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Helena Hanneder

Michele White/Diane Negra (eds.), 2022: *Anti-Feminisms in Media Culture*. New York, London: Routledge. 212 pages. £ 35.99

Anti-feminisms are on the rise and manifest in distinct ways, forming an opposition to what proponents of anti-feminism perceive to be a unitary feminist movement. In fact, feminist approaches differ widely: Neoliberal feminism advocates an integration of women into the logic of economic valorisation, while more radical feminisms criticize that the cultural representation and material reality of women has not been changed sufficiently. Within anti-feminist discourse, the latter is often ridiculed by pointing to the former, leading to a dismissal of feminist points of view in media culture. *Anti-Feminisms in Media Culture* is dedicated to pinpointing how media has portrayed, developed and perpetuated anti-feminist resentments. Contemporary media culture is providing a fertile breeding ground for anti-feminist language and imagery, which the book aims to evaluate by adopting an intersectional approach that highlights concerns about race and class.

The book is structured chronologically from the 1920s to the present. Here, the chapters are outlined according to the topics they most prominently discuss. *Anti-Feminisms in Media Culture* includes essays that focus on class, sexualized violence and most prominently race. Specifically, whiteness and its entanglement with feminism is scrutinized at length. In chapter 1 by Tasker, the depiction of women in the 1920s is discussed in relation to the discourse about independence, which had been gained only by white women who had entered the work force. The graphic nature in the depiction of white male violence in so-called exploitation films is discussed by Pinkowitz in chapter 3. White feminism and white tears are not only connected to each other, as Leonard claims, but they have become synonymous in the online discourse. She is warning the reader that reducing white feminism to white tears comes close to dismissing female emotion. Leonard historically connects this development to reducing the Suffragette's feminism to their racism. This is not intended to dismiss their racist points of view, but the situation is described as more nuanced and calls for a focus on the antagonist, the capitalist patriarch. In chapter 7, Zuo discusses the short film *Kin*, starting with the images of the murder of George Floyd and then analysing how the protagonists of the film go on a murderous rampage out of a belief in white, masculine entitlement. These four chapters focus on whiteness and thereby discuss what is hegemonically constructed as the neutral position of those in power.

As we move through the chapters and the connected timeline, the situation for women changes, which also changes their feminisms, causing a change in the backlash against it. With, albeit slowly, increasing independence, there is also an increasing awareness of intersectionality as well as a critical discussion of the centring of white women in mainstream feminism. While the feminist movement has struggled to integrate BIPOC women, the book attempts to put them in a central position. In chapter 2, Page discusses the image of the welfare queen, critically examining the connection

drawn between consumerism and capitalism, as people need to generate value through their productivity within a capitalist system. In chapter 5 by Goldstein and Murugan, the same system is examined in the entertainment industry, where a white heteronormative audience is constructed and this image is upheld – every award ceremony is used to criticise an issue about the film industry, but a white feminist status quo and the connected hierarchies are maintained nonetheless, as exemplified in selected scenes from *Little Fires Everywhere*. Kim (chapter 4) discusses how Asian women on screen are not necessarily misrepresented, but very commonly misread, as white feminism is presented as a desirable ideal. In chapter 8, Keller analyses a video of politician Alexandria Ortasio Cortez (henceforth AOC) as an example of how women of colour are judged if they do not conform to the standards of whiteness. In the last chapter, Everett makes an appeal to the natural, kinky hair community, as the author explores her identity through online chat rooms, in which women support each other. It is argued that the way in which black women have been policed for their appearance is embedded in the maintenance of societal hierarchies. It becomes obvious that the second main theme is how BIPOC women are particularly affected by anti-feminist rhetoric and depiction. By loosely structuring the essays around these two topic complexes, it is shown how race and gender intersect, while highlighting specific instances and experiences in a number of ways.

A definition of postfeminism provided early in the book by White is, in line with recent sociological terminology, developed as an antithesis to the anti-feminist sentiment according to which feminism is unitary. It is acknowledging the development of feminisms, and in the Introduction it is newly used to describe media culture in a refined and detailed way. Feminism constantly develops and interacts with capitalist demands of society, which is not acknowledged by anti-feminist rhetoric, as it attempts to paint a picture of an unchanging feminism that has become superfluous. Early in the book, the authors are establishing vocabulary that is crucial for a sharp analysis of societal circumstances and structures. Unfortunately, it is not developed further and the book hardly returns to it. Postfeminism is only briefly mentioned in chapters 6, 8 and 9, allowing for some intertextuality around this core concept. Pinkowitz's depiction of neoliberal feminism surprisingly does not reference the term, even though it would have allowed for an analysis concerning its postfeminism that would have further developed the term. This brings us to a central issue: The book does not provide a clear structure for the reader to follow and it seems as if certain specific and sometimes arbitrary media depictions are analysed. While these contribute to an overall analysis, there is a lack of an overarching thesis that connects the chosen examples. The reader might look in vain for the examined pieces to contribute to an overarching timeline that outlines media culture with regard to its anti-feminism.

In terms of content, the inclusion of racism in many facets of media implicitly unites many chapters as outlined above, from the racist depiction of sexualized violence, such as the so-called southern rape complex, to the potentially a little far-fetched analysis of AOC's dancing videos as emblematic of nudes and "revenge porn". While there are parallels in that personal boundaries were not respected, Keller's interpretation may come across as not only delegitimizing the status sexualized trauma inhabits in a heteropatriarchy, but it also distracts the reader from the main goal of the video leak. It was used to discredit AOC in a racist attempt at depicting her as unprofessional and unfit

for leadership. When this is attributed to the domain of sexualized trauma, a concise analysis is lost. In opposition to several analyses of how boundaries were not respected and violated in media culture, there is also a chapter of the book including an analysis of black joy. It is presented as a counter tactic to anti-feminist sentiments in solidarity with dance videos or black girlfriend selfie culture by Everett. These moments of joy are often forgotten, so that blackness is equated with suffering, which is a myth this book does not perpetuate, similarly building on the critical and extensive examination of whiteness as an oppressive force.

I would like to end by pointing to a chapter that stands out from the book, as it sharply analyses the current climate and capitalism's impact on human worth, which is specifically amplified in the reproductive labour carried out by women. In chapter 2, Page concisely highlights the ingenious work of the Nap Ministry, which shows resting as a valuable alternative to hustle culture. It presents an attempt to resist a society in which a person's worth is judged according to their productivity. While white women desired to be integrated into the labour market, black women had been working outside their homes for decades. Remaining in the domestic sphere to have the time to do their own reproductive work was and is a feminist endeavour that white feminisms have ignored. The book, in this regard and in the others outlined above, includes a nuanced depiction of the tension between race and feminism, often also highlighting its entanglement with capitalism.

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