

BOOK REVIEW

Minds of Our Own: Inventing Feminist Scholarship and Women's Studies in Canada and Québec, 1966-76. Wendy Robbins, Meg Luxton, Margrit Eichler, and Francine Descarries, editors. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008; xiv+398 pages; index; bibliography; ISBN 978-1-55458-037-8; \$38.95 (paper).

Comprised of 40 essays by members of Canada's first generation of self-identified feminist scholars, as well as three chapters by the editors, *Minds of Our Own* is a detailed look at the emergence of feminist curricula and scholarship in Canada between 1966 and 1976. Together its varied essays represent contributions by researchers who have worked in all of Canada's provinces, with southern Ontario being most heavily represented. Most of the pieces are by white women; two are by women of colour and two are by men.

Certain themes are prominent throughout the collection, including the influence of Simone de Beauvoir, Margaret Mead, and Betty Friedan upon some writers' initial forays into feminism. Contributors also state that observations of their mothers' experiences, encounters with marriage and motherhood, participation in consciousness-raising groups, political activism, and desires to understand women's lives sparked their commitments. In their attempts to gain degrees, study feminist issues, and secure advancement, writers encountered sexism at all levels. Some were denied entrance to graduate school because they were female, for example; others were denied tenure because their peers perceived research on women as unsuitable for the academy. A further theme is the importance of collegial support. Generally viewed with suspicion by male faculty, feminist scholars between 1966 and 1976 banded together to take care of each others' children as well as to teach team courses, gain maternity benefits, organize feminist conferences, and create journals, including *Atlantis* and *Resources for Feminist Research*.

Minds of Our Own is an important collection, lending documentary and analytical insight into the emergence of Women's Studies and feminist scholarship in Canada. Among its strengths is its comparison of feminist scholars' activities in Québec with the rest of Canada. Whereas the former tended to integrate feminist scholarship into existing disciplines, the latter tended to create Women's Studies courses and programs. The collection's inclusion of 40 submissions, as well, enables the volume to avoid constructing a singular narrative about the rise of Canadian feminist scholarship, and to instead present a multiplicity of voices and interpretations. Yet at 40 essays and 400 pages the book does get unwieldy, and if included in undergraduate courses it will become necessary for instructors to assign specific selections.

Minds of Our Own admirably fulfills its goal of documenting the emergence of feminist scholarship in Canada. Yet it does serve another purpose. Exploring the personal and professional lives of a remarkable group of scholars, it contributes to the social and intellectual history of feminism. It reveals that individual fulfillment was a strong motivator for many feminist scholars in Canada during this period; it also demonstrates that while many feminisms existed prior to 1976, liberal and materialist feminisms dominated the academy. More than this, by exploring over three dozen women's careers from the 1950s onward, *Minds of Our Own* offers a compelling portrait of the feminist scholarly life in Canada during the latter half of the twentieth century. Characterized by geographical and social mobility, as well as by tragedies, disappointments, and accomplishments, this life was both intensely difficult and richly rewarding.

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