

well-structured, -written, and -argued. McLaren's critiques of the shortcomings of existing models are very effective, and her conception of relational cosmopolitanism is very provocative, an important concept that is greatly needed in the debates over globalization, worthy of future research and debate. I used this book in a mixed under/graduate seminar in feminist theory last spring and they found the argument provocative and engaging, and the book enjoyable to read. Highly recommended.

Feminist Trouble: Intersectional Politics in Post-Secular Times

Éléonore Lépinard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). 336 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0190077167.

Reviewed by Joan Eleanor O'Bryan
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Who is feminism for? The question reverberates frightfully in feminist discourse. Despite decades of theorizing that the unified feminist subject is an impossibility (given differences in race, class, sexuality, etc.), the question remains all too relevant in praxis—much to the detriment of the movement as a whole. Or at least, so argues Éléonore Lépinard in her new book, *Feminist Trouble: Intersectional Politics in Post-Secular Times*.

The tendency of feminists to rely on such a question, according to Lépinard, is a dangerous one: it results in an ethical stance in which we are liable to judge people as being “good or bad feminist subjects” (11). It is those judgments—particularly on the part of white feminists—which have supported the rise of “femonationalism”—a phenomenon referring to the way that governments have justified anti-immigration and Islamophobic policies in the name of women’s equality.

Instead of asking the “subject” question (*who is feminism for?*), Lépinard posits that we ought to be asking a “relational” question (*with whom am I in community?*). Drawing on Joan Tronto’s ethic of care, Lépinard defines feminism as “a project to care for those who could be part of this political community, who are put in relation with it through their claims or the claims that are made about them in the name of feminism” (231).

Lépinard’s theory emerges from her empirical research, an attempt to ensure that her book is “grounded in the social and power relations that shape feminist communities” (14). This takes the form of a comparative study of feminist organizations in France and Quebec. There are two parts to this endeavor: first, an archival research project, tracing the histories of feminist organizations in the two nations; and second, a series of ethnographic interviews with white and racialized¹ feminists on racism, organizing, and the relationship between religion and contemporary feminism.

It is in Lépinard’s delineation of her empirical findings that her book’s greatest strengths and also weaknesses manifest

themselves. Most interesting is her discussion of the impact of different national backgrounds on feminist praxis in each respective nation. Both Quebec and France exhibited similar national discourses regarding the relationship between the state and local religious minorities, largely of immigrant-background. A large proportion of the discussion centered on the roles and rights of religious women in public life, with a significant proportion of (usually white) feminists—or feminist-coopters—seeing Islam in particular as incompatible with women’s emancipation. These “sexularism” debates raged not only nationally but also within women’s organizations, creating room for coalition or schism within feminist groups.

Feminist organizations in Quebec and France, though sharing much in the way of background ideology and culture, manifested starkly different responses to the sexularism discourse. In Quebec, racialized feminists were able to make their voices heard, and acting in coalition with white feminists, were able to speak out on behalf of religious accommodation and against the racism and Islamophobia they saw as intrinsic to such legislation as the prohibition of facial veils. Though their efforts were not perfect, Lépinard argues that the leading Quebec feminist organization was able to “keep a critical distance from femonationalist discourses” (61). In France, however, no such distance was achieved. The leading feminist organization’s response to various instances of racism and femo-nationalism, in particular those in national policy, was so disappointing to French racialized feminists that it resulted in uproar and schism.

Lépinard credits the difference between the two nations to three key factors: 1) the strength of racialized women’s self-organizing; 2) the relationship between feminist groups and the broader left; and 3) the history of institutional relationships within umbrella organizations with groups representing racial minorities. The first and third factors seem relatively self-explanatory; it makes sense that stronger organization on the part of racialized feminists and patterns of positive interaction between white and racialized feminists would ensure that voices of color be elevated during these debates. But the second factor was surprising, and deserves further attention.

The two dominant women’s organizations Lépinard discusses, the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ) in Quebec and the Collectif national pour les droits des femmes (CNDF) in France, faced different political landscapes, which resulted in their respective abilities to engage with racial and religious differences. As Lépinard describes, in Quebec during and immediately after the FFQ’s founding, the left—and in particular the radical left—was decidedly weak. As a result, the FFQ’s early institutionalization and activism made it a powerful force within leftist politics. The organization thus emerged both relatively autonomous vis-à-vis other movements as well as influential, with left-wing parties in Quebecois politics headed by former FFQ members.

The CNDF in France, on the other hand, never had the opportunity to grow in strength and autonomy in the manner of the FFQ. Lépinard analyses how CNDF’s roots

grew in the radical/class struggle of the French second-wave feminist movement, meaning that its leadership and members attempt to address class and sex oppression jointly, “a strategy that put them in constant relation to leftist politics, trying to convince leftist organizations and unions to include a gender perspective while attempting to also exist on their own and to forge coalitions with the radical feminists” (76). Unlike the FFQ, the CNDF comprises representatives of political parties and unions, meaning that the influence tends to be from outside-in, rather than the reverse. So, whereas the FFQ found the left a source of sustenance, rather than competition, the CNDF found itself struggling for power. This point matters because “the competition of the women’s liberation movement [the CNDF] with radical-left politics during the second wave encouraged white feminists to frame their claims as universal in order to resist the tendency in radical-left politics to sideline gender issues” (64). Because the FFQ did not face the same pressure, it could invest political energy into differentiation among women.

Lépinard’s archival analysis is fascinating and enlightening. Less convincing, however, are the conclusions she draws from her ethnographic work. Generally speaking, ethnography is hard to do well. The methodology is most useful when it points us to what Ian Shapiro calls “problematizing redescriptions”—“accounts of political phenomena that destabilize the lens through which we traditionally study them, engendering novel questions and exposing new avenues of moral concern.”² Ethnography is thus most productive when it uncovers for us new ways of thinking, valuing, or perceiving old phenomena. The problem with using ethnography as evidence for established fact—such as the fact that white feminists often discriminate morally and politically against feminists of color—is that a theorist is likely to fall into the well-recognized traps of the empirical researcher: first, the propensity to over-extrapolate and generalize from small samples, and second, the desire to find what it is she’s looking for.

Although Lépinard is keen to demonstrate that she does not fall prey to such temptations, she cannot help but extrapolate beyond what her data can offer. For instance, although she provides the requisite caveat that her interviews do not “exhaust the variation of feminist whiteness,” nor are they “representative of the diversity of white feminists,” she writes as though she has uncovered the true “essence” of the phenomenon (85). Occasionally she makes it explicit: in a footnote, she states that her interviews are “*representative* of how feminism is made white” (emphasis added, 284). Furthermore, her analysis “charts a general evolution in feminist whiteness” (19). This seems a stretch. From a small selection of views, she constructs a supposed ideal type—the means by which feminism is made white—and seeks to define it comprehensively. This goes beyond what ethnography can rightly claim to do.

The second, and more troubling, trap which ethnographers must fear is the tendency of the researcher to impose her own normative framework upon her subjects. When Lépinard engages in such behavior I become suspicious

not only of her methodology, but of her normative project as a whole: that moving from a subject-based approach to a relational one will help prevent white feminists from judging, othering, or excluding feminists of color.

Take for instance, her interview with three racialized feminists in France regarding legislation prohibiting the veil. Mariam is an immigrant from Mali in her fifties, Samira is another woman of presumably middle age (she was an adult during the Algerian civil war in the early 1990s, though she had immigrated to France by that point), and Maleiha leads an organization of lesbians of color in Paris. All three have lived experience dealing with oppression, racism, and the struggles of immigration. All three, also, are against veiling. Although united in opposition to the legislation, the three women see veiling as detrimental to women, and in particular to Muslim women born in France, as they highlight that veiling is a cultural, not religious, tradition. Given especially their experiences in environments in which veiling has not necessarily been an autonomous decision on the part of participants (149), they understandably see the issue as one of complexity. Lépinard, however, reads them as essentially brainwashed by white ideology:

Despite the fact that the three interviewees disapprove of the 2004 and 2010 bans, the needs and rights of veiled women are not put at the center of their critical analysis of the law. These discourses testify to the strength of hegemonic discourses in the French public sphere about secularism as necessary to emancipate women, and about the veil as a sign of oppression (148).

Implicit in this discussion is exactly the kind of judgement Lépinard thinks she can avoid: these are “bad” feminists.

Who then does Lépinard approve of? Sandra, a young activist who came of age as a feminist in the early 2010s, has the “right” political opinion. When asked about veiling, she responds: “What is emancipation? It goes back to a simple question: well, is a woman free to choose how she dresses, what she wears?” (150). For Sandra, there is no complexity. It’s “simple.” Ignoring background conditions, national discourses, and the lived experience of immigrant and other women, she expounds in the abstract: feminism is all about free choice. That this tenet of liberal feminism has been criticized since Simone de Beauvoir and before is of no import. On this banal statement, Lépinard waxes poetic, admiring how Sandra’s statement “expresses not only a political will for inclusion, but also a desire for relationality with those supposedly abject feminist subjects, a will and a wish to expand the boundaries of feminism’s moral universe and its promise of treating equally its members” (150).

Lépinard, despite her theoretical wish to remove the judging of “good” and “bad” feminists from the political project, so easily slips into their implications. One cannot help but read this chapter as follows. The middle-aged women, with all their experience and knowledge, are presumed to neglect those with whom they claim to be in community. They are “bad” feminist subjects. The young woman, on the other hand, who states the beliefs that Lépinard happens

to hold, is a “good” subject. Is this treating all who make feminist claims as political equals?

Indeed, it isn’t only the author’s inability to maintain her own approach which results in my skepticism; the entire thesis has troubling implications. The idea that anyone who makes a claim under a feminist banner is therefore to be treated as my political equal and joint compatriot in the political project strikes me as naive, to say the least. Do Phyllis Schlafly and Sarah Palin’s causes become feminist by their claims or by the claims that are made about them “in the name of feminism”? What about men’s rights activists? There are good reasons to be discriminating in determining what indeed advances the cause of feminism, and what—and who—does not.

In order to do so, it will require messy, conflictual, and difficult organizing, engaging with those within and outside the feminist project. It will require exactly the kind of work and analysis Lépinard so deftly engages in during her archival exploration. It will be painful, and it will be complicated, and it will require choosing between good and bad feminists, the same way we choose between good and bad socialists, good and bad democrats—exorcising those “false friends,” as Lorna Finlayson so aptly puts it: the Sarah Palins, Phyllis Schlaflys, and others who advocate policies which harm more than they help.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank David Klempere, Joseph Cloward, and Caitlin Murphy-Brust for their generous insights which contributed to this review. All mistakes are, of course, my own.

NOTES

1. “Racialized” is the preferred term in Francophonist feminist circles, used in this text as interchangeable with more common Anglophonic phrases such as “women of color.”
2. Matthew Longo and Bernardo Zacka, “Political Theory in an Ethnographic Key.” *American Political Science Review* 113, no. 4 (2019): 1066–70. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000431>.

Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women

Kate Manne (Penguin Random House, 2020). 288 pp. \$27.00
ISBN: 978-1984826558.

Reviewed by Vanessa Wills
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Kate Manne’s *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women* takes up some of the central themes that animated her 2017, *Down Girl*. Where her first book is a conceptual analysis of misogyny, Manne’s more recent book is presented as a series of case studies of particular manifestations of misogyny. These treatments of various misogynistic encounters illuminate what Manne refers to as “male privilege”—a phenomenon that encourages men to feel “entitled” to various goods and services from women, with these goods being often sexual or emotional in nature. *Entitled* inherits many of the strengths of *Down Girl* and expands the picture; it also leaves open some questions that were raised by the earlier text.

Misogyny, we should remember from *Down Girl*, is, on Manne’s view, not most fruitfully thought of as a kind of inner hateful feeling inside men’s hearts. Rather, on Manne’s account, misogyny is “best conceptualized as the ‘law enforcement’ branch of patriarchy—a system that functions to police and enforce gendered norms and expectations, and involves girls and women facing disproportionately or distinctively hostile treatment because of their gender, among other factors” (7). For Manne, misogyny is a means of policing women for their perceived failures to render unto men what is theirs. One of *Entitled*’s contributions is to offer a catalog of the occasions upon which misogyny’s policing function may be deployed.

Understanding misogyny in this way allows us to avoid trivial back-and-forth about whether any particular man *actually* hates women in his heart of hearts—a debate that in most cases can never be adequately settled, that offers too much obscurantist plausible deniability to apparently misogynistic men, and that adds little to our ability to theorize the central question of oppression as experienced from the point of view of the oppressed person. That men’s experiences are more often centered in our collective social imagination is itself a manifestation of misogyny—“himpathy,” a term Manne coined in *Down Girl*. Manne’s account of misogyny helps us to reorient our attention from men’s motivations to women’s experiences of gendered mistreatment and to find out what can be learned from this shift of perspective.

Entitled opens with the reader called upon to gaze, with their mind’s eye, upon an image: the sullen, bright red face of then-Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. It is a face twisted in rageful resentment that in being vetted to determine his fitness for a seat on the highest court in the land, he might be called to account for his alleged commission of sexual assault against Christine Blasey Ford when both were teenagers moving in the same social circles of an affluent DC suburb.

Rhetorically, this beginning reminds one of the cinematic device in which the camera looks first through a keyhole, one’s gaze tightly narrowed to a specific object that serves as the point of reference for all that follows as the frame widens and the field of vision expands.

Manne describes Kavanaugh as “a picture of entitlement.” What do we see in that picture? Kavanaugh is angry, white, cisgender, affluent, powerful, and protected. Ford, also white, affluent, and established in her professional career, is not without her own enjoyment of social privilege—indeed it is this positionality that likely accounts for some of the courage she exhibited on the stand and for her having gained any standing for her claims at all. However, Ford has one obvious social disadvantage with respect to Kavanaugh: he is a man and she is a woman. As a woman, far from having access to the sort of shielding and protection that Kavanaugh experienced, Ford was driven from her home by relentless violent threats against her and her family—punishment for speaking out as a victim—and as of the time of this writing, she has not yet been able to return.