

need to be a tragedy.” I want to applaud this ending, but I remain perplexed by this memoir because, ultimately, the story Uppal is willing to tell herself and her reader does not seem particularly incisive or successfully self-reflexive.

Fertile Ground: Exploring Reproduction in Canada

Paterson, Stephanie, Francesca Scala, and Marlene K. Sokolon.
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In *Fertile Ground: Exploring Reproduction in Canada*, editors Stephanie Paterson, Francesca Scala, and Marlene K. Sokolon have collected works on the law, policy, and social infrastructure implicated in the regulation of Canadian reproductive activities. Built into the foundation of the collection is a challenge to the discursive shaping of reproductive activities within neo-liberal frameworks. While neo-liberal politics have made possible achievements like the striking down of prohibitive abortion laws or the provision of assistive reproductive technologies, the editors caution in their introduction: “with its emphasis on choice, rights, and responsibilities, neo-liberal discourse...[obscures] the discursive and structural contexts in which choices are made and responsibilities are assigned, negated, or performed” (14).

The chapters compiled under Part One collectively trouble the impossible neoliberal subject upon which reproduction regulations are predicated, by grounding the impact of these regulations in women’s experiences. Diana L. Gustafson and Marilyn Porter, and Candace Johnson contribute chapters that concentrate on the carrying out of reproductive decisions within intersectional, generational, and transversal contexts, suggesting that decision-making is inevitably and inextricably a socially embedded, politically informed activity. Co-editor Scala and Michelle Walks both write about the impact of reproductive technologies on queer and trans persons and single women, and the problems inherent in regulatory law and policy built on the assumption that families are heteronormative.

Part Two offers a more intensive focus on statutory and jurisprudential approaches to managing reproduction, beginning with Vanessa Gruben and Angela Cameron, and later Alana Cattapan reflecting upon the 2004 *Assisted*

Human Reproduction Act—legislation that filled a federal void but remains limited, especially since it was stripped down in the 2010 Supreme Court of Canada decision *Reference re Assisted Human Reproduction Act*. This section in *Fertile Ground* also includes Julia Thomson-Philbrook’s analysis of the watershed 1988 case *R v Morgentaler*; she claims, “while many believe the *Morgentaler* decision established a constitutional right to choose abortion, that belief is simply not true” (246), given that the decision struck down existing abortion prohibitions in order to protect physicians, without filling the resultant statutory gap with protections guaranteed to those making reproductive decisions.

In the final section, authors consider the discursive construction of reproductive activities. Lisa Smith writes on the appropriation of “girl power” and “at-risk” rhetoric to market birth control as a means of taking control of and responsibility for unruly feminine bodies: “the discourses that construct young women as powerful and autonomous, such as girl power, and the discourses that construct young women as powerless, problematic, and dependent, reflect the complex positioning of young women as subjects in late modern society” (267). Tasnim Nathoo and Aleck Ostry review the federal government’s engagement with breastfeeding promotion through the twentieth century, which placed emphasis on social benefits rather than women’s experiences; and Robyn Lee suggests that “queering breastfeeding creates new possibilities for pleasure by demonstrating how the boundaries between sexuality and motherhood are necessarily porous” (315). The book ends with Sarah Marie Wiebe and Erin Marie Koons, who argue that reproductive justice, which “links issues of health and reproduction to the broader context of social justice” (351), should integrate Aboriginal and environmental politics.

The range of topics covered in *Fertile Ground* is vast, from in vitro fertilization to abortion to breastfeeding. The book thereby catches in its ambit, among others, young women avoiding pregnancy, genderqueer couples engaging in family planning, pregnant women turning toward midwifery, and new lactating mothers. While such a scope is already ambitious, the authors bring loftier, more abstract analyses of legal and social mechanisms to ground by concentrating on the personal and experiential, and demonstrating sensitivity to compounding identity markers such as sexual orientation and gender presentation, and Aboriginal and immigrant status. To weave the work together, all these considerations (joining a chorus of scholars, such as Karpin, 2005; Mykitiuk, 2002; Shildrick, 2004) complicate and call into question the subject assumed to exist across the spectrum of reproductive decisions. This is the impossible subject at the heart of neo-liberal discourse—that disembodied Rawlsian ideal capable of operating outside social, political, and legal

entanglements, borne out of a political economy that prioritizes competition and employs a cult of individuality to mask systemic privilege.

This central focus in the anthology is a powerful one—that notwithstanding strides made in the Canadian arena, the underlying ideological assumptions still at the core of these strides code reproductive choices as decontextualized, their choosers disembodied. Alternative suggestions to neo-liberal rubrics depend upon the theoretical orientation of each anthology author: early on in the text there is a strong showing for relational autonomy, a feminist reclaiming of the principle of autonomy that sheds the baggage of rugged individualism and situates choices in-relation (found also in Sherwin, 1998); but the book ends on reproductive justice (a concept found in Smith, 2005), which not only implicates but also prioritizes the social and political framing of reproductive decisions. That multiple alternatives exist, though, does not undermine the message of the work, for *Fertile Ground* offers a poly-vocal approach to analysis of reproduction in Canada, one that is calibrated and sensitive to the nuances of social location.

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