

colour are exoticised, sometimes demonized. African-American writer Alice Dunbar-Nelson's engagement with race is sublimated into questions of the parentage and sexual danger of her orphan character in "Sister Josepha." But these stories are potentially subversive if read in context. A collection such as this allows them to achieve a cumulative effect whereby their critiques and lacunae become increasingly apparent.

The book is nicely produced. There are biographical notes and a portrait with each story. Stephenson rightly assumes that the collection will whet the appetite, and has provided much useful bibliographical material.

Stephenson ambitiously reads across national traditions and compares them, and the state of scholarship, in Canada, Britain and the United States. In her judgment, scholars are further along in the project of rediscovery and recuperation of women's short fiction in America; more critical work needs to be done in Britain; and Canadianists face very basic difficulties in even recovering much of the material. Some of this work is already being taken up, and compelling collections such as this one can only encourage us to read further.

## WOMEN IN MOVEMENT: FEMINISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Sheila Rowbotham. New York:  
Routledge, 1992.

by Jan Clarke

*Women in Movement* traces women's contributions to social movements in many countries from the late 1700s to the early 1990s. This book highlights ways in which women find different points of entry and access to resources for individual and collective action. There is a focus on femi-

nist and socialist political action to confront systemic oppressions, but Rowbotham never loses sight of the personal emancipation which is often so central to actions in which women choose to participate. Also, the importance of understanding feminism as dynamic is reinforced by emphasizing that the experiences of women in earlier social movements still inform contemporary feminist struggles. While this is primarily an historical introduction to women's participation in social movements, it is also an important reminder of the diverse historical underpinnings which shape current debates in feminism.

In *Women in Movement*, historical accounts follow a general chronological order based on themes such as equality, women's difference, the personal and the political individualism, collectivity, the scope of rights, and the definition of needs. Under each topic, Rowbotham links ideas and actions in many political and cultural contexts by focussing on how women's experiences have been perceived and analyzed, how social change occurs, and the different world views which shape action.

While many of Rowbotham's accounts of earlier women's movements are located in Europe and North America, she clearly includes historical accounts from Third World countries in order to further elaborate on racism, ethnicity, colonialism and imperialism. It is the many glimpses of women's lives in particular historical and cultural contexts which demonstrates both the complexity of women's movements and the persistence of women's oppressions. From her viewpoint: "although international interactions resulted in theoretical crossovers, every new beginning has assumed differing shapes. It is as if thousands and thousands of women were busy making a gigantic garment, borrowing and creating their own patterns."

In *Women in Movement* it is striking that women's political actions throughout the world are not seen as isolated. Instead, Rowbotham has

carefully traced the dissemination of ideas, and the sharing of strategies which shapes social movements, particularly ones from a socialist perspective. Since Rowbotham covers such a broad base, women in many cultures do tend to be presented as glimpses interspersed among the European and North American accounts. This is balanced, however, by detailed chapters which specifically focus on women's long history of collective action under different political circumstances in Russia, India, and China.

While Rowbotham continually points to theoretical debates to explain historical accounts, she also manages to leave women's stories to stand more or less alone. In the final sections, she returns in more detail to the 'knots' of feminist theoretical debates as a means of connecting the threads she has unravelled. By partially untangling these theoretical knots she offers some direction for ongoing political action for social change. She also makes it clear that these same knots "do not just need cutting and untangling, but provide nodular clues for making new connections and reorientating thinking."

*Women in Movement* is a well written, thorough introduction to feminism and social action which demonstrates the long and diverse history of women's political struggles throughout the world. Rowbotham not only sparks an interest in delving in more detail into many of the social movements she introduces, she also sheds light on contemporary feminist theoretical debates.