

A Feminist Dictionary, by Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler, Boston, London, and Henley: Pandora, 1985, x, 587 pages, \$19.95 CDN, \$12.95 US, £6.95, ISBN 0-86358-015-7.

What is a 'feminist' dictionary? How and why is it different from any other dictionary? Why is a feminist dictionary necessary at all? These are among the many questions which are likely to arise upon first glimpsing the title of this book. In producing a ground-breaking work such as this, Kramarae and Treichler have fortunately recognized the need to answer many of these questions by including an introduction ('Words on a Feminist Dictionary,' 1-22) by way of explanation. It is impossible to do justice to their introduction here (it could be read with profit even by those who have no intention of reading or even browsing through the dictionary itself); it should be sufficient for me here simply to point out that 'traditional' dictionaries have always been written by men, with all the ensuing biases, sexism, and 'invisibility' of women. This dictionary then, can be seen as an attempt to change that, particularly by using quotes from female authors and by demonstrating the multitude of 'ways in which women are seizing the language' (1). But this dictionary is more than just feminist in outlook; many other 'oppressed' groups are well-represented here (e.g., blacks, immigrants, the aged, the handicapped, those living under apartheid, members of the American Indian Movement). The dictionary has a fairly conventional format (i.e., boldface headers and A through Z sequential listing, but no pronunciation guide and only occasionally etymologies), although it relies far more heavily on quotations (some entries are in effect little more than a string of quotations) and has much better than average cross-referencing and bibliography (515-87; as with the introduction, the bibliography is extremely valuable even for those who do not intend to use the dictionary itself).

Since in a relatively short review it is not feasible to comment in any significant way on any meaningful number of entries, I shall confine myself to a few miscellaneous remarks only. Among the longest entries are feminism (158-60), language (223-6), marriage (252-6), name (290-3), periodicals (330-2), pornography (344-8), racism (374-7), rape (380-3), and woman (489-94), presumably reflecting the centrality of these concerns to women today. Note in particular how a 'male' dictionary would have a very different list of 'longest' entries! However, a few entries seem to be disproportionately long (e.g., rock and roll, 393-5). Some obviously sexist terms of derision/approval by men are understandably omitted (e.g., fox, vixen, dog), others are included along with other

meanings for the word (e.g., cookies, bunny), and yet others are given with the 'sexist' interpretation completely omitted (e.g., broad: 'a woman who is liberal, tolerant, unconfined, and not limited or narrow in scope' [81]) - a perfect example of women 'seizing the language.' Some words are somewhat inexplicably missing: for example, palimony, girlcott, wasp, and osteoporosis, whereas alimony, boycott, anglo, and dowager's hump are included. Some entries seem to have been chosen for no obvious reason (e.g., brush arbor, in my dirt); perhaps these, as with computer literacy, simply need to be more explicitly related to the concerns of the oppressed. Occasionally entries seem to have been included simply because there was a good quotation available (e.g., frustration: 'The feeling of a sitting dog being told to sit' [from Gloria Steinem; 171] and resistance tactics of secretaries: 'Willingness to go on dumb errands/ laziness/ taking extra time in the ladies' room/ misfiling important letters/ "forgetting" to correct typos' [from Judith Ann; 391]). Some inclusions reveal extremely good selection and search procedures, demonstrating the breadth of this dictionary (e.g., Greenham Common, The Dinner Party, The Female Eunuch, Kramer vs. Kramer). Citations used show a similar breadth of coverage, including all parts of the feminist political spectrum. Coverage is of course limited to English, but the entries and quotations are comprehensive enough to include not just 'standard' forms of British and American English, but also various creole and dialect forms. And within the 'standard' forms it is not just the English of England and of the United States which are represented: Scottish, Irish, Australian, and particularly Canadian English are well-represented both in headers and in citations. Citations are not just modern, with several dating from the 1600's; in line with the aims of the dictionary, most but not all quotations are from women authors.

A very few entries are in my estimation less than satisfactory. Bilingualism ('A language situation where language is not merely a medium for content, but is itself a referent, a source of meaning and group identity' [69]) may be true, but is far from adequate from the (socio)linguistic point of view. Inadequacy of definition also marks bourgeois ('a label constantly thrown at white, radical feminists by white upper-middle-class marxist men' [78]), D & C (divide and conquer, with no reference to the medical procedure [115]), farmer ('in most of Africa, usually female' [152] in no way tells what a farmer is or does, especially outside of Africa), fog (with no reference to the weather condition [165]), folklore ('is a straightforward set of devices for making real life more exciting. Unlike myth, folklore is easy to infiltrate with different kinds of consciousness' [165]), hear (with a meaning only of 'understand' [188]), hearing ('The beginning. In the beginning

was not the word. In the beginning is the hearing. Spinsters spin into the listening deep' [188]), manic ('of or like a man ...' [250]), meat (quotes only a poem by Sharon Nelson [265]), Norman Conquest (historical, social, linguistic facts and repercussions inadequately covered [303]), prehistory (an attempt to redefine a widely accepted term into 'the prior importance of the interconnected significant events of women's living and dying'; at least the conventional meaning should also be given [355]). There is a major error in the entry for chauvinism ('... a term initially applied to U.S. aggression in South-East Asia ...' [90]); the term is from almost a century earlier (OED citations for chauvinism, chauvinist, and chauvinistic all begin in 1870).

Some entries are intentionally humorous. Examples include: dinner ('an activity which precedes washing the dishes' [124]), gumption ('anyone who has gumption knows what it is, and any one [sic] who hasn't can never know what it is. So there is no need of defining it' [183]), handbags ('containers which get bigger and bigger when mothers take care of young children, and smaller when the children become teenagers' [186]), and cuntionary ('an alternative to dic-tionary' [113]).

If you have only a limited amount of time, read the introduction and three definitions: feminist, dictionary, and feminist dictionary. These will at least explain 'what all the fuss is about.' You may even be surprised at how early a quotation is given here for the term feminist (1913, Rebecca West); the OED even has citations back to 1894, but in all probability from male authors. But you will miss the humour, feeling, breadth, and interest which enable this dictionary to actually be read, cover-to-cover, merely than just consulted like any ordinary dictionary. It is interesting to note that pioneering dictionaries seldom strive for universality (early 'man-made' dictionaries tended to be of hard words, foreign words, or frequently 'misused' words only), and this dictionary is no exception (intentionally [16]). The authors actively solicit readers to contribute to the dictionary and to suggest revisions and feedback in general (21). A second edition will also enable the correction of typographical errors, almost all of which are self-correcting, but which can occasionally be annoying, especially when personal names are involved (e.g., 'Anshin' for Anshen [303]; 'Haimann' for Haiman [22]; Albert Gilman incorrectly given as 'Alfred Gilman' [523] and 'Roger Gilman' [460]; 'Virgina Woolf' for Virginia Woolf [60]) and some other minor errors (e.g., in German, the article preceding Professorin should be die, not 'der' [142]).

The book jacket advertises: 'This is a dictionary with a difference. It places women at the center of language and uses definition and quotation to take us on a fascinating journey through the development and use of the English language from diverse feminist perspectives.' The book more than delivers its promise.

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