

ment of revolutionary new theoretical understandings of the world. They did this through collective reflection and action on varied but inseparable issues in women's lives and in feminist political practice. Most of the articles in Part Two are as large in their theoretical scope as those in Part One. Articles in Part One make their theoretical contributions through addressing the very issues that organize Part Two. None of the articles treats any of these issue areas as separable from the others.

Nevertheless the organization of the volume works well and serves useful political purposes. In Part One the separate section of "Manifestos" highlights the deeply collective nature of radical feminist political development and its connection to activism. The section on "Consciousness-raising" reinforces this understanding while bringing together classic sources of this little known and much misunderstood central political practice of radical feminism. The diverse topic areas of Part Two illustrate the breadth of radical feminist concerns and dispel at a glance the simple but prevailing stereotype of a narrow white middle class movement unengaged with issues of race or class or poverty and dismissive of children and married women. The volume as a whole serves as an eloquent corrective to this widespread view.

Despite the fact that it is not organized to trace the chronological development of the theory and activism of this period, the book powerfully surfaces a feminist political history which we have lost and/or allowed to be distorted. Barbara Crow says in her Introduction that, "We need to critically reinsert this history into contemporary feminist practice and women's studies." Her book is an important basis for this work. Taken with the companion volume of Canadian feminist writing called *Open Boundaries: A Women's Studies Reader* that she co-edited in the same year with Lise Gotell (2000), it is a major contribution.

## RECLAIMING THE FUTURE: WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Somer Brodribb, Ed.  
Charlottetown: gynergy books,  
1999.

### BY BETH PERCIVAL

Ho hum. Tired of feminism? Given up on the women's movement (been there, done that)? Sure that a post-modern, post-feminist, apolitical relativism rules the day? Well think again. This collection will reinvigorate your activist energy and remind you that feminism is not hopelessly mired in identity politics, frozen in its tracks by right-wing ideology, rendered irrelevant by globalization, or reduced to nothing more than relativity.

Somer Brodribb (Associate Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Victoria) brings together many voices reflecting feminisms in the new millennium. There is vitality and resistance in the voices, not passive resignation. It's a wonderful antidote for feminists who are tired and discouraged. It's filled with smart analysis and a commitment to action. The contributors are primarily North American, with the majority being Canadian. Many, but not all, are academics (both graduate students and faculty). They represent a variety of fields and perspectives, ages and backgrounds, but they all share a dedication to women's equality. The book opens with the powerful "A Woman's Creed" drafted by Robin Morgan in collaboration with a number of women from around the world at the Women's Global Strategy meeting in 1994. Following this are six sections with

two papers each: *Cities of Tomorrow*, *Borders and New Worlds*, *Popular Culture*, *Women in Cyberspace*, *Knowledge and Power*, and *The Future of Activism*.

A short review of an edited collection cannot possibly do justice to all of the articles but can, at least, highlight some of the important strengths and weaknesses from the reviewer's perspective. Some highlights. As one who knows little about the field, I found the history of women's involvement in urban planning, as well as the work of present day feminist urban planners and architects, in Mary Ann Beavis's "Women and the City of Tomorrow," absolutely fascinating. Infuriating (but enlightening) was Sunera Thobani's analysis of the sexism and racism in Canadian immigration policy. Kate Campbell's analysis of lesbian chic in mainstream media made a convincing argument that the increasing visibility of lesbians, accompanied by the invisibility of lesbian sex, is, at heart, both homophobic and anti-feminist (especially anti-lesbian feminist).

Very smart scrutinies of women's bodies (and the fear and denial of them) appear in several articles: Allison Whitney's examination of virtual reality and cyberspace, M.C. Schraefal's inspection of the web, and Annette Burfoot's look at natural reproduction as "alien, brutal, and deadly," with technological alternatives, especially reproductive technology, as the solution. Significantly, all three of these pieces, although despairing, do not end in despair but rather contain important suggestions for alternative, feminist alternatives.

These are not the only pieces considering global issues. There are also fascinating reports on homeless women in the United States and El Salvador (by Kathryn M. Felty and Laura Nichols) and alternative feminist media in Costa Rica (by Margaret E. Thompson and Maria Suarez Toro). And if you want to read just one piece about globalization and its

impact, that piece should be Joan Grant-Cummings' "Antidote to the Global Capitalist Agenda."

The book ends with Paula Gunn Allen's stirring poem, "Some Like Indians Endure." The penultimate piece is by the Federation des femmes du Québec's "2000 Good Reasons to March," a call for participation in the World March of Women 2000, and a list of demands.

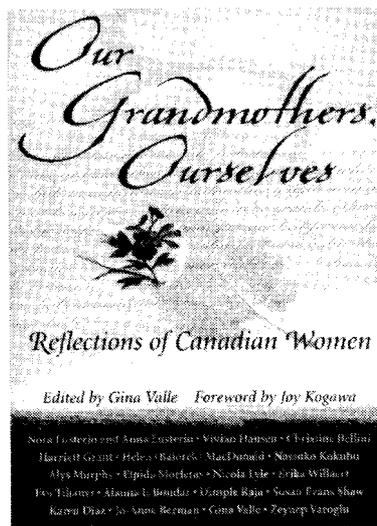
This piece encapsulates the strength of the entire collection: as much as we need good theory, analysis, and careful research, ultimately we need action. The March is one specific example (and an exciting one because of its global organization). The book is filled with other examples.

"If you're not happy here, then leave." That was the gist of Jean Chretien's advice to those who aren't happy with Canada's taxation policies. If he said that to Canadian women who are not happy with "x" (and "x" could be anything: uneven access to abortion; income and employment inequalities; violence against women; globalization; etc.), where would we go? Given that there is no feminist utopia, we need to continue our struggles, both locally and globally. *Reclaiming the Future: Women's Strategies for the 21st Century* shows us not only why we need to be political, but what kinds of actions we can take. While it provides pessimistic analyses of women's situations at the end of the millennium, it is, in the end, a profoundly optimistic book.

## OUR GRANDMOTHERS, OURSELVES: REFLECTIONS OF CANADIAN WOMEN

Gina Valle, Ed. Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 1999.

BY DORETTE HUGGINS



What kind of parents are you looking for? the Talk Show Host asked five-year-old identical twin boys slated for adoption. Lonnie (or was it Ronnie?) shot back: "A mummy, a daddy and a grandmother." Whether they be maternal or paternal, grandmothers are a breed apart, who play a key role in the shaping of the lives of their children's children. No one would agree more with the underlying sentiment expressed by these two young brothers than each of the twenty Canadian women who contributed to Gina Valle's remarkable collection, *Our Grandmothers, Ourselves: Reflections of Canadian Women*.

At the very outset, Gina Valle points out that the contributors are Canadian women raised in immigrant homes. The reader should thus

not be surprised to find that an anthology of reflections of Canadian women would then exclude and never once allude to the women who cradled our native land: our Aboriginal grandmothers. This is somewhat regrettable because perhaps we would have embraced a deeper appreciation and respect for the women who unlike their immigrant counterparts have become foreigners in their own land.

Instead of providing such a contrast, the selections in the book all follow the same trajectory, with one common denominator: isolation and the loss of independence. Whether it be the touching recollections by Nora and Anna Lusterio of the passage of their Filipino Nanay, or the memories of Christine Bellini's Italian Nonna living with Alzheimer's; whether it be Harriet Grant vowing to live by the creed of her Jamaican Yea Yea, or a doleful letter from Helen (Bajorek) MacDonald to her Polish Babcia; almost all of the tributes in the collection trace, with varying degrees of frankness, the lives of women who left the familiar or were sent for by their sons and or daughters to live out the rest of their lives in an unforgiving, foreign place of total dependency.

What comes out in many of these tributes is the stark truth: our grandmothers, the grandmothers of immigrant Canadian women, were treated like foreigners even within their own families, particularly so when the children of their children, out of a sense of shame, rejected outright all that they represented: funny accents, odd attire and peculiar religious or cultural rites of a far-away land. While not all of the tributes evoke this sense of shame, all except two reflect their granddaughters' struggles to assimilate in the world of their English speaking peers. They were courageous women, these grandmothers and the thousands like them whose lives were irremediably marred by the embalming of their past by the layers of daily pressures from within. Loss of