

Book Reviews

OPEN BOUNDARIES: A CANADIAN WOMEN'S STUDIES READER

Barbara Crow and Lise Gotell,
Eds. Toronto: Prentice Hall
Canada, 2000.

BY GERRY
COULTER

Crow and Gotell state that their reader is a product of the feminist critique of the enlightenment "view from nowhere gaze." As such, their reader is not aimed at framing a feminist truth but rather promoting a community that accommodates critique, questioning, dissent, and disagreement; or in Eva Karpinski's words, a community that is "specific, situated and self-critical." The editors are immensely successful in presenting us with an introductory women's studies reader that meets these challenges with teaching in mind, as it is wonderfully laid out for both the teacher and the student.

The book is divided into six chapters each of which includes a thoughtful introduction. Chapter One gives the student a broad understanding of Canadian contributions to the tapestry of feminist theory. Hamilton's classic analysis of Marxist and feminist theories along with O'Brien's thought on reproduction provide two superb glimpses of feminist thought

from a generation ago, while setting the stage for discussions of the individual and the collectivity. The presentation of Smith's contribution to standpoint theory and Weir's critique of Judith Butler's postmodern anti-foundationalism without a clear defence of postmodern theory from a writer committed to the perspective, highlights the pragmatism of the questions that inform Canadian women's studies. The remainder of the first chapter contains three outstanding representatives of the challenges to traditional Canadian feminist theory by Miles, Bannerji, and Ng.

Chapter Two on Canadian women's movements ranges from the list of recommendations of the Royal Commission on Women to Vickers' *et al.* work on NAC; Adamson, Brisken and McPhail on organization and process, and LEAF's advocacy work before the supreme court. Articles by Agnew on race, class and feminist practice and Ross on the diversity of lesbian perspectives are important highlights in this chapter.

Chapter Three brings together classic (Benston, Fox, Armstrong) and more recent (Kline, Das Gupta, Arnup) statements on the gendered division of labour and the complex interrelation of the private, the public, race, ethnicity, sexuality and the laws and practices which structure daily life. Chapter Four on sexuality highlights the ways in which violence is associated with pornography (Cole, Burstyn), and with heterosexuality and homophobia (Rule, Valverde, Overall, Maracle). Thought-provoking articles by Bell on women who ejaculate and MacDonald on

transgender politics round out this core chapter of the text which illustrates the social construction of sexuality and gender.

Chapter Five takes us through the politics of abortion, reproductive technologies, choice, and judicial intervention in pregnancy. This important chapter, which keeps these fundamental issues front and centre in Canadian feminist activity, is rightly sandwiched between two chapters which highlight violence. Chapter Six, "Engendering Violence," which includes Clark and Lewis on rape, and MacLeod on battering, highlights the state's toleration of violence against women. Work from the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women and the Aboriginal Panel appear alongside Gotell's thoughtful analysis of the state discourse on violence.

In these six chapters we find gender relations understood as inseparable from issues of race, class, sexuality and ability. The efforts of writers like Valverde, Ng and Bannerji to move Canadian women's studies away from earlier essentialism are not only included but find a certain fulfilment in this text. For example, I was delighted not to find a separate chapter on race, but articles on race in each of the six chapters. Prior efforts to gloss over differences among feminists (certainly a survival tactic in the hostile university environment) are abandoned in this text which itself tells us that women's studies departments and programmes have made spaces for the articulation of feminist differences.

Looking back over the forty-one articles that comprise this reader we find that Canadian women's studies

has struggled and to a large extent succeeded in conceptualizing "woman" as a category for challenging "interlocking systems of power including race, class and sexuality." The idea that "woman" represents a fixed category is thoroughly undermined by the selection of articles for this text. This book allows us to continue to teach a self-critical practice of feminism while acknowledging the debt to our foremothers who struggled so hard to create the spaces in which we can continue to ask the vitally important questions and hold the fundamentally important debates that women's studies will continue to thrive and grow upon. I would like to have seen more on media and the representation of gender such as Shari Graydon's work, but overall I recommend this reader very highly for introductory courses in women's studies, sociology and any class in which the study of gender issues are examined.

RADICAL FEMINISM: A DOCUMENTARY READER

Barbara A. Crow, Ed. New York and London: New York University Press, 2000.

BY ANGELA MILES

Barbara Crow, editor of this important volume, tells us that it "brings together many of the original documents that have defined, contested, and shaped radical feminism in the United States from 1967 to 1975." This description of the book is literally true but it doesn't begin to capture its significance. The 573 pages of brilliant radical political writing collected here sparkle with the energy and excitement of the period and the urgency, anger, love, hope, and hutzpah of the (mainly)

young women who were forging space together in their movement to see the world differently than they had been taught to see it; and who sought to change it at its roots. Their revolutionary redefinitions of the world and their visions for change start from a "place that implicitly values women."

This heady departure from women's learned distrust and devaluation of each other was revolutionary then and remains so today. It opens the way for feminists to proudly identify as women, to recognize themselves in other women, and to draw on women's diverse lives and experience as key resources in their theory building. I read almost all the many manifestos and articles collected here when or just after they appeared and were circulated among activists, most often from group to group in mimeograph or in feminist journals and newsletters of the time. In the process of writing my PhD thesis on "The Politics of Feminist Radicalism" (University of Toronto 1979) I re-read and studied them in such early feminist anthologies as: *The Black Woman* edited by Toni Cade Bambara, *Sisterhood is Powerful* edited by Robin Morgan, *Women's Liberation* edited by Sookie Stambler, *Voices from Women's Liberation* edited by Leslie Tanner, all published in 1970; *From Feminism to Liberation* edited by Edith Hochino Altbach and *Women in Sexist Society* edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, published in 1971; and *Radical Feminism* edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone in 1973. These anthologies are still available in libraries but are no longer in print and are very little known and used. So it is with great pleasure and relief that I welcome a broad selection of many of the most interesting examples of this literature back into print in this massive collection.

Barbara Crow has done a tremendous job of selection and organization. A great many of the most influential and widely circulated articles and manifestos are here,

including, to name only a few of the 67 entries: "Toward a Female Liberation Movement" by Beverly Jones and Judith Brown (1969); "Why Women's Liberation" by Marlene Dixon (1969); "The Personal is Political" by Carol Hanisch (1970); "The Woman-Identified Woman" by Radicalesbians (1970); "An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force" by Maryanne Weathers (1970); "The Politics of Housework" by Pat Mainardi (1970); "Housework: Slavery or Labour of Love" by Betsy Warrior (1970); "What the Black Woman Thinks about Women's Lib" by Toni Morrison (1971); "The Fourth World Manifesto" by Barbara Burris with others (1971); and "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" by Ann Koedt (1973); as well as excerpts from *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone (1970), *Woman Power: The Movement for Women's Liberation* by Celestine Ware (1970); *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet (1970); and *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* by Robin Morgan (1977). There are enough of these articles and excerpts reproduced at length to provide a compelling sense of the atmosphere and debates of the time as well as the political thinking of the author(s) of each.

The book is organized in two parts. Part One, "Political Statements and Processes," has three sections: "Why Women are Oppressed," "Manifestos," and "Methods: Consciousness-Raising;" Part Two, "Sites of Contestation," has five sections: "Lesbianism," "Heterosexuality," "Children," "Race," and "Class." This division highlights the large theoretical compass of the articles in Part One while it emphasises the contributions in specific issue areas of the articles Part Two.

These are, as the editor is well aware, essentially arbitrary divisions, for the overlap is enormous. Radical feminists of the period all presumed to be contributing to the develop-