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Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim, eds. 2013. *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives*. Third edition. New York and London: Routledge. xii + 628 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-52102-4. Available from Book Promotions – a division of Jonathan Ball Publishers.

What most contemporary theorists know as ‘gender theory’ has its roots in feminist theory, and that, in turn, arises from a ‘disobedient epistemology’ – from looking at phenomena through lenses that do not permit one to see only expected or conventional patterns of meaning. Feminist epistemology and theory is one such divergent view of reality in its focus on the disregarded categories of women and gender. There is a long and honourable tradition of feminist thinking and theorising which refuses to see society and the world through patriarchal eyes, and which interrogates relations of gender and power in society, in the academy and in discourse. This tradition is represented in Carole McCann and Seung-kyung Kim’s *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives*.

The project of editing a book called *Feminist theory reader* evokes questions of selection. So, for example, one editor may feel strongly about including Mary Wollstonecraft’s views in *A vindication of the rights of women*, while another may feel that Simone de Beauvoir’s *The second sex* is the founding text that cannot be ignored. Obviously, though, it is impossible to include all the texts that have contributed to what we know as feminist theory, scholarship and epistemology. In an attempt to address this, the editors of the third edition of the *Feminist theory reader* have adopted the concepts of ‘local’ and ‘global’ as their organising principles. The central idea is to arrange the book around notions of theorising ‘the local’, that is, the phenomena that are closest to the researcher, and the ‘global’, namely those that are more distant. However, these categories are not self-evident, and some context is required. As we work towards decolonialising knowledge, we must also take into account ideas of the ‘local’ and ‘global’. All too often, local: global has been posed as a binary opposition, where ‘local’ means underdeveloped, Third World and of the South, while ‘global’ means techno-savvy, First World and of the North. But as an epistemology of disobedience, feminist theory, which owes a great deal to Derridean deconstruction, challenges this hierarchical opposition as well as those that are imbricated with gender meanings. In the hands of theorists such as the Combahee River Collective (whose foremost exponent is Barbara Smith), ‘local’ means not only North American, black and feminist, but also lesbian, and speaks to the struggles of all black lesbian feminists. The collective’s manifesto, which appears in the *Reader*, thus subverts and notions of ‘local’ as ‘central’ or as ‘limited’. In these, and other pieces, the notion that feminism is ‘only local’ or ‘only global’ is overthrown, and the power interests underpinning the very terms are laid bare and subverted.

The *Reader* is divided into four sections, each prefaced by an introductory essay by one of the editors. The sections are: ‘Theorizing feminist times and spaces’; ‘Theorizing intersecting identities’; ‘Theorizing feminist knowledge and agency’; and ‘Imagine otherwise’. While these sections overlap conceptually, they also comprehensively map out the terrain of feminist knowledge. The essays that preface each section make valuable teaching resources for educators who will use the *Reader* to teach feminist thought and theory.

The first section is perhaps the least successfully named. ‘Theorizing feminist times and spaces’ maps the terrain of feminist thought via such germinal works as Simone de Beauvoir’s *The second sex*, but also includes robust discussion of global and globalising trends within feminism in works such as Becky Thomson’s ‘Multiracial feminism: Recasting the chronology of second wave feminism’. Running through this section is an impulse to question the ‘wave’ metaphor for different types of feminism, according to Linda Nicholson’s now-classic discussion in ‘Feminism in “waves”: Useful metaphor or not?’. Nicholson argues convincingly that the wave metaphor, despite its usefulness, obscures and oversimplifies more than it clarifies, and that there were more similarities than differences between the so-called first, second and third waves of feminism. The pieces in this section are somewhat disparate, organised around the concepts of local/global and history/wave, which create an arena of knowledge that is too large to fit into one discursive category. It might have been better, as obvious as it would have been, to offer landmark texts in the history of feminist scholarship.

The second section is entitled ‘Theorizing intersecting identities’ and here the organising principle is to explore gender, race, class and location as overlapping axes of identity that are inseparable, no matter how the theorist or scholar might wish to divide them for the sake of convenience of analysis. This section contains some material which could have been included in the first section, such as Gloria Anzaldúa’s now very well-known discussion of ‘The new mestiza nation’ from *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Nevertheless, these essays do cover the outlines of intersectional feminist thought, demonstrating the limits of any mode of thinking that would privilege one or the other.

The third section, entitled ‘Theorizing feminist knowledge and agency’ includes, in the introduction, an outline of ‘two major currents within feminist theory – feminist standpoint theory and poststructural feminist theories’ (p. 343). Standpoint theory, building on work by (among others) Nancy Hartsock, proceeds from the premise that ‘a feminist standpoint can be constructed from careful analysis of women’s experiences’ (p. 343). Essentially a variant of the feminist saw that ‘the personal is the political’, standpoint theory elevates the personal to the level of theory. Poststructuralist feminist theory, by contrast, with its roots in French intellectual circles, reworks ‘semiotic theories of language and psychoanalytical theories of subjectivity’ (p. 348). The essays in this section map the terrain of feminist metadiscourse, exploring how we think what we think, and include great writers such as Hartsock, Irigaray and Butler.

The final section, ‘Imagine otherwise’, asks the reader to imagine a world without patriarchy or any of the other forms of gender oppression and here the editors have included works that undo the categories of patriarchy entirely, such as the poets Lucille Clifton and Malika Ndlovu, who engage

in utopian and speculative thought. Some scholars may find these notions high-flown, but most will be enthralled by the possibility of ‘otherwise’ – a space and place we can describe, but may not yet be able to bring into being.

Taken as a whole, this book is an excellent compendium of texts dealing with any branch of feminist enquiry and theory. The only regrettable feature of the book is that it includes a number of proofreading errors, which are most unfortunate in a work of this stature. I suggest that Routledge might be well advised to work with a system of double proofreading, instead of only one round, to eliminate some of these lingering infelicities. This aside, I have no hesitation in recommending this excellent and comprehensive resource.