This was punishment for potential disloyalty rather than pacifism in many cases, although in others internment came about because of that oxymoron, state intelligence, resulting in injustices being done. In prison, it appears that idolisation of Mosley acted as substitute for fascist activity: women fascists in Holloway held a tea dance for OM's 44th birthday in 1940. Outside of prison other fascists used charitable efforts for the prisoners as a surrogate for political activity. At this point, fascist women's supporting role to the mainly male detainees was confirmed. Militant fascist women collected comforts for the fascist troops.

In her conclusion, Gottlieb rightly argues that fascist women were "autonomous historical agents." Mosley agreed when he declared that "without the women I could not have got quarter of the way" (267). But of course, he did not get very far. The Labour Party by the end of the 1930s had a female membership of hundreds of thousands and the Conservative Party had more than a million. Some discussion of fascist failure related to other parties' success might have been called for in the conclusion. This might have been more historically appropriate than the attempt to link the Spice Girls and Camille Paglia into the tradition of feminine activism that Gottlieb explores in the rest of the book.

But that is not the finish of this book. It continues with a very useful "Who's who in the history of women and fascism in Britain." It acts to give us some insight into the day-to-day activities of fascist women (and men). Hence Mrs LT Cotton, member of the BUF and interned during the war is described as attending a fascist meeting addressed by her husband in Branscombe, Devon. In response to the rough reception her husband received, Mrs Cotton "struck a member of the audience in the face." The "Who's who" also reveals the variety of ideas within fascism. Mrs Dudley Ward was an anti-Semite and animal lover, publishing a condemnatory book linking the two entitled *Jewish Kosher* (1944). Details are also provided of the huge variety of activities in which fascist women took part, from the organisation of fascist fêtes, running branches, conducting sticker campaigns, cutting telephone cables and seducing sailors for reasons of espionage in wartime. There about 260 women and 30 men described in this section, a notable feat, and it adds generally to the usefulness of this impressively researched and clearly structured book. Gottlieb offers a distinctive interpretation and adds significantly to the existing historiography on British fascism.

Paul Ward
University of Huddersfield, UK.

Ellen Messer-Davidow, *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

Although *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*

is a book well worth reading in full, its title thesis, the story of how "a bold venture launched thirty years ago to transform academic and social institutions was itself transformed by them" (1), is not the most interesting thing in it. Ellen Messer-Davidow tells several interlinked stories about social movements, the academy, and the reasons for conservative success and progressive failure in the United States over the past thirty years. Using a Foucauldian approach to the productive workings of power, she analyzes the forces that structured academic feminism. Her goal is to "synthesize what has been sundered – self-structure and social structure, intellectualization and institutionalization" (13). She believes "all social formations are discursively constituted" and that institutionalized discourses "consist of a welter of practices fueled by resources and ordered by rules" that can be deciphered and changed (13). Her methods for this deciphering include textual analysis, personal memoir, interviews, and ethnographic observation of organizations from both the Left and Right.

One story she tells is the meteoric success and rapid institutionalization of academic women's studies within the university. In contrast to the usual narrative, Messer-Davidow argues that Women's Studies in the academy was not the cumulative growth of three decades but rather that it emerged rapidly in the aftermath of 1968, led by veterans of the New Left, civil rights, and antiwar movements. She sees 1971 as a "pivotal" moment; before then, "academic women could not see the workings of the institutional-disciplinary order" (18). By 1975 academic women understood that their disciplines were male-gendered, male-dominated, and alienating to women, and they responded by reconstituting themselves as feminists, generating new knowledges, and so reshaping their disciplines and the academic system. The greatest success story was the formation of academic Women's Studies as a field that demanded and received recognition and resources from U.S. universities. The unifying "intellectual core" of Women's Studies was "women's oppression" (154), and the hallmark of early Women's Studies was its formation as a "hybrid" that could "breach the divide between theory and practice" (90). Once begun, the institutionalization of Women's Studies escalated dramatically: from four college and university programs in 1970 to over 630 in the mid-1990s, plus tens of thousands of courses taught, and a network of feminist research centers, national professional associations, journals, and publications.

This success was predicated on serendipitous conditions, among which were a bountiful economy, a large expansion in university budgets and enrollments, and prior successes of Left movements in mobilizing supporters and in provoking established institutions to gestures of compromise and containment. Having learned skills of political education and community organizing, young progressive women returned to academia ready to push for change. According to Messer-Davidow, "what the 1960s movements shared was not the same political agenda but a paradigm for making change through structure, action, and education" that could be transferred to academic feminist studies (93). The essential lesson,

Messer-Davidow emphasizes, is the need for an "articulated infrastructure" that connects grassroots activists and local initiatives vertically with national organizations and horizontally with other groups who have comparable aims (94). Her model is the U.S. civil rights movement, which demonstrated that "to make social-structural change it would have to deploy five strategies: catalyzing local activism through community education and organizer training, orchestrating direct action. . . to pressure the elites, providing services to the people through parallel organizations. . ., working the channels of official politics to change laws and policies, and insinuating movement issues and projects into mainstream arenas" (94). Academic feminist studies followed a similar course in its rapid institutionalization, developing experts and constituencies while transforming university structures and disciplines. Unfortunately, she contends, conservatives bested progressives at this articulated organizing, and now control the United States.

The changes that feminism wrought in popular and academic thought have been profound. Foremost is the concept of gender itself, understood not as a biological division between males and females but as an elaborate network of social constructions. Feminist scholars, Messer-Davidow notes, "operationalized gender" in many ways, "as stereotypes, cognitive scheme, and structures of consciousness; as social roles and status, relations among women and men, the social organization of activities, the effects of systems of (re)production; as personality traits, psychic structures, and identity performances; and as media images, cultural ideologies, and the semiotics of the body" (178). Contrary to some critiques, Messer-Davidow stresses that American academic feminist thought from the beginning grappled with the effects of the observer and with interdependent systems of inequality, including "race," ethnicity, class, and sexuality, as well as gender.

As Women's Studies was institutionalized in U.S. universities, it also achieved some success in reaching out to broader constituencies. One positive example Messer-Davidow cites is Goddard College, an experimental institution dedicated to connecting campus learning with the larger community. From Goddard came the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* collective, which provided the women's health movement with widely accessible information about women's bodies in the 1970s, and from it also came the educators who popularized the idea of distinctive women's "ways of knowing" so popular in the 1980s (126). A recent progressive success story is Rutgers University's New Jersey Project. Supported by the government of New Jersey, in the 1980s and 1990s it coordinated efforts to integrate the new feminist scholarship on gender, race, class, and sexuality into academic curricula across the state. And a continuing story of feminist mainstreaming is that of fiction by women of color, published in alternative presses until its audience grew large enough to attract established publishers.

A main strength of *Disciplining Feminism* is its case histories, both institutional and individual. Messer-Davidow retells the story of Evelyn Fox Keller, for

example, to show "the anomaly of a woman in physics" in the late 1950s and early 1960s along with parallel tales of women in other academic disciplines who were similarly alienated (21). She persuasively describes the interlocking material practices through which academic disciplinary norms were consolidated, followed by the forging of new feminist knowledges. One fascinating case history is her own, as she goes from nineteen-year-old wife to single mother after a difficult divorce, to graduate student activist. to tenured English professor. Like her, I joined demonstrations at the 1968 Modern Language Association convention, but I was not an insider to the spontaneous negotiations she records between some New Left academics and the convention administrators, which led to the founding of the MLA Commission on the Status of Women and its Women's Caucus.

If the Modern Language Association did respond to radical demands, while Women's Studies Programs, feminist presses, and academic feminism flourished throughout the 1970s, her next story undercuts these successes as conservative forces regroup and triumph. For her the election of U.S. President Ronald Reagan in 1980 marks "the beginning of the end" (217); she starts researching rightwing groups in 1987. She finds that they learned from the successful techniques of the Left for mass mobilization and the development of institutions, but they are far better funded, better connected, and more efficient as they dismantle the modest progressive gains of the 1970s. Conservative judges, for example, make "group discrimination disappear," not by improving conditions for members of historically disenfranchised groups but rather by nullifying groups in favor of abstract individuals who deserve, and already have, an equal playing field, even if some players wear cleats while others play barefoot (175). She adroitly skewers the logic of these judicial decisions and ruefully admires conservative effectiveness in institutionalizing their inegalitarian agenda. Well-articulated and coordinated, conservative groups target vulnerable populations, use legal challenges before favorable judges to legislate their views, and splinter women by funding pseudo-feminists of their own. As an observer of institutions rather than just a reader of texts, Messer-Davidow watches as conservatives use college summer programs to train white youngsters into believing the abstract "laws" of free enterprise and into discounting their empathy for the poor and people of color. After one of these conservative summer programs, she sees the students affirmed in their old identities but newly skilled as organizers, "radiating purposefulness" as they lobby for the rightwing agenda (236). By describing her infiltration of conservative organizations, she gives us a foretaste of her next book on the tactics of the Right.

The third story Messer-Davidow tells is her title story, and it's the one I find most equivocal. It is framed as a story of failure, sometimes tragic, sometimes pathetic. For her, academic feminism began as a wing of a vibrant, radical, egalitarian social movement, but it failed to transform the academy or larger society and instead became changed by that which it had sought to change. Some of her arguments are familiar. Academic language became abstruse and elitist, "inac-

cessible to community feminists," a charge to which her own prose is sometimes subject (161). Certainly she concurs with the postmodernist belief that social reality is discursively constructed, and she declares "theory" the unifying content of academic Women's Studies, even as its abstraction alienates community women. She also agrees with both the Right and many on the Left concerning the baleful effects of identity politics and its "grievance modality" (191). Academic feminists became dogmatic, divisive, and doctrinaire, she complains.

Feminists believed, she says, that more women in academia "would remedy sex-patterned education, employment, and knowledge. But it didn't" (78). Universities remained nearly as white and middle class in the 1990s as decades earlier, while institutionalized "recursive racism" demanded more service from faculty of color than from whites, then judged them harshly for failing to meet ever-rising standards of scholarly productivity (194). Furthermore, although all Women's Studies programs claim social change as a goal and many sponsor student internships in feminist organizations, Messer-Davidow judges that they have not achieved much. The transformations that feminist studies "promised in theory did not pan out in practice," not because they were suppressed but rather because academic routine "exhausted our energies, narrowed our vision, and isolated us" (165).

Messer-Davidow demonstrates that as feminism became Women's Studies in the academy, it conformed to academic rules and structures. However, I'm less inclined than she is to view the decline of organized feminism as due to flaws internal to academic feminism. There were indeed internal dissensions within feminist movements of the 1970s, as chronicled, for example, in Susan Brownmiller's *In Our Time: Memoirs of a Revolution* (1999), which pays little attention to academic feminism in comparison to feminist organizations and publishing. More than Messer-Davidow, I see feminist fragmentation as fueled by external forces, although it is true that feminists then were not successful in countering these forces. So I saw the Chicago Women's Liberation Union destroyed in the mid-1970s less by internal factions than by its inability to counter a provocatively divisive group who accused the majority of racism. I'm also skeptical about blaming academic feminism for the failure of progressive movements more generally. Academic feminism sought to change universities and did, dramatically increasing the number of women faculty, helping establish more student-centered pedagogy, and developing curricula both theoretically sophisticated and committed to social change. It did not eradicate sexism or capitalism or stop the erosion of public support for U.S. universities. In reactionary times from the 1980s to the present, academic feminists have continued to disseminate socially critical, antiracist, and often anti-imperialist perspectives on the struggle for gender justice. Part of my difference from Messer-Davidow here may spring from our differing locations and experiences, as feminist standpoint theory would predict: I still teach in the Gender and Women's Studies Program I helped found in 1975, a pro-

gram that has maintained a materialist feminist commitment to social change. Mostly, however, I think Messer-Davidow's disillusion with academic feminism arises from smashed idealism, from a too-sanguine, utopian sense of what was possible in the 1970s.

"What went wrong for progressives in the academy," Messer-Davidow asks, and answers that, "we also made ourselves vulnerable by internalizing to academic discourses what we set out to analyze and change in society" (287). Here I question who is included in her "we." There were never very many of us socialist feminists, and never a majority of women identifying openly as feminists among students and faculty. The academic feminist "we" condemned for elitist theory, narcissistic self-reflection, and careerist opportunism was not comprised of the same people who had been earlier been activists, although there was some overlap. Most of the old activists I know are still active, often in university politics or local civic campaigns, though Messer-Davidow is quite right in pointing to the overwork, burnout, job insecurity, and lack of resources hampering academic activism, all conditions brought about by the successful right wing delegitimation of public higher education and hence by falling academic budgets. Now conservatives undercut tenured radicals not only by disseminating reactionary ideology but also by attacking tenure, by cutting funding to universities, and so by having college-level teaching increasingly performed by overburdened, underpaid adjuncts rather than secure faculty.

It is not surprising that the Right has more resources to maintain its power than the Left does to disrupt it. They are better at disrupting themselves through crises in capital and the vicissitudes of empire, although it remains sadly the case that there does not yet exist in the United States a Left strong or ready enough to mobilize opposition to conservative hegemony. As anticorporate and peace coalitions build, Messer-Davidow's advice about articulating and consolidating a progressive movement will remain perceptive and timely.

She says, "the nation will get what its funders pay for" (238). I doubt many Marxists will be surprised at this conclusion. "As a feminist scholar and activist," she confides, "I am appalled by conservatism's vision of society, alarmed by its successes, and worried" that they "will sweep democracy away"; furthermore, "academic feminism's liberationist projects" will falter unless feminists can overcome this menace (219). Her helpful suggestions for what must be done might be summarized as "always articulate": she believes the Left should retool its local and national organizations in order to "build the cross-structure infrastructure we need" for a more progressive future (288).

Judith Kegan Gardiner
Professor of English and Gender & Women's Studies
University of Illinois