

Book Reviews

Michael D. Gibson, Book Review Editor

Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869, by Ellen Carol DuBois. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978. pp. 220. Index. \$12.50.

As the new American feminist movement continues to grow, its impact upon the historiography of women in the United States becomes increasingly evident. The most obvious effect is the increase in the quantity of women's history which is produced. Less evident, but even more significant, are the changes it is effecting in our perceptions and interpretations of the experiences of American women. In *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869*, Ellen Carol DuBois employs the insights of her feminist perspective to reinterpret one of the most traditional subjects in the history of American women—the development of the woman suffrage movement.

As both the title and the subtitle indicate, and as DuBois makes clear in her acknowledgements and introduction, this interpretation of the early years of the woman suffrage movement is a product of the revival of feminism in the last one-third of the twentieth century. It is also a product of the author's participation in the women's liberation movement, "which raised the historical questions . . . [the] book is intended to answer." (p. 10) DuBois wrote the book because she is "a feminist and a radical," and "present[s] it as a contribution to . . . [women's] understanding of the ways in which politics emerges out of and transforms common social life and consciousness." (p. 20)

Although much of the material included in this study will be familiar to many readers, DuBois furthers our understanding of the women's movement of 1848 to 1869 by viewing it from the feminist perspective of the 1970s. The introduction of this new vantage point establishes the value of this study by both abstracting the early women's movement from the other contemporaneous events of which it was a part,

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and by appreciating more fully than previous accounts the historical context in which the movement developed. DuBois succeeds admirably in establishing her thesis that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony developed a feminist philosophy and a women's movement which were independent of both the abolitionist movement and the Republican party. At the same time, she demonstrates considerable skill in describing the impact of abolitionism and of Republican maneuverings upon the development of feminism.

DuBois is at her best in describing the growing split between the abolitionists and such advocates of feminism as Anthony and Stanton, and in tracing the post-Civil War alienation of the early feminists from the Republican party. As feminists cut their ties with these former allies, they sought to construct new coalitions, first with the Democratic party, particularly in Kansas in 1867, and with the post-war labor movement. Although DuBois admires Anthony's and Stanton's development of a feminist perspective, she makes no effort to hide the openly racist nature of such new feminist allies as the Democratic party, or the feminists' assumptions of the superiority of women who shared their background to either ex-slaves or newly-arrived male immigrants from Europe.

In addition to her interpretive skill, DuBois demonstrates a literary style which is acceptable on all but two counts. One is a penchant for using "however" as the initial or the concluding word in most of the sentences where it appears. The second is an excessive use of direct quotations, particularly in the first chapter.

In regard to substantive matters, two areas would benefit from further work. One is the final chapter, where the author's otherwise satisfactory description of the rival national suffrage organizations which emerged in 1869 would be strengthened by a quantitative analysis of the membership of the two groups, or of a random sample from each. The second area concerns her analysis of the 1867 Kansas referenda on black suffrage and on woman suffrage, where the author concludes that George Francis Train's campaign activity "correlate[d] significantly" with the vote on the former but not with the vote on the latter. She offers no evidence of these relationships, however, beyond her statement that they existed, and her citation of "an excellent unpublished study." (pp. 97-98) The addition of these two types of analysis would enhance the value of this important contribution to the history of women in the United States.

Although the Kansas referenda received more attention than developments in any other state, DuBois also describes the politics of the early woman suffrage movement in such states as New York, Massa-

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chusetts, and Iowa. Readers of the *Annals* will appreciate her obvious familiarity with, and use of, Louise R. Noun's *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman-Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames, 1969). Although both Noun and DuBois concentrate on the movement during the quarter-century following the Seneca Falls Convention, their accounts are quite dissimilar, but for reasons more important than Noun's focus on Iowa and DuBois' on the national scene. The differences between the two studies reflect developments in the women's movement during the decade between the writing of the two, and the differences between Noun's and DuBois' educational and employment experiences. As increasing numbers of young women enter graduate programs in history, and subscribe to the new feminism, more and more women's history will be produced by women like DuBois, a Ph.D. graduate of Northwestern and an assistant professor of history at the State University of New York at Buffalo. As increasing numbers of women with training and perspectives similar to those of DuBois write women's history, the works they produce will undoubtedly confirm the maxim that each generation rewrites its history.

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Crossing Frontiers: Papers in American and Canadian Western Literature, edited by Dick Harrison. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1979. pp. 174. \$10.00.

Crossing Frontiers is a collection of the six addresses featured at a conference on American and Canadian western literature held in Banff, Alberta in April 1978. Each paper is followed by a response. The volume is introduced with an essay by Dick Harrison, the conference convener, and closes with four short summaries.

Both the conference and this resultant volume are filled with the kind of passion that results when two young, vigorous cultures encounter each other, but this is a joyous cross-fertilization, not a battle. As scholarly disciplines, the studies of Canadian literature and of western American literature are hardly more than a decade old. It is an age of exploration and discovery; *Crossing Frontiers* is a first outline map of the hitherto unnamed country where the two new disciplines merge. The papers in this volume also cross boundaries of academia. Only

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