, especially since other feminist publications such as *Kvinnefront* (Women’s Front) and *Kjerringråd* (Old Wives’ Remedies) did not appear before 1975. The magazine’s uniqueness also lies in the heterogeneity of its body of editors: unlike *Kvinnefront* and *Kjerringråd*, *Sirene* was not the voice of a certain political party or movement, but a group of strong willed women, brought together by common views. The ambivalence that lies in the name – in Norwegian, “*Sirene*” means both “mermaid” and “siren” – alludes to the Homeric mermaids who lure men with their seductive song, as well as to the pressing nature of women’s issues, thus establishing the magazine as programmatic issue, as well as a manifest of new-feminism. This idea is also underlined by Astrid Brekken:

“We called ourselves the alarm signal of the day, not the magazine of the day, because we wanted to reach beyond those who read this type of publications.”[9]

As a form, *Sirene* was both a journal and a magazine: it shared the serious nature of the journal, while borrowing the layout and the reader friendliness of the magazine. However, the publication distanced itself from the other magazines of the time as it contained articles, news reports, interviews, but also short stories, poems and cartoons. Classifying *Sirene* proves to be a difficult task since much of its content lies on the border between popular literature and women’s literature. In fact, the publication became a forum for new writers and a promoter of Norwegian fiction. The short stories which appeared in *Sirene* were essentially different from those published in other publications for women: they usually had a woman as a main character and mostly depicted everyday situations in which women were hindered in their desire to achieve their full potential. Nevertheless, the short stories were not programmatically feminist.

From the point of view of its structure, *Sirene* followed the American tradition of no hierarchy: the group worked together in a loose-knit structure, choosing a largely formal editor-in-chief for each number of the magazine, and work was done collectively – a specific trait of feminist organisation. “Sisterhood” and “solidarity” are key concepts for the new-feminists who relied extensively on the response of the public: many readers of *Sirene* regularly sent letters, articles or short stories to the magazine, and many of them were published. Because of the reader friendly policy and of the magazine’s freshness, *Sirene* enjoyed an excellent reception: readers expressed their happiness that finally there was a magazine for them too, and their wish that the spirit of *Sirene* would reach women and men alike. However, not everybody reacted positively to the new publication, since feminism was perceived as radical and dangerous. As a result, in order to maintain peace in the household, many women either gave up their subscription to the magazine or continued receiving it secretly. Despite – or maybe even precisely because of the controversial nature of the publication, *Sirene* had a huge impact on the whole of the Norwegian society, as the following letter from a reader demonstrates:

“Having bought *Sirene* for the first time, I went directly inside a café and sat down. After five minutes of reading here and there, I felt the need to put it away and go out again. I cannot explain my strong reaction to the magazine, but in the same time my heart began pounding as if possessed, and I burst into tears. Scared because it was so unusual to see written down something I believed I was the only one to think, and crying because finally, finally it had happened. And the whole time I knew – yes, that’s it, that’s it...!” [10]

It seemed that *Sirene* had achieved at least one of their goals, stated in the very first number of the magazine:

“Norway is a rather unpopulated country. We have received news from women from Karasjok, Molde, Kongsberg and Arendal who are not satisfied with their traditional female roles. *Sirene* is meant to be a helping hand and a connecting thread for all those who become lonely in their revolt. [...]

We want to create a magazine which concerns us. [...] We hope *Sirene* can be an alternative to the weekly press’ intentional influence on the traditional role ascribed to women.”[11]

Astrid Brekken and her colleagues intended to create an extensive forum of discussion, which would reach even those who did not consider themselves feminists or who were not concerned with politics. In fact, the editors’ adherence to new-feminism is a proof of their desire to alter the current state of affairs to the better, and not necessarily of their strong political or ideological engagement.

Undoubtedly the most famous statement in the magazine is its motto, used until no. 7/ 1974 and always printed in a visible spot:

“We are aware that not all women feel oppressed, but we know that they are. Nobody feels oppressed before having a dream, a vision of something better.”[12] Inspired from the psychologist Richard Farson’s book, *Sexism in Education*, from 1971, the motto alludes to three important ideas: firstly, it proves that the editors were well aware that their magazine would be accused of being useless by those who did not believe that women were oppressed. Secondly, it took up the goal of explaining to both men and women what oppression was and, thirdly, *Sirene* intended to depict how liberation would be like, to give people “a vision of something better”.

The motto, together with other programmatic articles published in *Sirene*, provides the framework for the later institutionalisation of the magazine as a leading promoter of gender equality in Norway. In her work on the publication, Turid Kleiva summarises the main goals of *Sirene*, together with the means of achieving them:

“*Sirene* was meant to be:

1. a journal which awakened people to fight against women’s oppression
2. a connecting thread between (feminist) protesters
3. an alternative to the influence of the weekly press
4. a source of courage and humour.

This would happen through:

- a. material from ‘our daily lives’
- b. reader-produced material (by women and men)
- c. diverse material: articles, short stories, cartoons, etc.” [13]

*Sirene* provides an excellent example of the way in which feminists turn the personal into political: they reveal the underlying mechanisms which hinder women, but also men, from liberating themselves from the constraints imposed by their culture. In order to do that, the editors of the magazine go beyond the private sphere and take up political issues of relevance. They approach women’s problems on two levels: equality and liberation, while clearly emphasising that achieving the former does not immediately imply that women have been liberated. Therefore, *Sirene* regularly writes about the importance of equal payment for men and women (a request which has still not been fully achieved in Norway), about parity in the working environment, in political representation, in sports, etc. In number 3/ 1975, for example, *Sirene* writes about childcare: they demand more facilities for working mothers, allowance whenever children get sick, lowering of taxes, shorter working time for parents with small children, etc. The magazine makes it clear what their standpoint is:

“We believe that economic independence is a prerequisite for women’s liberation.”  
Nevertheless, “[o]ur full participation in the working field does not necessarily mean that we are liberated.”[14]

It is not always easy to classify *Sirene* in a clearly defined branch of feminism: at times they speak about the social construction and falsity of gender roles, while other times they seem to make an essentialist statement by highlighting the specific traits that women share. But they are clear about one thing: the necessity to build solidarity among women of all social classes and races. All women are sisters, as they experience the same overt or tacit discrimination. On the one hand, the emphasis on solidarity represents one of the first, timid steps towards approaching the problems that women belonging to ethnic, religious and sexual minorities face, but on the other hand *Sirene* is oversimplifying in assuming that women are a homogenous group. In fact, they admit to be an eclectic magazine, whose inspiration came from the American feminists, as well as from Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, who provided them with the conceptual framework. As far as their opinion on the opposite sex is concerned, the editors of *Sirene* display a certain amount of aggressiveness towards men, who are mostly held accountable for the deplorable situation the world is in. Nevertheless, the magazine does not blame the individual man for social ills, but rather the whole system: patriarchy. *Sirene* goes further than most feminist movements of the time in Norway, which were deeply influenced by ideologies of socialist extraction, and does not tie women’s oppression to class struggle. Although they accept social class as a variable in establishing the position of individuals in society, they do not believe – like *Kvinnefronten* does – that capitalism or relations of production hold a central position in women’s oppression. Number 3/ 1976 of *Sirene* magazine further clarifies their position within feminism, by quoting an excerpt from Robin Morgan’s book, *Sisterhood is Powerful*:

“For me sexism is the root to all oppression; and until we extract sexism with its root, it will continue to ramify into racism, war, class hatred, competition, ecological catastrophe and economic domination.”[15]

No other magazine at the time was so open and drastic about the harmful consequences of women’s oppression. Nor was any publication so edifying in explaining what oppression meant:

“That first and foremost it is a battle of attitudes, deeply engraved in the majority of us, regardless of our sex, discovers anybody who explores accepted norms and breaks through with assimilated gender models.”[16]

Although at times it is unclear which branch of feminism *Sirene* is closest to, many of the ideas it disseminates point towards radical feminism. The term “radical” can be understood both in its regular usage: involving revolutionary ideals, and in its etymological meaning: pertaining to the root of the problem. This is evident in the magazine’s constant attacks on patriarchy and its numerous attempts to deconstruct phallogocentric discourse. Brekken and her colleagues see women’s oppression as a social and cultural construction which can be transformed into gender equality once they have shed light on the injustices of the system. For that they engage into a practice of consciousness-raising about the different forms in which oppression manifests itself. Using Robin Morgan as a reference in the magazine is yet another proof of the fact that the editors of *Sirene* adhere to radical feminism, as Morgan points out that women’s oppression is more fundamental than other types of human oppression. According to Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg, this statement may be interpreted to mean the following things – and I take the liberty to assume that Brekken and her colleagues would agree:

“1. That women were, historically, the first oppressed group.

2. That women's oppression is the most widespread, existing in virtually every known society.
3. That women's oppression is the hardest form of oppression to eradicate and cannot be removed by other social changes such as the abolition of class society.
4. That women's oppression causes the most suffering to its victims, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, although the suffering may often go unrecognized because of the sexist prejudices of both the oppressors and the victims.
5. That women's oppression . . . provides a conceptual model for understanding all other forms of oppression.”[17]

The goals and strategies of *Sirene* make the magazine an excellent example of the Second Wave feminism in Norway: on the one hand, the publication issues claims of universalism as far as women's experiences and the methods of eradicating oppression are concerned, and, on the other hand, *Sirene* displays special allegiance to localism, since the overwhelming material published in the magazine is of Norwegian extraction. Like many publications of this kind, *Sirene* developed from a utopian foundation, but – paradoxically – its utopianism may have been very contributor to the institutionalisation of feminism in the country. Today, the unconventional magazine *Sirene* is remembered for its stark opposition to the patriarchal dynamics of society, as well as for its success in granting the Norwegian woman “a room of one's own”.

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All translations from the Norwegian original are my own.
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<http://www.kampdager.no/arkiv/magasiner/sirene> (retrieved 3rd August 2010)
- [9] “Vi kalla oss eit tidssignal for kvinner og menn, ikkje eit tidsskrift, fordi vi ville nå utover dei som les denne typen publikasjonar”  
<http://www.kampdager.no/arkiv/magasiner/sirene> (retrieved 3rd August 2010)
- [10] ”Hadde kjøpt Sirene for første gang, gikk rett inn på en kafe og satte meg. Etter fem minutters lesing her og der, ble jeg nødt til å legge det fra meg og gå ut igjen. Jeg kan ikke riktig forklare min sterke reaksjon på bladet, men samtidig som hjertet begynte å hamre som besatt, var jeg helt på gråten. Redd fordi det var så uvant å se nedskrevet noe man trodde man var alene om å tenke, på gråten fordi det endelig, endelig er skjedd. Og hele tiden visste jeg – ja, slik er det, slik er det...!”  
<http://www.kampdager.no/arkiv/magasiner/sirene> (retrieved 3rd August 2010)

[11] “Norge er et grisgrendt land. Vi har fått henvendelser fra kvinner i Karasjok, Molde, Kongsberg og Arendal som ikke er fornøyd med sin tradisjonelle kvinnerolle. *Sirene* er ment å bli en håndsrekning og et bindeledd for alle dem som går ensomme med sitt opprør. [...]

Vi vil lage et blad som angår oss ... Vi håper *Sirene* kan bli et alternativ til ukepressens bevisste påvirkning til den tradisjonelle kvinnerolle.”

*Sirene*, no. 1/ 1973, pp.1-3

[12] “Vi er klar over at ikke alle kvinner føler seg undertrykt, men vi vet at de er det. Ingen føler seg undertrykt før de har en drøm, en visjon om noe bedre”

*Sirene*, no.1/ 1973, p.1

[13] “*Sirene* var meint å vere:

- 1.eit blad som vekke folk til kamp mot kvinneundertrykkinga
- 2.eit bindeledd mellom (feministiske) opprørarar
- 3.eit alternativ til påverknaden frå vekepressa
- 4.ei kjelde til mot og humør.

Dette skulle skje gjennom:

- a) stoff frå «vår hverdag»
- b) lesarproduisert stoff (av kvinner og menn)
- c) varierte stofftypar: artiklar, noveller, teikneseriar, osb.”

Kleiva, Turid, *Sirene, An Alternative to Journals?*, Oslo: Cappelen, 1978 (in Norwegian).

[14] “Vi mener at økonomisk uavhengighet er en forutsetning for kvinnens frigjøring.”

“Vår fulle deltakelse i arbeidslivet betyr ikke nødvendigvis at vi dermed er frigjort.”

<http://www.kampdager.no/arkiv/magasiner/sirene> (retrieved 3rd August 2010)

[15] “For meg er sexisme roten til all undertrykkelse; og inntil, og med mindre vi får rykket sexismen opp med roten, vil den fortsette å forgrene seg i rasisme, krig, klassehat, konkurranse, økologisk katastrofe og økonomisk utbytting.”

*Sirene*, no. 3/ 1976, p.2

[16] “At det først og fremst er en kamp om holdninger, dypt inngrodd i de fleste av oss, uansett kjønn, oppdager enhver som utforsker vedtatte normer og bryter med kjønnes tillærte oppgavemønster.”

<http://www.kampdager.no/arkiv/magasiner/sirene> (retrieved 3rd August 2010)

[17] Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg in Tong, Rosemarie, *Feminist Thought. A More Comprehensive Introduction.*, Westview, Charlotte, North Carolina, p.49

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