

***Poor-Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion.*** Jean Swanson. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2001; viii +207 pages; ISBN 1-896357-44-X; \$24.95 (paper).

*Poor-Bashing*, as the title suggests, is a no-nonsense examination of anti-poor ideologies and practices in Canada. Swanson's book offers an accessible and highly readable introduction to the bases of anti-poor social policies, the prejudices and practices that perpetuate poor-bashing, along with strategies for understanding and challenging social exclusion. Peppered with the experiences of individuals she has interviewed, this book brings a fresh approach to understanding the structural and systemic sources of poverty in Canada today.

There are two resounding strengths to *Poor Bashing*. First, the historical overview of the origins and perpetuation of anti-poor policies and practices is both rich and easily understood. Swanson traces the emergence of the poor laws to the United Kingdom and their subsequent transplantation in Canada, and adeptly illustrates the ways in which the protestant ideologies assisted in supporting a particularly capitalism-friendly view of wealth and inequality. In a chatty but serious fashion, Swanson winds through the various social policy developments associated with the rise of the welfare state in Canada drawing us to the current period, in which the media and neo-liberal ideology conspire to resurrect the spirit of the poor-laws. Second, Swanson pushes the reader to draw strong links between racism, sexism and indeed discrimination in general in relation to anti-poor behaviour. More than merely tying forms of oppression together, she forces an examination of personal prejudices and biases about poverty. She asks the reader to consider how she might "bash herself," thus exposing the insidiousness of anti-poor beliefs in Canadian society.

Swanson's examination of internalised poor-bashing pulls together the historical and social policy emphases of the book, culminating in strategies for countering poor-bashing in everyday life, in public discourse, in the media and in legislation.

*Poor-Bashing* will find a wide audience: it is written in clear and jargon-free language. While not specifically targeted to feminist scholars,

Swanson's ability to link poor-bashing with other forms of oppression makes her book extremely relevant for women's studies. Swanson is careful to note that poverty in Canada is gender (along with race and ability) specific. Social activists, university and college students, and indeed anyone interested in the issues of poverty and social justice will use this book as an accessible source of information about social exclusion in Canada.

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***The Radical Women Manifesto: Socialist Feminist Theory, Program and Organizational Structure.*** Introduction by Megan Cornish. Seattle: Red Letter Press, 2001; 94 pages; ISBN 0-932323-11-1; \$10.00US (paper).

***Turbo Chicks: Talking Young Feminisms.*** Allyson Mitchell, Lisa Bryn Rundle, and Laura Karaian, eds. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2001; 364 pages; ISBN 1-894549-06-6; \$24.95 (paper).

On a recent visit from Toronto, my aunt glimpsed these books upon my kitchen table and asked, "What *is* feminism these days?" A lively discussion ensued, with my side of the conversation drawing upon the diverse ideas presented in these texts. Both books address rebellious politicized individuals striving to change the *status quo*, but they present markedly different approaches to engaging feminism for social change. *The Radical Women Manifesto* is, well, a manifesto for socialist feminism, while *Turbo Chicks* is a collection of individuals' writings on how feminisms operate in the lives of the authors.

Introducing *The Radical Women Manifesto*, Megan Cornish addresses the book to a "new wave of rebels and revolutionaries" providing "a cutting-edge guide...to build and sustain a movement for redesigning society" (5). "Radical Women" emerged in 1967 in Seattle from a "Free University" class on Women and Society which brought together New Left student activists and feminist radicals from the "Old Left" socialist tradition. This international organization advances