

Mapping Women, Making Politics: Feminist Perspectives on Political Geography. Edited by Lynn A. Staeheli, Eleonore Kofman and Linda J. Peake. New York: Routledge, 2004. 319 pages, ISBN

Reviewed by Jennifer L. Johnson

In effect, *Mapping Women, Making Politics* is itself a map of the major contributions feminist geographers have made and continue to make in political geography. The editors have brought together new and experienced voices who engage critically with the neo/colonial and masculinist history of political geography and subjects as varied as migration, rape, nationalism, masculinity, development and globalization. Chapters dedicated to methodology and theory round out this collection. A central emphasis on the way feminists are transforming concepts such as ‘the political’, ‘space’ and ‘scale’ define this text.

Collectively, the authors push the boundaries of ‘the political’. Is the home a site of politics? Are storytelling, beer brewing and street theatre political acts? The authors point out that we need not cling to the trinity of the local, the state and the global to engage with geopolitics. For example, creative applications of scale greatly enrich our understandings of concepts like ‘territory’: “from the personal space of an individual to the space controlled by a street gang to the space claimed by a transnational corporation,” (p. 142) these feminist re-readings demonstrate that gendered social relations of power are ever present in geopolitics. Drawing on Marston’s (2000) thesis that scale is socially constructed, these authors call for attention to the global – often neglected by feminists because it has been constructed as an inevitable grinding oppression – as well as to the scales of ‘the home’ and ‘the body’ – often neglected because these are not usually considered sites of the political. “If scale – and specifically the global – is seen in a more contingent and radically open way, then there is room to identify gender at work in all relations, institutions, spaces, and places, be they ordinarily designated global, local, or something else.” (p. 132)

Mapping Women, Making Politics is a strong addition to the rich and diverse literature offered by growing numbers of feminist geographers. Among edited collections this text stands out as perhaps the only one to address an entire sub-discipline. Domosh and Seager’s (2001) collection come to mind, as do Jones, Nast and Roberts’ (1997) and McDowell and Sharp’s (1997) surveys of feminist work. Duncan (1996) and McDowell (1999) also offer good footholds, but these texts do not attempt a sub-disciplinary survey. The breadth and detail of this text demonstrates a maturity and considers the embeddedness of geopolitics in feminist inquiry. It is still relevant to note that feminist works are still rarely included in introductory political geography collections, so the inclusion of feminist analyses in recent publications on critical issues such as war, the body and globalization is encouraging (see Flint, 2005). Critical geography has also done much more to integrate a feminist lens, even agreeing that these perspectives require the transformation of central concepts in geopolitics (Klaus &

Atkinson, 2000). But the masculinist bias in a lot of political geography still haunts feminist geographers (Women and Geography Study Group of the Royal Geographical Society, 1997), so it is refreshing to see collections that are taking on more than just a singular theme.

This text is a meticulously researched and engaging entry to the sub-discipline and to feminist geography generally, appealing to anyone who has an interest in contemporary feminist inquiry. Chapters 2-8 provide an excellent introductory overview of feminist political geography for readers new to the subject, while later chapters address more discipline-specific concerns. The reflexive approach of these essays positions the reader in the midst of a lively debate about the direction of feminist political geography and how political geography is slowly being transformed by feminist scholarship.

References

- Domosh, Mona and Joni Seager (eds.). *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2001.
- Dodds, Klaus and David Atkinson (eds.). *Geopolitical Traditions: Critical Histories of a Century of Geopolitical Thought,* New York : Routledge, 2000.
- Duncan, Nancy (ed.). *BodySpace: Destabilising Geographies of Gender and Sexuality,* New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Flint, Colin (ed.). *The Geography of War and Peace: From Death Camps to Diplomats,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Jones III, John Paul; Heidi J. Nast, and Susan M. Roberts (eds.). *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, and Representation.* Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997.
- Marston, Sallie A. "The social construction of scale," *Progress in Human Geography* 24(2):219-242, 2000.
- McDowell, Linda and Joanne P. Sharp. *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings.* New York: Arnold, 1997.
- McDowell, Linda *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies,* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Wast-Walter and Staeheli in Staeheli, Lynn A., Eleonore Kofman and Linda J. Peake (eds.) *Mapping Women, Making Politics: Feminist Perspectives on Political Geography,* New York: Routledge, 2004. 142
- Women and Geography Study Group of the Royal Geographical Society. *Feminist Geographies: Explorations in Diversity and Difference with the Institute of British Geographers* Harlow, England: Longman, 1997.