

GENDER, RACE, AND NATION: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Vanaja Dhruvarajan and Jill Vickers, Eds.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002

REVIEWED BY SIMONE BROWNE

Questions of “belonging,” difference and the nation-state have long been the subject of much feminist research and discussion. The contributors of *Gender, Race and Nation: A Global Perspective* provide contemporary and historical understandings of the politics of inclusion and exclusion in the Canadian nation-state, and on the global stage. Organized into two parts, the first section reviews key terms and introduces the editors’ one-world feminist analytical methodology as a tool for thinking through differences. This one-world framework, which reads like a best practices guide from scholars and activists including Philomena Essed’s understanding of gendered racisms and Maria Mies’ methodological postulates to guide action research and knowledge making, could also be termed a transnational feminist analysis. The second part of the book functions as a collection of nine essays that attempt to apply the one-world methodology to the study of various topics, including Vanaja Dhruvarajan’s chapter on reproductive technologies, Amanda Goldrick-Jones’ discussion of pro-feminist men’s organizations, and Pavin Ghorayshi’s study of women’s paid and unpaid labour. Here, Ghorayashi reveals how national economic policies are heavily invested in gendered racisms.

In addressing how economies of the body circulate on the national stage, the chapter ‘Between Body and Culture: Beauty, Ability, and

Growing Up Female’ asks, “Do body image issues differ among diverse groups of women?” and explores the various ways in which women negotiate dominant ideals of beauty. Using a diverse group of participants, in terms of physical abilities, race and gender identity, Carla Rice conducted interviews to chart and understand these women’s “bodily histories.” Rice analyzes technologies of social control, public scrutiny, and the body as currency, and in doing so, carves space for understanding how the participants narrate the self to create resistance strategies.

One of the most important contributions to the book is Jill Vickers’ chapter, “Thinking about Violence.” Vickers considers the numerous ways in which violence is understood in current feminist theorizing, including the violences that colonialism, globalization, and some nationalisms and state practices entail. This chapter adheres to the one-world framework by attending to the differences in how violence is understood and addressed by differently located women. Interestingly, Vickers offers a brief comparison of the contents of two issues of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, one from 1983 and the other from 1991, to reveal how understandings of violence in academic writings have developed into the more nuanced conception of a “continuum of violence.”

Some of the chapters of *Gender, Race and Nation* serve as literature surveys of the field and would benefit from more inclusion of women’s voices and experiences, or a “view from below” as Mies suggests with her postulates for activist research.

In doing so, the reader could more fittingly see the application and benefits of this one-world framework. For example, the chapter “Women of Colour in Canada,” although highly informative, uses secondary sources to present a cursory history of Canada’s immigration and multiculturalism policies, and some women’s experiences regarding them. As such, the opportunity to hear

women’s voices is missed. As well, such terms as “people of colour,” “non-white,” and “Canadian,” as in “Canadians perceive their country as one of white settlers,” would benefit from further qualification, perhaps through a discussion of the processes of racialization, as their use risks reifying whiteness as norm and that which constitutes a “real Canadian.” However, this chapter does offer a good description of how the Women’s Press and NAC have changed in structure due to the efforts of “woman-of-colour activism.”

The contributors to this collection succeed in offering several theoretical perspectives on their particular topic of inquiry. Key concepts are explained in an accessible manner, while the lengthy bibliography provides for an excellent resource. Given this, *Gender, Race and Nation* is a useful introduction to thinking through and theorizing differences, at both the local and global level.

ON THE EDGE OF EMPIRE: GENDER, RACE, AND THE MAKING OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1849-1871

Adele Perry
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001

REVIEWED BY KRISTIN BURNETT

On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871 by Adele Perry examines British Columbia after it became a British colony in 1849 and before it joined confederation in 1871. As Perry shows, when British Columbia became a formal colony, it was anything but orderly, respectable,