

Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds. — *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-Cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1994. Pp. xvi, 620.

As the only reader of its kind, the first edition of *Unequal Sisters* (published in 1990) made tremendous headway into scholarship of a more multiculturally based women's history. In their introduction to the first edition, Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz discussed this perspective in terms of difference. They argued that the future of women's history required a realization that emphasizing white, middle-class women's experiences excluded more than it included and also harmed the validity of women's history as a field of study. In the second edition, with the addition of 16 new essays, an even greater emphasis has been placed on the argument that there is no single women's culture. The discussion of difference found in the first edition has been transformed in the second into the concept of diversity: "The dynamics of race and gender, however, are the pivotal point of this collection" (p. xi).

With the importance of diversity in mind, the second edition of *Unequal Sisters* stands as a testimony to the efforts of DuBois and Ruiz to include new articles that discuss both the history of ethnic women left out of the first edition, for example Puerto Ricans, as well as how these and other groups responded to external pressures to conform and to acculturate to white society. The collection includes 24 articles which "directly address the experiences of women of colour" (p. xv). Where it would be easy to discuss these women merely as the victims of a white patriarchal society, DuBois and Ruiz specifically have chosen articles that affirm agency and demonstrate how specific ethnic and racial groups, and indeed the vast majority of all women despite their differences, have come to form a certain level of communal bond.

The editors classify their chosen articles in terms of six major themes in women's history: family, work, class, sexuality, women's relationships, and new historical evidence. Each article discusses the importance of at least one of these themes. For example, Evelyn Nakano Glenn's article, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labour", discusses the impact of reproductive labour on family work and women's relationships.

Of the ethnic articles, there are five on Mexicanas and their descendants, four on Native women, two on Chinese-American women, one on Japanese-American women, one on Puerto Rican women, and one on Vietnamese-American women. One of the articles on Native women is Canadian Sylvia Van Kirk's fascinating work on a mixed-blood woman and her adultery trial in mid-nineteenth-century Manitoba. It is included, according to the editors, because "comparisons must also cross political borders" (p. xv). On reading this, one wishes that Canadian multicultural women's history had a body of work of its own to be included in a Canadian reader, rather than be given token representation elsewhere. Sadly, this is not yet the case.

From slavery to the present, the articles on black American women explain the historical background of the black woman's experience in the United States. These

articles, in one manner or another, all discuss how black women have been excluded from white society, as well as how they have managed at the same time to provide for themselves, their families, and their communities. These contributions have added to the field of women's history a more inclusive discussion of black women's experiences that now must be applied to women of all origins. Elsa Barkley Brown's article, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke", criticizes women's historians for assuming that race struggle can be separated from women's struggle in the lives of black women. Brown's article thus forces the reader to recognize the interconnection of the female experience. No one woman can be identified solely in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, or class; all women have their place in each category, and each category shapes their communal and self-identity.

Nine articles that explore issues in women's history are not primarily intended to focus on ethnicity or race. One of the new articles, Kathy Peiss's "Making Faces: The Cosmetics Industry and the Cultural Construction of Gender, 1890–1930", explores the means by which the cosmetics industry established the social necessity of its product. Its goal was to implant in all women the belief that they were not truly feminine if they shunned make-up, whatever their race or ethnicity.

From the first edition, Alice Kessler-Harris's article "Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Sears, Roebuck and Company: A Personal Account", on the other hand, describes how women's history, and indeed the entire historical discipline, was "put on trial" in the mid-1980s. Kessler-Harris discusses the future of history, as well as women's history, in the context of a society that looks to historians to find and explain objective past truths in the attempt to solve contemporary problems. Despite all efforts to the contrary, the outcome of the trial underlined the inseparability of history and contemporary politics.

As in the first edition, one article on lesbian culture has been included: that of Madeleine Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy, "Oral History and the Study of Sexuality in the Lesbian Community: Buffalo, New York, 1940–1960". Using oral history to explore new avenues of knowledge of lesbian lives, the authors make an important contribution to methodological discussions in women's history and to the history of sexuality. Finally, there are very comprehensive bibliographies included at the end of the reader — on African American women, Asian American women, Latinas and Native American women. In themselves, they are valuable additions to scholarship.

The second edition of *Unequal Sisters* is much improved by the concluding article. Where the first edition ended with Kessler-Harris's article, leaving the reader confused about the validity of future historical inquiry, in the new conclusion, "Teaching the Differences Among Women from a Historical Perspective: Rethinking Race and Gender as Social Categories", Tessie Liu discusses the problem of the term "women of colour": "As women of colour, we [are] classed together, in spite of our obvious diversity, simply because we are not white" (p. 574). Liu's article is an essential source for all those in the historical profession. Liu reminds us that the gains of research in women's history are not intended only for women historians. The time has come for the findings of women's history to be more fully integrated into history's curriculum. When this has been accomplished, every

student should leave the classroom recognizing the importance and diversity of all peoples.

Meryn Stuart
Kimberly Lystar
University of Ottawa

Constance Backhouse and David Flaherty, eds. — *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. Pp. xvi, 335.

Challenging Times is a collection of essays designed to address a nexus of contentious political issues surrounding contemporary (North American) feminism. As the proceedings of a conference held at the University of Western Ontario, this collection documents extensively the exclusions in second-wave feminist thought and takes account of the various ways in which the notion of a common women's experience has been dismantled and shown to be fallacious. The notion of a singular experience of women has given way, as Jean O'Barr describes, to a complicated idea of gender — complicated in the sense that feminists now “see that gender relations as experienced by any individual are not fixed and immutable but part of a larger category of social relations, positioned in time, place, and political/economic contexts” (p. 147). Compiled in 1992, *Challenging Times* remains an important contribution precisely because it addresses what has become the focus of feminism — the challenge of diversity. Also a historical comparison of the second wave of feminism in the United States and Canada, a discussion of the women's movements in English Canada and Quebec, a dialogue between activist and academic feminists, and an analysis of defining feminist issues from the economy to violence, *Challenging Times* is very much a comprehensive volume.

In the section “Racism and the Women's Movement” — indeed, throughout the volume — the racisms of the dominant women's movement are well enumerated. Arun Mukherjee describes a “crisis of legitimation” in feminist theory which has forced groups of people into divisive opposition: Blacks and women, or women and colonized peoples. Mukherjee situates race and racism as integral to feminism and implicitly speaks to the problems of conceptualizing race (and, one could supplement, sexuality or class) as merely an add-on phenomenon to gender oppression. It is an epistemological dead end to force women to separate their identities into categories for analysis; in Patricia Monture-Okanee's words, “My race does not come apart from my woman” (p. 194). Suggesting that we need to move beyond an “add colour and stir” approach to change our very pedagogics and epistemologies, Mariana Valverde writes, “we have to begin to teach ‘old’ subjects, such as the history of suffrage or the legal issues around abortion and reproductive technology, through new categories” (p. 161).

This is indeed the approach taken in M. Patricia Fernández Kelly's reconsideration of the reproductive rights debate in the United States, “A Chill Wind Blows: