

## BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

**Maureen FitzGerald and Scott Rayter**, *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*. Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012, 585pp. \$64.95. Paper 978-1-5513-0400-7

**Q***ueerly Canadian* is the first reader to bring together specifically Canadian scholarship on queer sexualities. It is organized into ten different sections that cover the full range of Canadian society, from the level of state regulation through to social institutions such as the family, education, and contemporary cultural media; as well as chapters on the experiences of identity. Each section has between 3 and 5 original essays that have been chosen as exemplars of work on Canada, something that the editors say was their primary motivation for putting together this teaching text. In this sense, the book achieves its aim, providing a wide-ranging resource of scholarship that tells students about the Canadian queer experience, its diverse history, its divisions and its struggles. This will be a very useful text for those of us teaching in sexuality studies, both as a core text book for a class focused on the history and development of Canadian queer sexualities, and as a supplementary text for a variety of courses organized around more specific disciplinary analyses of sexual diversity such as history, law, politics, or sociology.

In his introduction to the collection, Scott Rayter identifies some key themes that organize the material, particularly nationhood and identity and the universalizing tendencies in both. He indicates the ways in which the essays selected focus on these key issues and thus how the differential experiences of both First Nations' sexual diversity and those from visible minorities are illuminated in many of the chapters. This emphasis makes an important point for students about the diversity *within* queer Canadian identities. Whilst intersectional analysis has become a somewhat orthodox claim for much work on gender and sexuality, the essays presented here genuinely reflect the complications of an intersectional appreciation of national, racialized, and queer identities. For example, Rinaldo Walcott's reflections on black queer identity in Chapter 2 and Kerry Swanson's discussion of Kent Monkman's art in the final chapter ensure that issues of diversity within queer identities are consistently woven into the collection. Rayter also begins his overview with an anecdote that celebrates the progress of queer visibility and politics

in Canada and then refers to many of the essays that caution against an uncritical celebration of queer progress. For example, in the section on the State, Tom Warner's essay (Chapter 7) points out that the influence of conservative religious movements on politics is increasing in Canada and he argues that the legal and political gains of LGBTI movements cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, the extract from Gary Kinsman's work on the policing of queers in the name of national security (Chapter 5) reminds us that the incorporation of non-normative sexualities into the nation-state is very recent. Similarly, David Rayside's chapter on the lack of progress on integrating LGBTI issues in the school sector gives the lie to the assumption that Canadian society is uniformly proceeding towards the acceptance of sexual diversity.

It would be impossible to identify all of the different contributions to the field that are contained within this comprehensive ten section, thirty-six chapter volume in a single book review; suffice it to say the reader is introduced to important research while given a way to orient the different topics explored through the section headings. One useful addition that the editors have included is an alternative table of contents immediately after the "official" one, illustrating to the reader that many of these essays are relevant across different analytical "sections." For example, the first section on "Thinking Queerly About Identity, Community and Nation" contains three essays in the official table of contents, but this is expanded to nine in the alternative TOC. This invites students to consider issues of transgender, immigration, First Nations identity, national security, and academic theorizations of sexuality, as all relevant when "Thinking Queerly" about identity. Beyond this level of orientation, a real strength of the collection is that the selected essays are focused on very specific examples and so students will be able to make sense of the arguments being made, some of which are fairly complex. For example, Becki Ross's account of the tensions between lesbian feminists and the "boy lovers" issue of the *Body Politic* journal raises a number of difficult issues surrounding sexual regulation and political divisions within queer communities, while providing a clear navigation through the debate. Similarly, the chapter on queer parenting by Rachel Epstein manages to cover a wide period of social change and discuss specific issues in a way that gives students facts but also raises conceptual and political questions.

This text is a successful collection of relevant and interesting research that will be an extremely useful core or supplementary book, depending on the organization of particular courses. The only flaw I can see is that its positioning as an introductory reader perhaps assumes too much knowledge on the part of a novice student of sexuality in two

ways. Given that it is a reader, any teacher using it will still probably have to teach students about some basic concepts in sexuality studies, particularly getting across the point that sexual identities are socially produced, rather than “natural” identities that are then simply regulated by the social. Second, I think that the contemporary Canadian experience needs to be located in some wider historical and comparative context, lest the assumption of Canadian sexual exceptionalism surfaces uncritically in our students’ minds. This is a minor criticism, however, and no doubt something that will be addressed in any future edition, depending on feedback from users.

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