

BOOK REVIEW

***A Feminist I: Reflections from Academia*. Christine Overall. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1998; 214 pages; ISBN 1-55111-219-1; \$26.95 (paper).**

Christine Overall's A Feminist I: Reflections from Academia is an empowering, highly motivating, and thought-provoking work that draws the reader in from the very first paragraph. Written as a theoretical autobiography, Overall's "feminist od[d]yssey" (15) will be of interest to all individuals teaching and studying in academia. She explores the political and moral meanings of being a feminist in a democratic society. Using a critical "I", she addresses a multitude of topics, including the "role muddles" of being a feminist and educator, classism, sexism, ageism, masculinism, ableism and feelings of fraudulence. Interwoven within her personal stories are the works of many key writers. The reference list provides a wonderful resource for readings on philosophical feminism.

I picked this book up and couldn't put it down. It is a "gem" and you will feel an urgency to revisit your teaching in the world of academia. The chapters, "Women and Men in Education" and "A Tale of Two Classes" are going to be required readings for my preservice teacher education classes. Other chapters will be integrated into my graduate education courses. Encouraging post-secondary education students to critically reflect on chapters such as "Nowhere At Home" and "Passing for Normal" will help to promote transformative education in inclusive classrooms. For researchers and educators, the final chapter in the book, "Personal Histories, Social Identities, and Feminist Philosophical Inquiry" provides a strong justification for the critical use of personal histories and social identities as a primary resource for scholarly research and teaching.

Overall's strong, working class roots are influential in her writings and keep her grounded in the realities of lived experiences. Her stories are very powerful. She relates a story of going back to her working class neighbourhood in Toronto, to attend a birthday party. She recalls feeling like a "frivolous tropical goldfish in a small pond of sensible hard-working minnows" (107). A very telling moment occurs, when a former football star draws her into a hallway to quietly ask her, "How did you get out?" (108).

Based on Overall's seminal work, researchers can act from a position of confidence to gain feminist insights into their lives, their students' lives and the world. She models courage, determination and perseverance as she addresses relevant epistemological and moral issues of feminism studies in academia. Together, we need to continue to work for social reform. Christine, we're listening, we *hear* you!

Mary Jane Harkins

Mount Saint Vincent University