

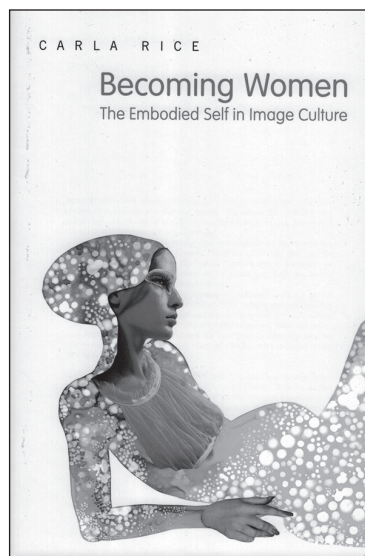
Disability Studies and Critical Race Feminist Theory both framed in the Marxist analysis of political economy of disability and difference. Sona is a therapist specialized in “internalized oppression” and “trauma” in vulnerable yet resistant populations of immigrants and refugees of colour. Sona founded her two community-based projects around acquired disability and marginalized populations’ empowerment in Toronto at the age of 21, and has been a disability-rights advocate since.

BECOMING WOMEN: THE EMBODIED SELF IN IMAGE CULTURE

Carla Rice
Toronto: University of Toronto
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**REVIEWED BY ANNA F.
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Carla Rice’s book seeks to illuminate and interrogate processes of becoming gendered for a group of Canadian women united by their birth in a certain time period: between the end of the second wave and the beginning of the third wave of North American feminism. As Rice explains, this group of women occupies a unique historical position that has been neglected by feminist scholarship; situated between crests of feminism, many of these women “had little opportunity to take part in second-wave organizing and ... missed out on third-wave media strategies of culture jamming.” Consequently, this group is shaped by intense contradictions, both benefiting, often indirectly, from feminist efforts, while also being increasingly “barraged with hegemonic messages from visual culture.” As her book’s subtitle indicates, Rice is specifically interested in embodied experiences,



exploring how visual culture, whether employed by the state or capitalist markets, shaped—and continues to shape—the bodily contours and perceptions of this particular group of women. Aligning itself with the body becoming theory of Christine Battersby, Elizabeth Grosz, Gail Weiss, and others, Rice’s book aims, in Rice’s own words, to offer “a cultural story of becoming women in an image-saturated world” that “proposes a new critical theory of embodied becoming that challenges conventional theories of human development.”

To achieve this goal, Rice’s book synthesizes analyses of visual culture with personal narratives, interspersing and interconnecting discussions about the representation of gender in television shows, advertising, scientific research, and government policy with data and quotes gleaned from interviews with a sampling of 80 women. Appropriate to her avowed commitment to intersectional feminism, Rice specifically sought interviewees with diverse backgrounds and experiences of embodiment; the specific processes of gendering the racialized body, the disabled body, and the obese body are highlighted throughout the book, whose roughly chronological chapters map the journey to

womanhood, from historical contexts of gender, racial, and ableist discrimination through girlhood, puberty, and beyond.

Rice’s approach highlights women’s varied strategies of negotiating both radical and conformist narratives and images, adding valuable nuance and specificity to the totalizing narratives of female experience that have often been perpetuated by both certain strains of feminism as well as the patriarchal hegemony. Rice’s book is at its best when it uses the voices of the interviewees, which, thankfully, it often does, usually in minimally edited, substantial paragraphs. The chapters that explore intersections of gender, race, and disability within the promotion of Canadian multiculturalism and within Canadian puberty education are particularly strong. In these chapters, Rice uses the situated, diverse voices of her interviewees to highlight and subvert these thoroughly problematic state-sponsored campaigns to define and maintain the “normal,” both strengthening her own critique and helping to fulfill the book’s overarching goal of developing new ways and frameworks for thinking and writing about the body. For the most part, Rice’s analysis stays clear of having any one interviewee stand or speak for any particular demographic group; where Rice does generalize the responses of her interviewees along intersections of race or disability, she generally highlights common themes and pressures while emphasizing a range of responses to those pressures.

Like any ambitious piece of scholarship, Rice’s book has its imperfections. Perhaps the book’s greatest and most obvious weakness is that does not significantly feature the voices of First Nations women; although Rice acknowl-