

of the 1990s. However, so much critique has already taken place of identity politics and this is not addressed at all in the opening theoretical or subsequent substantive chapters. In what senses does the queer female identity provide any kind of solace from the problematics of class, geography (UK or US) and migrant status, for example? In post-9/11 America how does queerness get co-opted into Islamophobia? Gopinath rightly asserts the necessity of recognition, and within the politics of representation, the absences highlighted by the book are correctives to over-celebratory constructs of diasporic cultures. The critiques of Bollywood, British Asian film and Asian Underground music are not to be questioned in terms of the framework on offer. Rather it is the limitations of identity politics that could have come usefully under the gaze and as a radical queer theory has the potential to do this, it is perhaps disappointing that this book does not fulfill this.

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### **Feminism in popular culture**

Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley, editors; Berg Publishers, Oxford and New York, 2006, 256p, ISBN 978-1-84520-223-1, £17.99 (Pbk); ISBN-10 1845-2022-36, £50 (Hbk)

*Feminism in Popular Culture* explores (not surprisingly) the relationship between feminism and popular culture, examining feminism's place within (and outside of) 'contemporary commonsense', and asking whether feminism can learn from popular culture and vice versa. As the authors argue in the introduction, most people's awareness and knowledge of feminism are commonly gleaned from a wide variety of texts that nonetheless share a narrow 'world-view', texts such as *Cosmopolitan* magazine, *Charlie's Angels* and Madonna (pp. 1–2). How is 'feminism negotiated with popular culture' (p. 2) in texts where there are frequently no positive portrayals of feminists or feminism? This is the question that occupies many of the chapters.

The book is divided into three sections: Inter-generational Relations of Feminism; Coming to Terms with Feminism; and Negotiating and Resisting Feminisms. The chapters cover a wide range of subjects from cookery programmes to sex workers, from Ally McBeal to female Quake players, leaving the reader wondering initially if these occasionally long leaps from topic to topic can be successfully achieved. There is, however, a clear rationale for including them, in that, while there are some overlaps between chapters, they do more than adequately cover the very broad canvas that is popular culture. The only note of caution is that, in any

discussion about feminism and popular culture, the reader will be aware of the existing body of work on the subject and so could, with the best will in the world, ask themselves if we can keep rehashing these same themes and concerns. However, these are issues that remain of relevance to gendered forms, reflecting and informing the ways that women live, and so for that reason we need to keep revisiting the subject.

In Chapter 3, Charlotte Brunsden discusses the popularity of cookery programmes, focusing on Martha Stewart, Delia Smith and Nigella Lawson as examples of the 'resurgence of the domestic on television' (p. 41) and its relationship to feminism. Both Martha Stewart and Delia Smith have been the foci of feminist scholarship for decades but Nigella Lawson is a more recent and 'modern' addition and her approach (despite her being 'impossible without Delia' (p. 51)) is somewhat different due to her 'semi-ironic, sometimes wittily flirtatious mode of address' (p. 51) as opposed to Delia's homely and comforting delivery or the chilly perfection of Martha Stewart. Brunsden argues that there is a 'complicated structure of being and not being a feminist [related to] the figure of the woman in the kitchen' (p. 45). Brunsden argues that each successive generation of feminists has to say 'we're not like that' (p. 43) in order to define itself (and define itself against the previous generation). So then, if second-wave feminists placed themselves in opposition to domestic labour the generation that follows can (indeed, must) embrace a version of it. For example, 'the Martha world is a sublime reversal of the feminist domestic labour debate of the 1970s ... they are not, in any strict sense, necessary tasks, their performance is a type of busy feminine leisure within the home' (p. 49). In this way Brunsden updates the material, making it relevant to today's readers, both those who are more familiar with work around this subject and those who are new to the area. Similarly, Chapter 6 returns to domesticity and feminism's place in the family. Joanne Hollows examines the return to a conservative, pro-family feminism which incorporates a 'women's culture' of child-rearing and domestic labour. She discusses how figures such as Nigella Lawson underline the chasm between what is perceived as the 'feminist' versus the 'housewife' and how Lawson has played with feminist rhetoric while advocating women return to the kitchen to do some baking.

In contrast, other chapters deal with non-domesticity, for example, Joke Hermes on *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City* (although I wondered how much longer we need to examine shows that have finished, especially considering the huge amount written about them already). There is a lot of existing work about some of the subjects examined in this collection (e.g., feminism in the news, the beauty industry, girls and subcultures) yet none of the existing studies or collections approach the subjects via quite the same specific focus of how feminism and popular culture inform each other. Another positive aspect about this particular collection is that it is very up-to-date and the work feels fresh

and relevant (making the peculiarly old-fashioned photograph on the front cover rather mystifying for such current scholarship). Although there is sometimes a weary sense of 're-inventing the wheel' about some of the subject matter of this collection it is only because we are still debating subjects and issues that were being studied in the 1970s. Despite that, this book is both engaging and interesting, a coherent collection which would be of interest to academics and students in media and cultural studies, leisure studies, gender studies, anthropology, and sociology.

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**Workable sisterhood: the political journey of stigmatized women with HIV/AIDS**

Michele Tracy Berger; Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2004, 234p, ISBN 0-691-11853-1, £11.95

Much of the current literature on gender and HIV/AIDS is concerned primarily with the causes of infection and the implications of these for prevention. It explores the interaction between women's greater biological vulnerability and the gender inequalities that often place severe constraints on their ability to protect their own health. Only recently have researchers begun to focus on the experience of living with HIV/AIDS and how this differs for women and men. This book makes an important contribution to that literature.

The book reports on an ethnographic study of a group of women whose lives were radically changed by a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS. But it is not an account of fear and despair. Of course, most of the participants reported deep distress on discovering their status. But they went on to reconstruct their identities and their ways of living, finding their public voices through community action designed to make a change for themselves and others.

Sixteen women participated in the study that was carried out in inner city Detroit. They were primarily women of colour and were already 'social deviants' before becoming infected. Their early lives are described as 'troubled, difficult, unmanageable and depressing'. They were sex workers, drug users and law breakers when they contracted what is often seen as a socially unacceptable disease. According to the author, this placed them in a situation of what she calls 'intersectional stigma'.