

“with” and “against the grain” in order to distinguish overt meanings from subversive currents that challenge colonial narratives in subtle but often unmistakable ways.

Importantly, Griffith does more than mine these newspapers for information. She also takes them as objects of study in their own right. “Students were almost always the labour behind nineteenth-century boarding school newspapers,” she writes, arguing that for this reason, “the material conditions under which these newspapers were produced matter just as much as what the text says” (24). Griffith thus pays close attention, not only to the content of the newspapers, but also to their paratextual elements, mastheads, photographs, page layout and architecture, article juxtapositions, as well as material that sheds direct light on individual student printers, typesetters, authors, and the activities that took place in the printing programs themselves.

Griffith’s book will be of great interest to Canadian cultural historians, Indigenous scholars, as well as historians of the book. Indeed, reading these newspapers shines a welcome and at times surprising light on areas sometimes left in the shadows by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission precisely because they give voice to missionaries, inspectors, Indian agents, principals, teachers, and bureaucrats—all of whom contributed to a past that framed colonialism as natural and innocent. As this book amply demonstrates, Indigenous students shared a world with these figures; they were not simply passive consumers of colonial ideology; their languages and cultures were not extinguished; and they did not merely exist in environments constructed by others. On the contrary: they actively shaped those environments and their newspapers as readers, as writers, and as printers.

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Dawn Wallin and Janice Wallace (eds.)

Transforming Conversations: Feminism and Education in Canada since 1970

Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2018. 281pp.

In her 2002 book, *To Speak is Never Neutral*, feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray argues that the mechanics of language, and by extension culture, have been so heavily formed under normalized auspices of masculinity, that language itself “lacks the creation, the affirmation that says: I live” (2).¹ Though she is primarily referring to the use of French and English, she maintains that the binarist basis of language is prescriptive and forecloses the possibility for discourses of *becoming*. From a feminist understanding, this means that speaking and writing oneself into being is not only an act of resistance, but a necessary undertaking to change the institutions we inhabit.

In Wallin and Wallace’s *Transforming Conversations: Feminism and Education in Canada since 1970*, the underlying theme of speaking/speech resonates with Irigaray’s

1 Luce Irigaray, *To Speak is Never Neutral* (Routledge, 2002/2017).

title, and uses multiple threads of feminist histories, leadership, and tensions within the field to compile a volume that speaks feminist historical work in Canadian education, paraphrasing the words of contributor Marlene McKay, “into its own existence” (192). The work is an assemblage of feminist strands that, together, explore the multiple roots of feminism in education in Canada since 1970, including its expanding iterations since that time. Using three sections, *Speaking Up*, *Speaking Out*, and *Speaking Back to Feminism*, Wallin and Wallace explore the central question, “What effect, if any, has feminism had on Canadian education since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, and to what end?” (10). While only a handful of chapters specifically mention the Royal Commission, the overall collection provides a wider historical understanding of feminism in Canada through strategic, collective actions taken by various groups to further feminist scholarship, policies, and practices in education since the 1970s. At the same time, contributors call attention to liberal feminism as being predominantly white, middle-class, heterosexual, cis-gendered, and able-centric, showing that there is much work to be done to grapple with tensions within feminism(s) in education, and a need to support a multitude of lived-experiences through intersectional solidarity.

The chapters in *Transforming Conversations* exhibit a wide-array of experiences from writers in various points in their academic journeys; contributors range from graduate students to professor emeritae, and are public school teachers, administrators, and activists. Methodologically speaking, Wallin and Wallace frame the chapters through a post-structuralist lens, using concepts of discourse and subjectivity in the introduction to ground the work. With this in mind, the edited collection demonstrates a *type* of post-structural project as a whole, yet most of the chapters do not take up post-structuralism in a deeper, theoretical sense. One chapter, however, that adeptly engages with the theoretical, is Melody Viczko’s “Performing Boundaries: Feminism Entanglements in Educational Administration,” where Latour’s Actor-Network theory, and Haraway’s work on assemblages, boundaries, and performance are used to explain institutional/subjective relationality in educational administration. Likewise, Marlene McKay works through a Foucauldian discussion of power, and its relational flows in institutional and Indigenous spaces using a narrative inquiry. The collection represents a move *towards* a post-structural undertaking, but since the majority of chapters mainly focus on historical, autoethnographic, and empirically-informed research methods, the theorizations of discourse and subjectivity, in a post-structural sense, are mostly absent. Theorizations aside, the book’s aims to represent a larger swath of experiences, feminism(s), and representations of feminism over time, places, and roles within public schooling and higher education, results in opening the disciplinary boundaries of “the historical” to include varied (and contrasting) interpretations.

At the same time, the first section, *Discourses of Teaching: Speaking Up*, is built upon historical pieces from Sharon Anne Cook, Rose Fine-Meyer, and Jean Hewitt on the advancement of feminism in post-secondary, curricular, and bureaucratic structures such as unions and school boards. This historical section lends itself as a springboard for the more affective, personal reflections in section two, *Discourses*

of *Leadership: Speaking Out*, where Janice Wallace, Dawn Wallin, Melody Viczko wade through the pressures, and sometimes incommensurability, of feminism and leadership. The turn toward the affective then branches into section three, *Disrupting Discourses: Speaking Back to Feminism*, where Evelyn Hamdon, Marlene McKay, and Thashika Pillay trouble a singular notion of white liberal feminism to voice the complexity of racialized and Indigenous experiences and onto/epistemological views in education that are underrepresented and too often excluded in feminist analyses. The final chapter, by Carol E. Harris provides a pedagogical coda to the collection through an arts-based lens.

The strength of *Transforming Conversations* is its breadth of content, weaving across times and places to bring together a rich conversation on pedagogy, teaching, leadership, union activism, curriculum, collective action, and a multitude of identities that live in and across each of these categories of education. While the authors do represent a range of experiences, there are limitations, including a lack of discussion and representation of gender identity and sexual orientation, and a disconnect from an institutional and/or economic critique of why the path towards equity is so long, and, so *uneven*, as Cook notes. A second volume would be an interesting undertaking to further address institutional racism, heteronormativity, and underlying patriarchal mechanisms in educational institutions while still drawing on historical content. Further, while post-structuralism was one methodological approach to imagine the edited volume, a posthumanist lens could advance feminist methodologies through emerging works in performativity, political subjectivity, relationality, and assemblage theories, to deepen complex discussions on matrices of being and knowing.

The power in Wallin and Wallace's collection, however, is in carefully illustrating the many struggles and triumphs of feminism in education over the last five decades. Not only do the authors strongly speak these experiences into existence, but they show that, unfortunately, these experiences are not relegated to the past. The volume points to the continual need for feminism in education to speak out and create new stories, and therefore, possibilities, into being. And, although, this is often "quiet work," (135) as one participant added on the labour of women in educational leadership, it is indeed never neutral.

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