

BOOK REVIEW

Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances. Aimee Carrillo Rowe. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008; xix+252 pages; appendices; ISBN 978-0-8223-43117-2; \$23.95US (paper).

In *Power Lines*, Aimee Carrillo Rowe taps into contemporary debates over the purpose and value of academic feminism's institutional power, particularly for those marked as "outsiders-within" due to their non-normative racial, gender, or sexual identities. Drawing on twenty-eight interviews with self-described academic feminists (ten women of colour, eighteen white women), Carrillo Rowe investigates the sites of tension and possibility informing these women's varying efforts to form transracial feminist alliances in their institutional environments. She conducts a rigorous rhetorical analysis of these women's responses and, in doing so, sheds light on the tangible political conditions which have fostered segregated feminist alliance building within the U.S. academy.

A primary objective of this work is to produce a rough methodological mapping of strategies for transracial feminist alliance building. Carrillo Rowe persuasively advocates a paradigm shift characterized by feminists' vulnerable listening (instead of defensive reaction), the embrace of transracial tension (not its denial), and the refusal to take refuge in feminist "innocence" in moments of sisterly betrayal. While these conclusions are not in themselves revelatory, the path Carrillo Rowe took to reach them is fascinating. The conversations with her interview subjects reveal, for instance, several white feminists' inability to verbally articulate the racialized terms informing their (usually) segregated alliances, while many women of colour characterize their "institutional intimacies" (25) more defensively, in terms of professional survival: "An ally is someone who won't block my way" (154).

In a compelling move, Carrillo Rowe emphasizes the affective quality of feminist alliances, which she describes as an interface between intimacy and power. Noting that "whom we love is political," the author advocates a self-reflexive and compassionate feminist project (called the "politics of relation"). She adeptly negotiates her own relational politics as an Anglo-Chicana queer feminist researcher (or Chicana falsa) throughout the analysis, asking, for instance, in what ways has her identity as a feminist researcher "split by categories, by worlds and words" (xix) fostered (dis)connections with her interview subjects? The author entreats us, as feminist scholars, to (re)consider the politics of our affective communities - that is, the people and groups with whom we live, work and make connections (25-26) - and the ways in which those ties risk reproducing hegemonic power relations and subaltern identities.

Power Lines is a significant and timely contribution to the ongoing project of transracial feminist alliance building, particularly in an American cultural context becoming increasingly identified as “post-racial.” By asking how feminist academics can better practice our politics, Carrillo Rowe has produced a study that stands as more than a theoretical exploration of U.S. third world feminist and postcolonial scholarship (although that is well-represented here). *Power Lines* is also a valuable tool to guide academic and non-academic activists who are engaging in bridge work at the interstices of identity politics.

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