

## Book/video reviews

*Sons of the Movement: FTMs Risking Incoherence on a Post-Queer Cultural Landscape.* Jean Bobby Noble. Toronto: Women's Press, 2006; 150 pages; ISBN 0-88961-461-X; \$29.95 (paper).

*Sons of the Movement* is a book whose time has come. Its very title is an exciting index of Noble's call for attention to the complex - he says "incoherent" - cultural significance of female to male (ftm) transgender subjects. Despite the conflicted status of "transgender" within women's and feminist communities, ftms are, Noble argues, not just interlopers within the women's movement and feminism, but sons of these movements. This thin (but packed) volume proceeds to take us through an intricate analysis of what we miss when we ignore what ftm subjectivities and cultures reveal about the intersecting discourses reveal about of feminism, gender, race and class.

For instance, in Chapter Four, "Our Bodies Are Not Ourselves," Noble applies the language of becoming (frequently a term of transgendered self-reference) to an analysis of class and race. He offers a moving account of his own transition from working class lesbian to middle class ftm, which displays not just a transition of gender, but a movement from what he calls "off-white" to white. Two other chapters focus on the prominence of boyhood within popular culture as a mode of inspiring masculinity that is on its way to manhood without fully arriving. "Zoom, Zoom, Zoom: Emergent Boyz, Bois, Boys in Popular Culture," charts the appeal of the boy as a transitional metaphor in cultural texts from Mazda commercials to films such as *Fight Club*. The other, "Boy to the Power of Three: Toronto's Drag Kings" describes (and thus helps to create a performance archive) of three waves of drag king movements in Toronto. The last chapter of the book "'Strange Sisters': Toronto Femme Frenzies" - perhaps the boldest of the book - shows us how the incoherence of transgender intersections also offers us a vocabulary for articulating a nuanced understanding of femme figures within queer communities. At the heart of every chapter in this book is an idea of arresting power - an idea that showcases just how

intersectionality itself undoes our easy assumptions about the separate spheres of class, gender, race, feminism, and sexuality.

Unfortunately, *Sons of the Movement* is also a book whose time came too soon. Its short chapters made one want more...and less. More analysis of what is at stake in the transitivity of boyhood, more and slower analysis of examples, in all chapters, more copyediting. I wanted more of all these things and less summary of the scholarship on whiteness as a problematically unmarked construction and the scholarship on butch-femme history. Such summaries no doubt flag Noble's careful charting of his influences, but they frequently delay and, in some case truncate, exposition of his own interventions within and responses to these histories. One more round of revisions to this book as a whole would have sharpened both its claims and its prose.

It is perhaps a sign of the sad state of academic affairs that, as he claims in his introduction, Bobby Noble felt he could not traffic and thereby test and expand, the ideas and the prose of this book through the institutional frameworks the university offered him during his graduate school training (although he is quite careful to acknowledge his intellectual debts). But this book and Jean Bobby Noble himself (that "guy" who, in a lovely turn of phrase, claims he is "half lesbian") are themselves flickers of hope that the landscape of gender and sexuality studies is far less coherent - more full of possibilities we could not have predicted in advance. We have a lot more to learn from the sons of the movement. And *Sons of the Movement* is an important contribution not just to the "post-queer" landscape, but to the landscape of ideas writ large.

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*Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism.* Viviane Namaste. Toronto: Women's Press, 2005; xii + 136 pages; ISBN 0-889691-452-0; \$24.95 (paper).