

arguments (such as Elijah Anderson's ethnographic research). The experiences she documents are real enough, however, and the race/crime nexus surely is one of the most serious, complex, and intractable problems of our time.

None of these books should be read as an introduction to criminology or as definitive of what criminology is about. Taken together, however, they demonstrate the importance of some of the issues with which criminology is concerned and some of the approaches taken with respect to these issues.

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## Review Essay: In the Murky Waters of Postmodernism

*Everyday Sexism in the Third Millennium*, edited by Carol Rambo Ronai, Barbara A. Zsembik, and Joe R. Feagin. New York: Routledge, 1997. 242 pages. Cloth, \$65.00 [Can. \$91.00]; paper, \$17.99 [Can. \$25.99].

*Postfeminisms—Feminism, Cultural Theory, and Cultural Forms*, by Ann Brooks. New York: Routledge, 1998. 240 pages. Cloth, \$75.00 [Can. \$105.00]; paper, \$22.00 [Can. \$31.99].

The editors and contributors of *Everyday Sexism*, who all are professors or graduate students at North American universities, do not declare themselves postfeminists, but all have chosen epistemological views and methodological preferences taken from the postmodernist literature. Ann Brooks, the author of *Postfeminisms*, a New Zealand sociologist, defends the claim that real postfeminism, as distinct from the cheap "postfeminism" of the media, is not anti-feminist but a higher stage of feminism; it allegedly incorporates into feminism various valuable postmodernist insights. For the authors of *Everyday Sexism* the enemy is "mainstream feminism," whereas for Ann Brooks it is "second wave feminism."

*Everyday Sexism* presents fourteen papers grouped in three parts. The title of part I is "Identity as a Gendered Space"; part II, "The Body as a Gendered Space"; part III, "The Political/Economic Arena as a Gendered Space." All of the authors of these papers use some of the language of postmodernism, yet they consider themselves as still within the framework of social science, feminist research, and social action. Although one of the editors, Carol Rambo Ronai, echoes the anti-social science postmodernist stands of Lyotard, blaming social science for its claim to objectivity and its "discursive constraint" (p. 134), the authors' criticism of "mainstream feminism" is not as extreme as that of Ann

Brooks of the "second wave feminism." Mainstream feminism is characterized as "aiming at equality with men" (p. 218), favoring "individualism" (p. 221), and generally being "white middle class" (pp. 218–21), but mercifully it is neither called "modernist," nor is it accused of blatant racism, only of neglecting the different and complicated experiences and identities of non-White, non-middle-class or non-heterosexual women. The editors and authors of this book attempt to fill the void created by this neglect. The book contains accounts of the identity problems of such people as daughters of White mothers and Black fathers, of interracial lesbian couples, of the specific sexual harassment problems of Asian American women, of the hazards of women's activism on the Internet, of the baffling problem of the silence of so many victims of wife abuse and of childhood sex abuse, of defining the boundary between sexual harassment and everyday rudeness, of the complicated identities and loyalties of working-class Black and Chicano women; all these may either interfere with their loyalty to women's causes or isolate them from their communities. Unfortunately, most of the authors seem reluctant to compare the experiences of their research subjects to those of American women from other groups. Most of them neither formulate any hypothesis nor propose any tests of what they say.

Ann Brooks presents in nine chapters grouped into three parts, "postfeminism as the theoretical meeting ground between feminism and anti-foundationalist movements such as postmodernism, poststructuralism and post-colonialism." The introduction and part I accuse second wave feminism of "liberal humanism" and of racism in the same breath. Part II describes feminism's "turn to culture," and part III postfeminism and cultural forms.

Absent in this book, written by a sociologist who presents postmodernist postfeminism as a great advance over second wave feminism, is discussion of anything postfeminism may have to offer either to the feminist research program or to the formulation and application of feminist policies and their evaluation. Indeed, what can there be, when there is no "subject," no truth, no causality, absolute relativism, only differences between women of different racial and ethnic groups and different kinds of sexuality? What is discussed here is their "representation" in culture, especially in popular art and the media, seeing in them "spaces of resistance." That postmodernism rules out the possibility for any social science is not stated here.

Brooks proceeds as follows: she presents with tacit approval statements by postmodernists Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, and Lyotard, never as firsthand quotations in their context, but as short quotations from secondary sources without explanation, let alone critical discussion. Brooks also presents two half-sentence quotations in the opposite direction from Sheila Benhabib and Edward Said who warn against a central part of postmodernism—relativism—again without critical discussion.

The basis for this book's high regard for postmodernism is its curious description of "second wave feminism," that is, that of the late sixties and the seventies, as "modernist" in its philosophy and "hegemonic" in its attitudes; by "hegemonic" she and her sources mean the attitude of White, middle-class, academic, North American or British women, who during this period dominated the feminist scene and allegedly disregarded the experiences of women of other categories. Postmodernist feminists claim that unlike those hegemonic second wave feminists, they themselves have full regard for all non-middle-class and/or non-White women in North America, for the women of the entire Third World, as well as for persons of all sexual orientations.

### **Second Wave Feminism: Politics or Research**

What is here meant by "second wave feminism"? Is it the sociopolitical movement that organized itself in the second half of the sixties in the United States or the multifaceted intellectual activity: the debates, the conferences, the founding of women's studies departments and of sections within the national and international associations of various academic disciplines, of specialized journals, the initiation and funding of research and the publication of papers and of books—by feminist women (also by some feminist men) in all the social sciences, that sprang up nearly concomitantly with the sociopolitical movement? Second wave feminism is here criticized for having had a consensus both with modernist goals and with modernist epistemological and methodological prescriptions.

Like any political organization that aims to achieve social change, NOW (National Organization of Women), the major mainstream "second wave" feminist organization in the United States, had to have some consensus about its short-term goals, methods of action, and conditions of membership. Like many other organizations aiming at social change, it also attempted to reach a consensus concerning medium-range and long-term goals, as well as the choice of allies. Such a consensus may indeed involve wider moral/ideological and even philosophical issues. Yet no feminist organization—not the National Organization of Women (NOW), nor the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), nor the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), nor more "radical" feminist organizations, nor temporary consciousness-raising groups, nor workplace caucuses—to the best of my knowledge ever attempted to establish a consensus concerning epistemological and methodological rules for research into problems of interest to them!

Yet women's studies departments or women's research institutes adopt criteria for the acceptance or rejection of teachers and speakers; feminist journals and other learned periodicals adopt editorial policies and criteria for accepting or

rejecting papers, and those criteria may be epistemological and/or methodological—and serve as a kind of “consensus.”

### **What Is Modernism?**

Postmodernists seem to say that modernism entails naive rationalism, faith in progress, the one truth that can be discovered, “unilinear causality,” and scientific objectivity. They claim that the modernism of second-wave feminists has caused them to concentrate on the goal of “equality” for women, to grasp the identity of being a woman as simple, and to disregard the differences between women and men as well as among women. As an example they quote disapprovingly the blanket use of the concept of “oppression” to denote the situation of all women.

Modernism, or the “Moderns” as opposed to the “Ancients,” is a concept created by Jonathan Swift at the turn of the eighteenth century to mean the same as “Enlightenment,” both rationalist and individualistic. I do not think that any of the “Founding Mothers,” either of the political movement or of the academic second-wave feminism, would have described themselves as modernist. The sociologists among them were either functional analysts and as such collectivists, not individualists, or, if already critical of Talcott Parsons’s theory of social equilibrium and the unequal role assigned to women in it, mostly chose critiques of Marxist or neo-Marxist style (C. Wright Mills style)—both of them nonindividualist, seeing in the collectives of social class the driving force of history. Most anthropologists among them held the collectivist views of either Franz Boas or Bronislaw Malinowski. Most psychologists among them were either behaviorists or Freudians, though individualists, decidedly not rationalists. Those feminist sociologists, anthropologists, or psychologists who became increasingly critical of Marxism, neo-Marxism, (anthropological) functionalism, or psychoanalysis certainly did not become modernists. It is about time to explode this baseless story of the modernism of second-wave feminism.

### **Conclusion**

The realization that the de facto inferior status of women constitutes a major social problem for democratic society, and that this problem could be solved, not only caused a great and inventive organizational effort by women but also spurred problem-oriented and critical discussion, and innovative research within many academic and “applied” disciplines as well on an interdisciplinary basis. New methods of semi-structured and “qualitative” interviewing, oral history, participant observation, and change research were developed. Questionnaires and surveys fit for thinking and feeling human subjects were designed. There was no strict consensus, and different groups of feminist researchers

avored different methods. Yet second-wave feminism certainly helped to loosen the rigid "scientistic" methodological rules aping the natural sciences that used to dominate, especially in American sociology.

Most feminist researchers tacitly have assumed that there exists a "truth," a social reality, and that it was their duty to test their hypotheses. While rejecting the demand of being "value-free" concerning their commitment to the well-being of women, they nevertheless were committed to aim at objectivity in their research.

Already in the early seventies, that is, well before the advent of "post-modernism" in the United States, some "radical feminists" openly opposed all empirical social research, declaring that what was needed was nothing but "gathering ammunition for the struggle." Contemporary postmodernist feminists appear to have given up struggle in preference for some vague "resistance," but their hostility to social science is still going strong.

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*Feminism and Men: Reconstructing Gender Relations*, edited by Steven P. Schacht and Doris W. Ewing. New York: New York University Press, 1998. 310 pages. Paper, \$17.50.

This anthology focuses on men's role in the transformation of gender relations brought about by the feminist movement. Major questions addressed in this varied and uneven book include: How does the social construction of masculinity serve as a basis for gender inequality? Which methods of studying masculinity are politically reactionary to feminism, and which can potentially advance the feminist agenda? And, most importantly, what are the ways in which men can claim a feminist identity and act in solidarity with women in feminist struggles against the gender hierarchy?

Men's participation as allies in the feminist struggle has always been problematic. The abolition of sexist inequalities requires that men suffer losses of advantages and power as women gain both. As a group, men have enjoyed the distribution of privileges and advantages under patriarchy, while simultaneously suffering under rigid sex-typed codes of behavior. This means that for men, the personal disadvantages of moving toward equality with women are clear, while the benefits are ambiguous. This political reality, coupled with the trend toward separatism from men in the radical stream of the second-wave feminist movement, has insured that the number of men taking part in feminist struggles remains extremely low. However, as the feminist movement has outgrown its need