

representation, but must also be regarded in their institutional, performative and framing aspects. Bal's method of postmodern cultural analysis relies on close reading, which allows her to address the complexity and specificity of particular texts or images while foregrounding their relationship to ideologies, politics, and aesthetics. Her readings demonstrate the instability of intention, agency and subjectivity, at the same time as they problematize a common tendency in feminist, queer and cultural studies to "naturalize" visual and textual constructs by referring them back to the outside world. She finds formal equivalents or encodings of such naturalizing readings in narrative, rhetorical and tropological structures.

Another unifying thread found in this volume is Bal's feminist concern with gender, articulated through the recurrent themes of rape and violence against women, violence of representation, or epistemic violence. Even her interest in biblical narratives derives from a desire to study the recorded beginnings of patriarchy and misogyny, supported by her optimistic belief that we are now witnessing the "unstable end of patriarchy." Of particular interest to Women's Studies is her essay "Enfolding Feminism," in which she proposes a rallying metaphor of the fold to repair severed links and seemingly irreconcilable conflicts in feminism.

Bal's work has a role to play in the general critique of what makes culture constrictive and limiting, exposing the abuse of power, embracing ethical non-indifference and deconstructing the supposedly "unmarked" dominant modes of perception of reality through whiteness, Christianity, and colonialism. In the end, this *Reader* is a form of "life writing," the text writing the life of a thinker, philosopher and academic who acts as our guide and who occasionally lightens up her theorizing with humour, playfulness and personal anecdote.

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Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations of Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred. M. Jacqui Alexander. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005; xii +410 pages; ISBN 0-8223-3645-6; \$23.95US (paper).

M. Jacqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations of Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred* is a comprehensive, extensive exploration of Alexander's journey through migration stories (including her own), through academe, the academy and teaching, and through African and Caribbean colonized identities and sexualized politics. Her collection contributes a great deal to the feminist examination of the need to remember, to communicate the experiences of women of colour, including the spiritual survival of women of colour by finding room for the inclusion the Sacred and sacred experiences, as she steps away from the secularized view of experience and power that post-modernism has brought about.

Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing* is an incredibly ambitious undertaking as she pulls together a decade of her writing (her critiques and reflections) into this one collection. Alexander's theoretical approach brings together intersections of feminist, queer and critical race theory while also strongly contributing to a critique of colonialism, neo-imperialism and modern empires. Throughout *Pedagogies of Crossing* Alexander relies on a radical feminism influenced by feminist activists and critical theorists such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Adrienne Rich, and especially Gloria Anzaldúa, among many others who the reader can recognize as inspiring her efforts.

Alexander's collection weaves together themes ranging from the need to teach for justice - that teaching the life stories of women of colour is essential to understanding the oppression of colonialist forces - to the need to question the control of empires, including corporate empires, and their violent traditions pressed upon

people of colour. Alexander's chapters combine her critical analyses on race, sexuality and citizenship/colonialism.

One main theme throughout *Pedagogies of Crossing* is Alexander's inclusion of stories about "The Crossing," which she defines in her introduction. To Alexander, "The Crossing" of Africans to the Empire's functions as a metaphor for how to understand oppression - state and corporate oppression by empires - both historical and present. She maintains throughout her collection that empires (including that of the predominantly white academy) have limited our knowledge and she provides an approach to understand this limiting force by way of remaining critical of colonial power and domination. She does this by finding spaces to teach difference; she provides examples of her own experiences in teaching justice and rights.

Alexander frames her collection with three interlocking themes, developed in three parts in her book. Part One, which includes 2 chapters, confronts sexuality and subjectivity and how heterosexism and patriarchal power governs neocolonial states. Chapter 1 examines how citizenship is rooted in heterosexual terms. This chapter deals specifically with the Caribbean example and she enters her argument by dealing with domestic violence and the criminalization of homosexuality. Chapter 2, quite different from the first, confronts the markets of "gay capital" - "gay corporate tourism and neocolonialism" (12). Part One puts forth a strong argument to unite questions of colonialism, racial formation and political economy under the banner of queer critical studies/queer movements. Alexander states we must recognize that "racialization and immigration do matter for an alternative politics of sexual identity" (88).

Part Two, comprised of three chapters, examines how our global world and the State are affected by the political economies of corporate capital and that the academy is also controlled by these forces. Chapter 2 utilizes heterosexism and the enforcement of heterosexuality in the

defence of the nation by neo-imperial states (for example, the United States of America) as the launch pad for her critique. While Chapter 3 focuses on the State, Chapter 4 focuses on her experiences in the Academy, specifically the New School University, and how she found that the knowledges of women of colour were being erased. Alexander advocates most strongly for, as seen in her fifth chapter - which she explains as her analytic grounding and methodological approach for her first four chapters - the need for "ideological traffic" to critique and question social formations such as those that include the colonial and neo-colonial (13).

The third part of Alexander's collection, made up of the two final chapters, deals specifically with reflection and memory. Alexander maintains throughout that "memory [is] an antidote to alienation, separation and the amnesia that domination produces" (14). Chapter 6 is her reflection on *The Bridge Called My Back*, its impact and impassioned narrative to women of colour. It is her dedication to Gloria Anzaldúa specifically, and to women of colour in general, who work this world. Alexander was influenced by a belief in the urgency to remain true to "wholeness as a necessary part of the pedagogy of Crossing" and the "need for spirit in the process of decolonization" (281). The final chapter deals with the question of transgenerational memory. For Alexander, memory is a sacred dimension of the self. Her feminism and her politics create new spaces for the Sacred, which she believes emerges from memory.

Readers of this collection should be well versed in the theoretical assumptions and approaches of third wave feminism and critiques of the modernist project whereby the multiple intersections of oppression - meaning how race, gender, sexuality and colonial powers intersect - undergo critical analysis. While *Pedagogies of Crossing* would not be easily accessible to all, it is, however, an intense critical analysis of colonial and corporate power and the need

for queer and feminist approaches to our nation states, constructed sexualities and racialized identities.

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Obstructed Labour: Race and Gender in the Re-Emergence of Midwifery. Sheryl Nestel. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006; vii+200 pages; ISBN 0-7748-1220-6; \$29.95 (paper).

Mainstreaming Midwives: The Politics of Change. Robbie Davis-Floyd and Christine Barbara Johnson, eds. New York: Routledge, 2006; x+559 pages; ISBN 0-415-93151-7; \$31.95US (paper).

Sheryl Nestel's *Obstructed Labour* is an examination of how the activism and rhetoric leading to the legalization of midwifery in Ontario reproduced racist discourses, problematically affecting immigrant midwives of colour. Nestel posits that Third World women played significant roles in supporting the legalization of midwifery, while simultaneously being used in juxtaposition to the movement's construction of "respectable" midwives. She takes the reader through the local, institutional and interpersonal "technologies of exclusion" within the movement, as well as the larger global processes of domination that arise in the common practice of midwifery tourism, where aspiring midwives travel to Third World countries in order to gather birthing experience. Nestel also highlights narratives from midwives of colour, detailing their experiences of both exclusion and resistance. She closes her work by insisting that "in order for there to be a glimmer of hope in constructing political projects that do not reproduce hierarchical relations among women" (166), it is vital to acknowledge and account for the errors of past political projects.

Nestel's work makes good on its advocacy of the painful accounting for errors of the past, weaving the reader deftly through a highly troubling depiction of racism and the propagation of hegemonic

discourses arising from a well-meaning feminist endeavour. *Obstructed Labour* is neither an easy nor palatable read. However, as disheartening as some of the information is, this work is highly important to the growth of feminist activism and scholarship, as well as for the growth of the midwifery movement. I would highly recommend this book to Women's Studies classes and to feminist readers of all backgrounds. The theme and analysis transcends the midwifery movement itself, providing an excellent examination of the dangers of adhering to notions of generic womanhood and of all forms of socially conscious organizing which do not allow for dissenting voices.

It should be emphasized that this book is not an indictment of midwifery. While certainly critical of how the licensure of Ontario midwifery came into being, Nestel never questions the importance of midwifery and the alternative birth movement. Instead, *Obstructed Labour* offers a difficult but necessary wake-up call to feminist theorists and organizers of all backgrounds.

Mainstreaming Midwives provides a variety of essays about the historical and current contexts of midwifery in the United States (US). The book is separated into three distinct sections, each outlining a particular theme within the US midwifery movement. Section I analyzes the national context of midwifery, examining the development of nurse and direct entry midwifery, as well as highlighting the tensions between the various national midwifery bodies. Section II provides case studies of the struggles and successes of direct-entry midwives to obtain licensure in seven states in the US. Section III examines some of the core issues related to the project of mainstreaming midwives, including tensions between midwives who choose to practise outside of state regulated practices and those who are more protocol oriented, and the frictions that occur in the attempts to balance the project of professionalization against the social movement of midwifery. *Mainstreaming*