



The Change: Women, Ageing, and the Menopause

Germaine Greer

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"A brilliant, gutsy, exhilarating, exasperating fury of a book."

THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

In this compulsively readable, fascinating account of menopause, renowned feminist and author Germaine Greer gives us so much more than the medical facts. She has gone back into history, read textbooks, explored novels and poems, and has written a wholly extraordinary account of women and their changes in life.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

The Change: Women, Ageing, and the Menopause Details

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From Reader Review The Change: Women, Ageing, and the Menopause for online ebook

Brook Clinton says

Although quite well researched it is far too long. Not a bad book for anyone considering having a worthwhile life as an older woman (she often strays into general discussions of feminism from the older woman's perspective).

Pauline Esson says

I'm going against the grain here, I know pretty much everyone who has reviewed this raves about it but I didn't recognise any of this as my experience.

I persisted, coming back again and again thinking the tide would surely turn and I'd find some resonance in the next few pages, but never did.

Officially throwing in the towel at page 104.

If anyone tells me there's a radical change at some point after that I'll come back and resume reading, otherwise, I'm moving on.

Caroline says

So relevant it was scary.

Cindy Dyson Eitelman says

Hard to review. Toward the end, she got so "right on!" that I wanted to cheer. I wanted to pull out quotes and send them to friends. To cherish the book forever for reading and re-reading.

But then again, maybe I should just get on with my life.

Anyway, her initial chapters dealing with the history of menopause, or the climacteric as she prefers to call it, are as sad as you would expect. The tendency of male doctors and philosophers to view the female body as a frail, diseased version of a man's; to treat childbearing as the whole purpose of a woman's existence; to expect all women's ultimate desire to be pleasing a husband...well, we know our history, don't we? It sucked. And the glory age of HTR (hormone replacement therapy) fitted neatly into a world that wanted a pill to pop for every disorder. Ceasing to have periods was a disorder, wasn't it? When women complained of the pre-menopausal symptoms, doctors "fixed the problem." That's what doctors do.

I enjoyed that part of the book and very seldom had to put it aside and pace around the room swearing. But the last two chapters--*The Old Witch* and *Serenity And Power*--are outstanding. Maybe she over-glorified the historical contrast between wizards and witches--wizards are all about spells and transformations, evil eye and dark arts; witches about love spells, healing and herbs. But the idea of witchery as an escape from the

dead and lonely lingering of a useless old woman was a new idea, and it delighted me.

Serenity and Power is a rallying cry for the modern-day elderly woman. Childbearing and mothering behind; freed from the nuisance of a monthly curse, she can let herself be alive to create the strong old woman she was always meant to be. Yeah.

Syd says

I was really disappointed in this book. Not only is it rather poorly written, it spends very little time on what is actually happening to our bodies from a medical point of view. The history of the horrific experiments that women have been subjected to was the most interesting part, but then a huge part of the book was dedicated to women feeling worthless because of lost sex appeal. I mean, I get that for a lot of women, especially more traditional heterosexual women this would be a difficult thing when the patriarchy has taught her that her sex appeal is the most valuable thing about her, but it was also done in a pretty condescending way. It got boring. I am over supposed feminists being so judgmental of women. It strikes me as the opposite of feminism. I will try another book to try to learn more about this rite of passage.

farmwifetwo says

Truly no idea the point of the rant. Depressing actually and seems to be feeding my mood . Dnf'd at 50pgs.

Susan says

review to follow, still trying to absorb a lot of what she writes about.....hmmm...why does it seem to apply to my Mom more than me.....

Linda Robinson says

"Nobody knows what to do with a woman who is not perpetually fawning. Calm, grave, quiet women drive anophobes [sic:] to desperation. Women who refuse even to try to empower the penis are old bats and old bags, crones, mothers-in-law, castrating women and so forth. Though female culture cannot afford to give such attitudes even token respectability, we could see our way to exploit male panic if we dared."

Dee Rose says

This heavy book spent time talking about how women's health is oftentimes not taken seriously since it is mostly overseen by men, then also about how women pine for their lost youth. I liked the research side of it, but not so much the anecdotes about women who are ageing in a sad and miserable way. I thought I would end the book feeling empowered about entering the middle years, but instead it left me feeling the opposite.

Amanda says

An important subject and all credit to her for trying to make women feel better about the menopause. Quite academic with lots of research (although a lot of this is now probably a bit out of date, first published in the 90s I think) - but she seems to think homeopathy is perfectly acceptable! Also she is very serious. Banging on about 'the death of the womb' which didn't make me feel very joyful...I shall search out something else on the same subject but a bit more recent and a bit less fierce.

Stephanie Matthews says

Essential reading for any woman going through the process, however old she is. In fairness, I first read this about 20 years ago but this time I was ready for it and I have to admit, I have enjoyed what I've read. Greer alternates between justified rage, sarcastic wit and academic fact finding which can make the book heavy going at times, but it is ALWAYS worth it. It has, at least, helped me to make a couple of important decisions, which means it's already justified its worth.

Harley says

Germaine Greer, still liberating. I love this woman. And I just found out she wrote a 2000 book called The Whole Woman, which I'm going to get ASAP. She's a million times smarter and two years older than I am, and she's my almost-forgotten goddess.

Toto says

Greer wants to make sure we don't think of this book as "mere loony feminist nonsense" that often condones loony behaviour of older women. Unlike Dr. Christiane Northrup, for instance, Greer does not see raging anger as a sign of the "wisdom" of menopause, but a sign of hormonal imbalance. She attempts to synthesize (mostly old) medical literature to sift through the known from unknown, from knowable and unknowable. In that she does a great service by showing that medical knowledge of the process of menopause is woefully incomplete. Therefore, most of the solutions to the many miseries this period introduces into a woman's life are inadequate as they are based on shaky if non-existing science.

First half of the book discusses the nitty gritty of scientific knowledge of the female hormonal process and is quite useful. Some of her own language is over the top, which is par for the course for Greer, but her natural scepticism is also a needed corrective of unhelpfully positive suggestions (take Prim Rose oil and feel young again!, etc.) peddled by the likes of Oprah.

It is the second half of the book that is weak and uninteresting. My "favourite" was a chapter called Hardy Perennials, which discusses women in high places and speculates whether they are on HRT. Lives of older celebrities ranging from Dame Judy Dench to Ellen read like People magazine and it makes you wonder what Greer is doing here besides being a chatty old bat. Chapters titled "Misery", "Grief" comment on Iris

Murdoch, Simone de Beauvoir and other older women as they chronicle their aging process, either in memoirs or novels. I found them dull. Chapters on Old Witches and Serenity and Power teeter on the verge pulling a Northrup, therefore seem paradoxical in a book like this. But with Greer, as always there's much to like, and much more to shake your head at.
