

Indeed, [some women] *might* be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding culture) or, preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women....”

Honig, Abdullahi An-Na‘im, and Joseph Raz all registered shock at such a suggestion. Okin, in her reply, explains that, “whether their culture stays the same, changes, or becomes extinct in a particular context because its members assimilate, more or less slowly, and wholly or partially, into one of the alternative cultures available, ... is the kind of “becom[ing] extinct” I had in mind.” Yes, well, that was not very clear and, sympathetic as one may be to her position, expecting us to read her mind is rather a tall order.

Finally, Okin takes Will Kymlicka to task for his view that only those groups which are internally liberal can be granted special rights, claiming that while he considers the civil and political domains of girls’ and women’s lives, he disregards the domestic domain in which they are universally subjected to sex discrimination. Thus, concludes Okin, no existing culture could meet his criterion of internal liberalism. Kymlicka, in response, outlines what he sees as “internal restrictions,” those restrictions within a group which limit the rights of individual members, and “external protections,” measures which protect minorities from being swallowed up by majority groups. The domestic domain would, he explains, fall within the category of “internal restrictions.” This misunderstanding clarified, he asserts his basic agreement with Okin who sums up by acknowledging a degree of shared concern, but contending that “he tends to prioritize cultural group rights and I... prioritize women’s equality.”

The issues discussed in *Is*

*Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* are diverse and immensely complex, and it would be unreasonable to expect definitive answers to questions on which so many distinguished thinkers are at odds with one another. What we do have is a wealth of provocative arguments laid out before us, so that we may briefly sample some or chew for a while on others. This review necessarily touches on only a few of the main issues and authors who offer us their opinions. But there is something to satisfy every appetite.

## EMIGRE FEMINISM: TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Alena Heitlinger, Ed. Toronto:  
University of Toronto Press, 1999.

BY RENUKA  
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*Emigre Feminism: Transnational Perspectives* brings together a wide range of new theoretical work on the question of exile. The authors in this collection detail the urgency of positioning exile as part of a necessary grammar for feminist discourse. The interesting “nomadic” grove which is palpable in this book reads emigre as having been fundamentally excluded from the cannon of Western feminist traditions. *Emigre Feminism* seeks to challenge the singularity and often myopic delay of cultural, national and everyday hegemonies whilst exploring the “in-between” experience and sensibilities of those exiled. The authors show us that the

study of emigration moves beyond the latent and uni-directional confines of national patriarchal narratives such that democracy, communism, and apartheid are made more complex. Attention to this complexity is a clear indication of the many ways in which the address of gender is necessarily expedient; *Emigre Feminism* stands as incisive, contemporary commentary on the social conditions women as exiled have endured as diasporic actors.

This collection is the result of a conference on emigre feminism which was held in 1996 at Trent University, Ontario, Canada. The book features the work of thirteen women who lend their personal, academic, and activist knowledge(s) of living loss, anguish, and certain trauma—alongside a range of other physical, temporal, and spatial relations—within the borderlines of hybridity, otherness, displacement, and conditional belonging. And while it has been argued that wholly psychoanalytic readings of exile produce tropic erasures of women, mourning, melancholia, and death remain constant, “real” and endemic of exile. The emigre accounting levelled in this book is a constant reminder that we have only begun to scratch the epidermic tissue of exile. What has been revealed thus far tells the story of other kinds of surfacing to come.

As a way to expand and deepen its categorical parameters, the very definition of exile comes under contestation in *Emigre Feminism*. Emigre ruminations bring decidedly poignant readings to bear on the term in order to elide easy attempts at definition. The various approaches employed in this task show that conceptual ruptures are important in making visible the often invisible relations of gender, sexuality, “race,” religion, politics, region, nation, and so on which are integral in any narrative concerning exile. In *Emigre Feminism*, narrow conceptions of exile are problematized by each contributor as they speak to the specific

tensions and difficulties of their struggles; exile is magnified as a way to reject normative, conventional categorization encompassing what Alena Heitlinger calls, "a spectrum or continuum of varieties of conditions, identities, and metaphors, with powerful historical, political, literary and epistemological connotations." Thinking exile critically, whether it is from the interstitial spaces of being a "femigrant," or from the newly coined "post-exile" destabilizes the idea of exile as an activity of leaving, living elsewhere, being an 'outsider.' How one becomes an "internal exile" is as important to consider as the frames of marginalia to which most exiles have become familiar and are equated.

Configuring exile as a sliding signifier, the political contingent within emigre feminism challenges the often broad and totalizing, mostly Eurocentric and middle-class, practice which essentializes Western feminism. Jacqui True, in this collection, maintains that it is "typically forgotten that feminism has been embedded, and indeed emerged from within a Western imperial and Enlightenment context, and it is therefore not benignly outside of prevailing political and economic frameworks and power relations." And so, to juxtapose emigre feminism to Western feminist tendencies manages deconstructive movements in contemporary feminist debates around difference and representation. Emigre feminists require a qualitative discernment to be placed squarely on those theoretical organs which disavow calls for inclusivity and alteric nuances; the illuminative candour indicative of this call positions the politics of identity and location alongside deconstructive possibilities allowed in postmodern, anti-racist, post-colonial, and poststructural addresses.

The underlying common denominator which ties the essays in this compellation together is their engagement with and deciphering of ongoing feminist thought. As such,

the essays provide us with unapologetic critique of feminism(s) as an exclusionary and elite gaze. While many of the essays wage serious battles around historically conservative feminist practices, it is widely agreed that transnational feminist connections and linkages are necessary analytic imperatives which will allow for new directions, agendas and visioning towards fashioning feminist futures. But it is the *trans* in transnational which gives Smaro Kamboureli pause enough to deploy a double reading of transnational. For her, using *trans* to mean *beyond* as well as "across, on the other side, through ... signifies intercultural exchanges that occur across distinct locations through specific discourses while foregrounding and problematizing the particularities involved."

Emigre feminism is marked by its insistence on transnational alliances mapping feminist strategies across the spatial divide of boundaries and borders and must be careful to cultivate and make use of Kamboureli's conceptual clarifications. Hers is an important consideration especially given the multi-classed, multi-culture, multi-racial identities as well as geopolitical locations that construct the exile. It is the transnational attempt noted here which allows feminists to analyze the forces of globalization, economic devastation and capitalist insurgency whose horrendous effects are instrumental in designing the movement of people. As the displacement of people is not a new occurrence, neither is transnational feminist organizing. Jacqui True argues, "it is often overlooked that feminisms, both in terms of their normative claims and practical struggles, have to a great extent always been transnational and that feminists have often acted as bridges among different social movements, ideologies, and cultures."

But even this transnational challenge is tinged by a weariness that the "emigre" in emigre feminism is highly coded with the excesses of academic pursuits. Eva Karpinski reminds us

that emigre is associated and aligned with a certain privilege of its own. For her, choosing exile allows her to be critical of class positions; she is also careful to add that while she employs the term exile, that she is cognizant of its masculinist associations. Part of Karpinski's project is the surfacing of exile's "female" metaphorical possibilities. It is from the standpoint of this tropic association that exile claims a subversive undercurrent.

For the contributors to *Emigre Feminism* gender is factored relationally to signify and enunciate exile's chaotic and cumulative effects. Writing against static and universalizing tendencies which plague the thinking of gender, sustained polyphonic readings account for alterity and mimetic tensions to be ever present in the analyses of gender taking place in this book. What is even more available to readers of this book is the unrelenting currency given to delimiting and delineating the various intersecting matrices of domination (sexism, racism) which never privilege gender. This integrative analysis is a core and fundamental methodologic in the articulation and problematization of everyday social relations women exiles encounter.

Focussing their analysis on gender and on the active participation of women in political organizing (for example, Schild, Bobb Smith, Jung), cultural and religious expression (Arat-Koc, Moghissi), personal reflection (Ternar), feminist theory and research methodologies (Moghissi, Muisi, Heitlinger, Tyyska) each writer is able to elaborate topically on the scopical interiority of exile. These works are important in that they show the search for strategies and the negotiation of identity, politics, community, and home are part of the conflict of nation and how it defines itself in relation to gender. Decentering the myth of women as refugees rather than as exiles, allows for a concise and authoritative suturing of gender to the

social relations and conditions involving women's everyday life experiences and challenges as they resist their governments, state ruling technologies, continued patriarchal practices, religious hierarchies, and begin to organize for their (our) rights, for justice and for recognition. It is important to note that in this book *gender and woman are not used interchangeably*; by arguing for the specificities of suturing gender and the social relations of women's everyday, I am not being reductionist. Gender is understood as a socially constructed category or a set of social meanings and expectations that the sexed body takes on in any given culture and is relational to other equally relevant categories such as "race" and sexuality.

Heeding the work of Benedict Anderson who reminds us that nation is based on how it is imagined, the question of home, which is closely articulated within the framing of nation, becomes most visible as a way to foreground feminist considerations on exile. Bobb Smith argues that for Caribbean women, their understandings of empowerment and resistance stem from their connection to home; here home is configured beyond the boundaries of place to imagine home as a place in the mind. Such a notion of home is formidable if we think about the ways we carry home with us wherever we are located; home works within the dynamic play of memory, culture, site, pedagogy, and as a way to signal survival. While women emigres often find that they continue to be involved, in some capacity, with issues going on in their "home" country, the fact that they are also participating in the immediate day-to-day movements of their "host" country calls into question the unmistakable relationality, not disjuncture, between home and host; I'm appreciative of Vappu Tyyska's conceptual break with home and host considering instead "excursions that are both familiar and foreign." What is evidenced here is the negotiated anxie-

ties and ambivalence associated with a divided state of being, a state most emigre women bear; it is like living one's life on a tenuous fault line mired by a dual desire. However, it is important to note that home and host become undeniably tied and as such produce a force of one on the other.

Like other feminist fields, emigre feminism is internally contested and fragmented. This, I hope, will create a sonorous line of questioning as a way to further investigate its contentions within and without. Emigre feminism should be lauded for its integrative analysis and grounded approach to theorizing exile which has fastened the personal to the political in a way which has been silenced and marginalized before now. The contributors to this collection have given feminists a "new" language and address known here as "emigre feminist thought." This text is excellent for feminist theory courses, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels and for anyone working on questions of nation, feminism, cultural studies, postmodernism, and anti-racism.

## ANTI-RACIST FEMINISM: CRITICAL RACE AND GENDER STUDIES

Agnes Calliste and George J. Sefa Dei, Eds. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2000.

BY DONNA HARRISON

The contributions in this edition explicate the interrelationship of race and gender in contemporary Canadian society. They draw upon postmodern and post-colonial theory

to examine the multiple and dynamic experience of subordinate and marginalized groups and to point to directions for theoretical and political change. The edition attempts to augment what is indeed a paucity of scholarship on social justice issues conducted by those from the margins of white, malestream North American society. Imperialism and the white settler colonial history of Canada figure as a background for ongoing reproductions of racist discourses and identity formation.

Essays in the text offer an array of issues and concerns: from historical analysis of debates over the immigration of South Asian wives and the ongoing construction of discourses of a racist nationalism in media representations, to black women and men's resistance to occupational segregation and the possibilities and limitations for building a transnational anti-racist feminism. Some contributions are more historical, some more contemporary, but all introduce Canada as a site of struggle over racism inherent in its structures and institutions and within our everyday social relations. As such, it is a fascinating account of the Canadian experience, and an inspiration for anti-racist mobilization.

Some essays open up a critical analysis of whiteness. In their historical overview, Maria Castagna and George J. Sefa Dei encourage a definition of "race" more as a process of racialization—the attribution of certain social relations and signifiers as raced—rather than a static concept rooted in biological essence. This introduces a more fluid and historical approach to "race," one emphasizing its social construction. Whiteness, then, becomes a category to critically investigate and historicize "race" and assess the boundary of self and other. The historical elevation of whiteness corresponded to the racialization of the immigrant, and strengthened colonial discourses.

In a most interesting contribution, Kerstin Roger, psychotherapist herself, examines the construction of