

Sherene H. Razack, editor, *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002).

Ten or fifteen years ago literary theory was the dominant import for historians, and it had a profound impact on the writing of, among other fields, women's history and lesbian and gay history. Today historians are borrowing most heavily from geographers, and the new collection *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* demonstrates why this is a fruitful project for the discipline.

The collection began as a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, and in her introduction editor Sherene H. Razack says the "book explores *how* place becomes race through the law." In particular, the authors are interested "in how the constitution of spaces reproduces racial hierarchies," and thus "examine the spatial and legal practices in the making and maintaining of a white settler society" (1). In countries like Canada, "national mythologies of white settler societies are deeply spatialized stories." The land is first imagined as devoid of a human presence, erasing thousands of years of aboriginal inhabitation and thus justifying and glorifying its "discovery" by whites. Then the "empty" land is "settled" by "hardy and enterprising European settlers" (3). People of colour (blacks, Chinese, Sikhs, "boat people," "refugees," "Arabs,") arrive later, and are therefore believed to be less entitled to space within the nation. As this book makes plain, such racialized narratives are not just used to structure our understanding of Canada's past, but are played out daily in Canada's present and are given substance in Canadian law.

The authors challenge these narratives and legal practices through a process of "unmapping." Whereas European colonizers mapped their newly-discovered territories to enforce and reinforce their claims, "unmapping is intended to undermine the idea of white settler innocence (the notion that European settlers merely settled and developed the land) and to uncover the ideologies and practices of conquest and domination" (5). In pursuit of its goal of identifying "legal and social practices that reproduce racial hierarchies" (17), this collection unmaps a significant amount of territory. The nine chapters examine indigenous resistance to colonization in eastern Canada; the intersections of racial identities and liquor laws in late nineteenth century British Columbia; Japanese women's spatialized memories of internment during WWII; racialized discourses among 1990s undergrads at the University of Saskatchewan; the ways race, gender, and "justice" played out in the 1997 trial of the killers of Pamela George; the strange battle over the word "racist" in the Manitoba legislature in 1995; Muslim struggles to get spaces for mosques in Toronto in the late 1990s; the regulation and remembering of Africville, Nova Scotia; and the racial hierarchies behind the legalization of midwifery in Toronto.

Even though many of these articles might be considered too recent to be of

interest to most historians, the entire anthology does in fact have a great deal to offer historians of race, colonization, First Nations peoples, nation-building, and immigration. For example, Razack argues in her discussion of the 1995 murder of Pamela George, a Saulteaux woman, just outside Regina, that because George “was considered to belong to a space of prostitution and Aboriginality, in which violence routinely occurs, while her [white, male, middle class] killers were presumed to be far removed from this zone, the enormity of what was done to her and her family remained largely unacknowledged” (125-26). In spite of the fact that the violent history of the white colonization of the west and of aboriginal women’s bodies were fundamental narratives deployed throughout the trial, that history was never acknowledged. The “encounter between the white men and Pamela George was fully colonial,” (128) but the nature of the legal system is such that history is supposed to be barred from the courtroom to avoid muddying the abstract, race-less, legal categories of “accused” and “victim.” Razack asks, “What would it mean to deliberately introduce history and social context into this trial?” She suggests that seeing George’s murder in its context of Aboriginal-white relations might have meant that fewer excuses were made for her killers, and George herself might have stood a chance “of entering the court’s and Canadian society’s consciousness as a person” (156).

Similarly, Sheryl Nestel’s analysis of what she calls “midwifery tourism” on the part of trainee midwives in Ontario in the 1990s places the practice firmly within a much older colonial tradition of “First World” women traveling to and learning from the racialized spaces and bodies of “Third World” women, and then returning home with their exotic new knowledge and status. To gain legitimacy, midwifery activists had “to reconfigure the midwife in the public imagination as respectable – that is, knowledgeable, modern, educated, and Canadian/white” (239). After legislation demanding licensing was passed in 1985, Ontario midwives had to get “maximum clinical experience in the minimum time possible” (240). The majority of interns found placements at independent midwifery clinics along the U.S.-Mexico border, itself a highly contested space. The Canadian citizenship and white skin of the interns gave them access to and authority over the predominantly poor, marginalized, Spanish-speaking women who used the clinics, and the knowledge the interns acquired from their patients was believed to be “uncorrupted by civilization” and thus more “natural” and “legitimate.” The violently colonized space of the southwest borderlands, and the colonized bodies of the women with nowhere else to go for birthing assistance, “created the discursive and material conditions for professional status back home.” As Nestel argues, “feminist projects that rely on unexamined notions of ‘global sisterhood’ reproduce unequal relations of power between women” (241).

These examples highlight two of the significant contributions *Race, Space and the Law* makes to current historical scholarship. First, the book demon-

strates the utility of spatial theory for non-geographers, and in so doing gives historians new questions to ask about the intersection of space with race, gender, and immigration. It shows historians who are already interested in race, gender, migration, aboriginal peoples, colonization and settler societies how space interacts with and shapes the categories and questions we are already using in our analyses. Second, by pinpointing some of the ways in which race, space, and the law have interacted in Canada to marginalize First Nations people and people of colour, this collection offers another tool with which to unmap, and possibly dismantle, the pervasive racism that has structured Canada's past and present.

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Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine, Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001)

At the end of *Divine Feminine*, Joy Dixon states that one of the most significant questions that emerges from her study is the relationship of spirituality to modern political life. While Dixon's book takes on a number of topics it is the nexus of spirituality, feminism and socialism in late nineteenth to early twentieth century Britain that is the backbone of the work. Dixon argues that the Theosophical movement was a major site of feminist activity where crucial questions of the time were framed and debated.

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 in New York City by Russian emigrée Helena Blavatsky and American Henry Steel Olcott. The society's stated aim was to "form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour." While interested in comparative religion generally, Theosophists focused particularly on the Indian religious traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism. The society was plagued by scandals and considered by many to be a refuge for "cranks" and eccentrics of all descriptions. Theosophy seemed destined to become an interesting footnote in western history. However, with the radical changes wrought in historical methodology particularly the rise of social history and feminist and esoteric studies, the impact of Theosophy has been reconsidered. A growing body of work has shown that Theosophy was influential far beyond what membership numbers would indicate. Historians have begun to map out the connections between this group and the counterculture of the 1960's, feminist spirituality and the New Age movement.

Dixon's book, which builds on her 1993 dissertation ("Gender, Politics and Culture in the New Age: Theosophy in England, 1880-1935"), contributes to this