

BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization*, edited by Margaret A. McLaren. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017

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Densely packed and informative for accomplished scholars, students, and a lay audience, *Decolonizing Feminism* provides an impressive, tightly woven array of scholarship on the impact of empire, coloniality and feminist theoretical interventions concerning the production of knowledge. Margaret A. McLaren brings together a spectrum of scholars and, beginning with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's congratulatory preface, the result is a broad education on the development of decolonial feminist thought and its import. The list of contributing authors indicates the volume's firm grounding in feminist philosophy and political theory with original work rather than re-worked, previously published material. The ideas are new, refreshing, and energizing.

McLaren offers a concise, thorough work tracing the threads informing the collection—scholarship stemming from Latin American, Indigenous and non-Indigenous feminists of color praxis or “knowledge produced from the body.” The Introduction is a well-formed guide on the shift in feminist theorizing of “Otherness” towards decolonial praxis, which is helpful for those new to decolonial feminist philosophy. McLaren's map sweeps from Quijano's (2000) coloniality of power (acknowledging Lorde's 1984 premise on Western Europe's simplistic, binary, hierarchical and oppositional histories and the resulting “excesses”) to Lugones' (2008) coloniality of gender (acknowledging Oyewumi's informative 1997 premise naming patriarchy as an inappropriate, unintelligible and false cultural sociohistorical analytic in global contexts) to Indigenous political theorists' inclusion of settler colonial exercises of power in naming the biopolitical workings of empire. While impressive overall, a notable shortcoming in McLaren's discussion of Indigenous contributions is its lack of detail or vibrancy amid the attention to other influences. Though contributor Allison Weir is credited for expanding the assessment, those

engaged in Indigenous political theory, methodologies and anti-settler colonial scholarship will likely find this inadequate to properly locate Indigenous contributions to the decolonial thought detailed here. While this concern is somewhat addressed in later chapters, the impact of the lost opportunity begins in the Introduction and remains throughout.

Divided into four areas, the book embraces philosophy, political theory/critique and praxis-based case study. Part One, “Decolonizing Epistemologies, Methods, and Knowledges,” effectively considers the violences of universalist feminist philosophies, pushing against complicit blaming of previous knowledge-producers while offering alternative options. Pohlhaus’s “Knowing Without Borders and the Work of Epistemic Gathering” tasks the reader to “gather epistemology” aware of the embodied materiality of knowledge making and production. Doing so, we might address the discord that Alcoff highlights in the preceding chapter where the assertion is that decolonizing philosophy requires doing philosophy differently.

Part Two, “Re-thinking Rights,” includes philosophical case studies taking up rights as a decolonizing project. Bueno-Hansen and Falcón’s “Indigenous/Campesina Embodied Knowledge, Human Rights Awards, and Lessons for Transnational Feminist Solidarity” solidly addresses the limits and inherent problems of transnational feminist solidarity practices initiated by global North actors. This contribution reads more as ethnography than philosophy, highlighting how this striking shift to praxis might have benefitted from a contextual signpost. McLaren’s chapter on transnational approaches to “Women’s Rights as Human Rights” (“Decolonizing Rights”) offers a strong analysis of how the rights discourse might address its own limitations. Its positioning, however, detracts from its intended impact.

The third part of the book, “Citizenship and Immigration: The Space Between,” extends the rights discourse to belonging/not-belonging as conferred by a State and/or bodily asserted “right to space.” Mahadevan interrogates critical theory’s limits in understanding immigrant women’s role in European “citizenship” (“Constitutional Patriotism and Political Membership”), juxtaposing Habermas’ and Benhabib’s philosophical ideas across lived reality. Bardwell-Jones explores liminal space created through transnational experience in “‘Home-Making’ and ‘World-Traveling’” through another praxis-based contribution. Oliver effectively blends philosophy and praxis to consider the intersection of gender, refugee status, confinement-as-consequence-of-war and sexual violence, illustrating embedded colonial codes of human and humanity present in

rescue politics. The reader will appreciate the book's genealogy—especially Lugones's thinking on recognizing resistant intentionality in others as a means to support resistance to multiple oppressions (Lugones 2003).

The final part, “Decolonizing Dialogue, Solidarity, and Freedom” looks towards methods for us all to “get free.” Fultner's “The Dynamics of Transnational Feminist Dialogue” provides a dialogue model of transformative practice reliant on attention to expanded accountability and culture as a permeable system of meaning. Gallegos' “Building Transnational Feminist Solidarity Networks” convincingly marks how the major trends in transnational feminist movement approaches of issue/goal-oriented or identity-based mutually reinforce the other, ultimately supporting cross-issue and identity solidarity. The volume ends with Weir's “Decolonizing Feminist Freedom,” a fitting and necessary conclusion to the collection, which looks at rights and freedoms operable outside of false divisions between individual belonging, rights and relational, collective space and place.

Whereas the introduction minimally assesses Indigenous contributions to decolonized feminist philosophy, the latter half of the volume subtly urges us towards it, contemplating where Indigenous epistemological processes including knowledge gained through ‘relationship to’ expands how we understand the intersections from which knowledge can be built as well as theoretical freedoms which conceptually cling to rigid binaries of fluidity or fixedness.

The collection engages, challenges, and inspires new thinking in a format useful for classrooms, reading groups or personal enrichment. As a philosophical offering, *Decolonizing Feminism* encourages “flexible stability” in theorizing, theory-as-life praxis and future actions aimed at expansive feminism imagined across multiple realities.