

colonial experiences and relationships of *western* women in European colonies during the middle to late nineteenth century. Because this collection of essays is quite various, I will attempt merely to provide general impressions of the collection on the whole, rather than commenting on specific debates and issues.

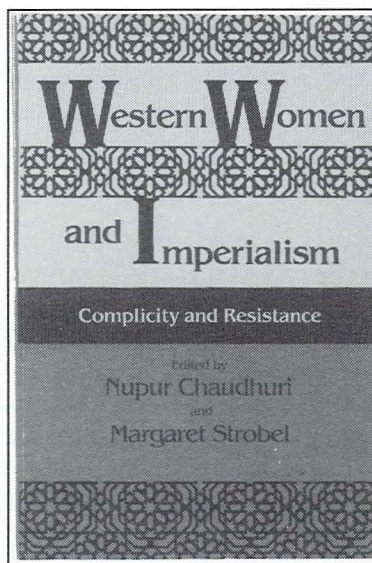
In the introduction to the essays, the editors begin by stating that the collection focuses on the “interactions between gender, race and class.” Yet, in my reading, it is exactly this naturalized or unproblematical use of the terms of “gender, race and class” that provides me with my first opportunity to challenge criticism based on such first premises, and thus provides me with a point of intervention into this collection.

My fundamental point of contention is that the process through which the relationships between gender, race and class are analyzed is not made explicit. That is, the methodology underlying the analysis of the colonial relationships between “western” women and colonized subjects is one that is not fully explored in many of the essays. This lack of a clear methodological perspective leaves many of the essays devoid of a critical strength that would have been necessary in order to fulfil the laudable purpose outlined in the introduction of the collection. According to the introduction, the essays “juxtapose feminists and social reformers of varying stripes and pro-imperialist women of different levels of consciousness and thereby offer the reader many important insights into the workings of race and class ideologies within imperialism.”

As a student who is interested in both anti-imperialism and feminism, I have found it difficult to discover much work that involves an integrated approach to these issues. While it is true that within the past ten to fifteen years there has been a growing number of publications spotlighting the category of imperialism and feminist studies, it is also true that the construction and discourse of race is often—paradoxically—left intact. In this collection, I found that the lack of a critical examination of the power of colonialism, whether male or female, in relation to the histories which are presented as *verité* or authentic, was very problematic. I found that the category of “woman” remained unproblematically “white” due to the fail-

ure to cast a critical eye towards the construction of race through the articulation of this history. That is, the notions of “western,” “female,” and “other” have once again remained entrenched as perfectly organic and theoretically operant terms. Instead I was left wondering what the underlying politics of such a re-presentation of colonization actually sought. In present academic and political circles where “voices of multiplicity” are making some intervention, I find this representation of a “woman’s” history to be disappointing and dangerous.

In conclusion, I would have to reiterate that although the articulation of difference amongst the western colonizer is the purpose of this project, the result of the homogenization or outright silencing of the “other” colonized subject, which is



implicitly a part of this process, only reestablishes imperial structures of power. I also feel that any critical project of imperialism and gender must do more than simply analyze the “difference” between male and female “white” authority; it should seek to examine this fundamental category of “white” as a point of beginning.

WE WERE MAKING HISTORY: LIFE STORIES OF WOMEN IN THE TELANGANA PEOPLE’S STRUGGLE

Stree Shakti Shanghatana. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989.

by Shirin Kudchedkar

The whole place was surrounded by hundreds of military police.... All the women were whispering loudly—she is going to be arrested; she fed the communists. So I left with the clothes I was wearing.... I had to go into the forests.... Over there was a madiga (untouchable caste) house.... I jumped across the wall and hid in the niche where the cowdung cakes lay.... In the evening again Razakars (fundamentalist para-military forces in the Nizam’s time) came.... The madiga said that bitch is not in this house or even in this village—and all the time I was hiding in his very house.... Then the squad came and I left with them.

Dudala Salamma, whose account is quoted above, is one of the women who ‘were making history’ through their participation in the peasant movement in Telangana, the Telugu-speaking area of the former Hyderabad State in South India, now part of Andhra Pradesh. A team of six women belonging to the women’s organization, Stree Shakti Sanghatana interviewed women who had taken part in this struggle—peasant women in remote forest villages, middle class women, even some women born in landlords’ families—and used sixteen of the interviews to make this book.

The introduction provides a background to the story, detailing the land ownership system in the princely state of Hyderabad, the forms of oppression—forced labour, bonded labour, the feudal right of the first night—and the stages of the people’s movement. Via the nationalist movement, the women’s movement and the communist movement, the women were led to join the anti-landlord struggle. After Independence, the Communist Party sought to bring about a revolution through armed

struggle using Telangana as the base. In Communist-dominated villages, land was redistributed, forced labour and bonded labour abolished. Mass support was enormous. They came nowhere within sight of achieving the ultimate goals, however, and in 1951, the CP called off the struggle.

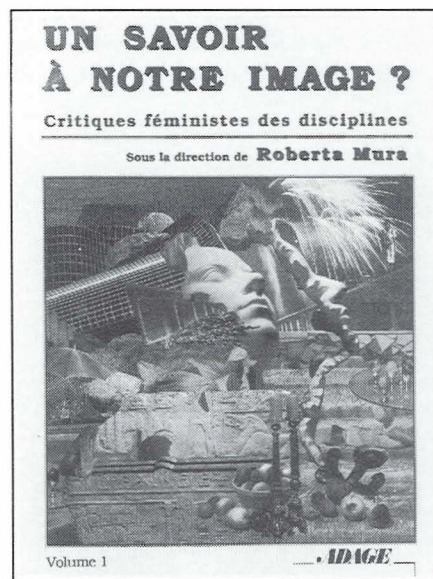
The editors state: "Ours is an attempt to analyze and understand the ideological framework in which women struggled, the experiential dimensions of that struggle, to present issues as they were perceived by women." We have to listen to the language of silence.

The women do speak of what brought them into the movement—they are inspired by the nationalist woman leader Sarojini Naidu, by the Russian revolution. They speak of the enthusiasm and dedication with which they joined the movement, convinced that a new world was about to be born. They speak of the work that they did for and in the armed squads. Some of them wielded arms and fought in the squads. Others performed the highly responsible task of organizing shelters for the underground members. They organized meetings of village women where they made speeches and sang songs to inspire the women to support the movement. They campaigned on women's issues, opposing child marriage, supporting widow remarriage. With the squads in the forests, they shared all the hardships of the men, trekking long miles carrying tiny children, fleeing a shelter at night when word came of a raid. They acquired medical skills, dressing wounds, dispensing medicines, even performing operations.

Some of the women insist that there was complete equality in the movement, no distinction between men's work and women's work. But doubts and uneasiness also come through. Swarajyam, one of the eminent leaders of the movement, is the most articulate about these. Though more useful as an organizer than her husband, it is she who has to remain at home with her infant son, not he. The male members of the party support women who wish to break with their husbands or who are ill-treated by them. But on other occasions they dismiss such problems as a diversion from the struggle. If they are drastic in their punishment of men who molest women, they can also be harshly puritanical, expelling a most valued

woman comrade—the 'barefoot' doctor Acchamamba—because she is accused of a liaison. Mixed messages come through, for the men are ambivalent in their thinking. Hence mixed messages come through from the women also.

To a non-historian, the book appears to be a model of how oral history should be researched and presented. The background is provided in the introduction and the interpretation in the afterword. But for the major portion of the book, the editors have rightly decided to let the women's voices speak.



UN SAVOIR À NOTRE IMAGE? CRITIQUES FÉMINISTES DES DISCIPLINES.

Roberta Mura (dir), Montréal, Les éditions Adage, 1991.

par Louise Toupin

Après avoir changé la vie, le féminisme a-t-il, parallèlement, changé le monde scientifique? Les nouvelles perspectives ont-elles bouleversé celles des diverses disciplines comme l'histoire, la littérature, la biologie, la psychologie, la théologie, l'architecture, etc. au point que le « monde » de chacune d'entre elles est désormais compris autrement? La

nouvelle vision que le féminisme introduit dans les sciences peut-elle être qualifiée de « rupture épistémologique », comme certaines l'ont prétendu, ou encore de « révolution » scientifique?

À l'orée du deuxième millénaire, un bon nombre d'essais ou d'anthologies de textes portant sur la critique épistémologique féministe ont traité de ces questions, mais en américain principalement. Eh bien, l'immense lacune qui existait en cette matière en langue française vient d'être comblée. Nous devons à Roberta Mura, professeure de didactique à l'Université Laval, cette excellente initiative d'avoir regroupé en un seul volume les diverses contributions au séminaire « Critiques féministes du savoir », organisé à l'Université Laval par le Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire féministe (GREMF).

D'abord publiées en trois cahiers ronéotypés dans la collection des *Cahiers de recherche du GREMF* (no. 19, 20, 21), voici maintenant ces contributions éditées en un seul volume, avec des ajouts de disciplines. Résultat : 15 disciplines académiques sont scrutées à la loupe féministe par 19 chercheuses.

Ce qui frappe au premier abord est la qualité générale des diverses contributions et, au premier chef, le travail d'encadrement fait par Roberta Mura. Son introduction et sa conclusion vont bien au-delà d'une recherche des lignes de force des diverses contributions qui composent le volume ; elle réussit le tour de force de situer, par ce biais, l'« état » de l'épistémologie féministe dans l'univers académique nord-américain.

Retraçons d'abord, pour mémoire, les étapes franchies par la critique féministe dans à peu près toutes les disciplines ces vingt dernières années. Ce sera notre façon à nous d'appréhender l'ensemble des disciplines recensées, trop nombreuses pour en faire voir en quelques lignes les richesses singulières.

Un premier temps peut être caractérisé par la critique du « masculin ». Il s'agit généralement de la première étape dans la découverte de l'androcentrisme chronique de chaque discipline scientifique. On s'aperçoit que le « modèle général » de chacune d'entre elles n'est rien d'autre que le modèle « masculin ». Les femmes n'y sont pratiquement nulle part et, lorsqu'elles y sont, c'est à titre de catégorie