

NATALIE THOMLINSON. *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968–1993*. Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. Pp. 272. \$100.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.174

Criticizing the “meagre” extent of scholarship on the modern British feminist movement, as well as existing scholarship’s avoidance of “more troublesome aspects of feminism’s past” (4), with *Race, Ethnicity and the Women's Movement in England, 1968–1993* Natalie Thomlinson sets out to tell a new and different story. She argues that post-1968 feminism in England was always constructed in racial terms and riven by racial divides—from the ways in which the women’s liberation movement pursued activism on issues mostly pertinent to white, middle-class women, to black (Thomlinson’s term) activists’ critique of this tendency. Thomlinson’s picture of the feminist movement is indeed a darker one than readers might encounter elsewhere: riven by conflict and divisions, filled with statements that are “problematic” and initiatives that “fail” to be racially inclusive. Ultimately, Thomlinson argues, “the emotionally charged nature of these debates, and inability of some white feminists to deal with the challenge of race constructively, played a key role in the breakdown of the WLM [women’s liberation movement] as a coherent national movement” (6).

In chapter 1 Thomlinson examines the mainstream white feminist movement during the years 1968–1975. Thomlinson argues that the academic New Left circles out of which women’s liberation emerged predisposed it to focus on issues and strategies dictated by white middle-class women, such as equal pay, sexual freedom, and consciousness-raising. Efforts to include working-class women or women of color were often condescending, while such women questioned white middle-class feminists’ focus on “luxury” issues like sexuality that distracted from more fundamental forms of oppression (61). In chapter 2 she turns to the involvement of women in black radical activism, describing a distinct genealogy for black feminism that predisposed it to focus on different issues and tactics. Black women activists were keen to work with men, while also addressing issues such as family and reproductive rights in ways that were attentive to the needs of black women. Though Thomlinson chooses to use the term *black* to refer to a political identity that united women of color of different ethnic backgrounds, she acknowledges that there were sometimes divisions: activists of South Asian descent, for instance, were uncertain about a focus on protesting the notorious stop and search laws, seeking instead to raise awareness about domestic violence in South Asian immigrant communities. Importantly, Thomlinson notes that English black feminists took direct inspiration from African American women activists, many of whom visited the United Kingdom in this period.

In chapter 3, Thomlinson turns to the uneasy relation of Jewish feminists to both black and mainstream white feminism. Thomlinson seems to struggle to find evidence of a coherent Jewish feminist movement in England, and this chapter does seem out of place amid the rest of the book. She does, however, engage in a detailed discussion about how race figured in debates about Israel/Palestine among the staff of the magazine *Spare Rib* in the 1980s, which—Thomlinson argues—contributed to *Spare Rib* folding in 1993. This controversy, in Thomlinson’s account, is a particularly clear example of the escalating white-black racial tensions that fractured English feminism more widely in the period.

In chapter 4 she studies the women’s groups that, in the late 1970s, organized explicitly in opposition to the National Front and in support of “Third World” activism. Thomlinson seeks to show that, as in earlier instances, white feminists’ attempts to engage in debates in which race was centrally implicated were limited by their whiteness. White feminists were worried about how fascism oppressed women, but not—black feminists responded—about the more fundamental ways that it harmed people of color, or the ways in which the British state

continued to be implicated in imperial domination of new Commonwealth immigrants. White feminists became too caught up in the personal emotional experience of coming to terms with their own racism, instead of taking the opportunity to build coalitions with black activists. Thomlinson herself is highly critical here of white feminism's inability to transcend its limitations.

In chapter 5 she addresses ways that black and white feminists worked in coalition in the 1980s. She seeks to recover the 1980s as a vibrant time for feminism, in which activists overcame some of the problems with racial division the movement had previously experienced. She discusses some key flashpoints between black and white feminists but also suggests that in this period white women became more practiced at acknowledging their privilege, and she highlights publications, businesses, and local organizations in which women of different races worked together successfully. Ultimately, however, Thomlinson suggests, conflict over race took too great an emotional toll on many women, and that white women in particular became alienated from the movement even as black feminism became more vibrant.

Thomlinson is to be commended for bringing attention to this understudied topic and recovering overlooked and ephemeral sources. Though some might criticize her reliance on fifteen oral history interviews as providing only a limited sample of women activists, she contextualizes these interviews very effectively within a range of magazines, newsletters, records of community groups, and public oral history collections. She also makes judicious use of feminist and postcolonial theory. However, Thomlinson's insistence on assessing the perspectives and strategies of activists in terms of "success" or "failure" based on the extent to which they perceived gender and race as intersectional identity categories may rankle some readers. Thomlinson raises a wide range of questions that will provide fruitful avenues of research for future scholars. In particular, I wanted to know more about British women of color's engagement with African American feminism, about feminists who were not involved in leftist political movements, about the intellectual and theological content of Jewish feminism, and about the ways in which anti-fascist feminists of the 1970s took their cues from 1930s forebears—there is surely much more to say about the latter than that it was insensitive to issues of race. The need for such further work illustrates how helpful it is that Thomlinson has finally brought such a worthwhile topic to historians' attention.

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PAUL A. TOWNEND. *The Road to Home Rule: Anti-imperialism and the Irish National Movement*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016. Pp. 336. \$64.95 (cloth).
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Paul Townend's *The Road to Home Rule: Anti-imperialism and the Irish National Movement* is a welcome contribution to the literature on both imperial history and Irish nationalism. In recent years, scholars of Ireland and empire have moved beyond the question of Ireland's imperial status to examine the island's engagement with the larger British Empire. However, there has been relatively little historical investigation of the impact of British imperial expansion on either the Irish polity or Irish culture. Similarly, scholars of Irish history have consistently pointed to local events—especially the "traumatic experiences of famine and emigration"—to explain the development of Irish nationalist movements without taking the empire into account (10). In *The Road to Home Rule*, Townend merges these two