

Norma Grieve and Patricia Grimshaw, eds. *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives has a unique place within women's studies in the Australian context; in scope, it is the most comprehensive volume published so far. Certainly, it is a very ambitious and commendable undertaking to present any collection of essays which range over so many diverse topics and disciplines. It is truly an "interdisciplinary" approach, with articles extending from a neuropsychological analysis of male and female brain structure to the role of widows in contemporary Australia. Primarily, the authors are derived from the social sciences--sociology, anthropology, history and psychology, with another group from education, theology, and literature.

The book is intended as a reader for tertiary level students in the field of Australian women's studies, and as such should prove by its scope and comprehensiveness to succeed as a sound introductory text. It is divided into three major conceptual areas: the origins of women's subordination (which addresses itself to the theological, biological, and psychological dimensions of women's oppression generally); forms and expressions of patriarchal power (which primarily analyze the role of Aboriginal women in

both traditional and colonial society as well as the roles of white women in both colonial and contemporary Australia) and, lastly, a weak section on the feminist analysis of subordination.

One of the difficulties posed by an edited volume like this is that while trying to break down the barriers of excessive specialization which render both the data and the argument comprehensible only to initiates in that discipline, it lacks the thematic unity of a book like *Damned Whores and God's Police: The Colonisation of Women in Australia* by Anne Summers. Therefore, it is often difficult in *Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives* to place with ease a particular article within the overall context. The two most successful articles, which to me overcome this unfortunate deficiency, are Ann Curthoy's "The Sexual Division of Labour under Capitalism" and Annette Hamilton's "A Complex Strategical Situation: Gender and Power in Aboriginal Australia."

Overall, the book really only does present "feminist perspectives" and it is singularly silent on the subject of feminism itself. It is a tame and safe volume, lacking the intensity and political commitment of earlier books like Summers'. But then, given its moderation and its subdued tone, it will admirably succeed as a general introductory text for both students and the general reader.

Kay Saunders
University of Queensland