



## Book Reviews

***The Gender of Democracy: Citizenship and Gendered Subjectivity.*** By Maro Pantelidou Maloutas. London and New York: Routledge. 2006. 208 pp. \$130.00.

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In this theoretically provocative (and action-inspiring) study of the relationship between gender and democracy, Maro Pantelidou Maloutas makes an important contribution to both feminist theory and democratic theory. She emphasizes that democracy's emancipatory potential is substantially inhibited by the existing system of dichotomous gender relations. The requisite for us is to deconstruct rather than simply to modernize gender roles (whether through quotas or parity) which is tantamount to a "modernization of oppression" (p. 55).

Through an investigation of European Union gender policies that are ostensibly "for" women, Pantelidou Maloutas moves us toward a more democratic future that refutes the inherent masculinity and repressiveness of the current gender order. To move toward this "democratization of democracy," we cannot reconcile ourselves to operate simply within the dichotomous gender framework that creates hierarchies and homogenizes gendered subjects, which is intrinsically contradictory to democracy's liberatory promise of "equality" (p. x). In this wonderfully rich exploration of the nuances of gender and democracy, the author provides us with the theoretical ammunition to move via radical critique and deconstruction "to a project of *reconstruction*, via a reconceptualization of gender and democracy in a new frame, allowing for a transitional tactic which, while referring to the existing context of EU gender policy, opens up a *prospect* for a radically different function of gender" (p. 123, emphasis original). Her exploration of the political viability and necessity of deconstruction in harmony with reconstruction is an important pointer, not only for democratic and feminist theory but also for policymakers and feminist activists who would comprehend more fully the implications of existing policies and

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move toward a social vision that is future oriented, nonessentialized, and truly progressive.

The empirical domain for this study is the European South (specifically Greece). The original study was published in Greek in 2002; the present edition is a translation. Far from being a hindrance, the empirical locatedness of the book has much to offer in terms of conceptualizing different ramifications of our gendered political existence in all parts of the world, whether by scrutinizing notions of “equality” or “liberty,” or by understanding the varied implications of our sexed subjectivity in political processes and decision making. In Chapter 1, Pantelidou Maloutas examines the correlation between gender and democracy. What does the demand for representation of women *as* women mean *for* women and *for* democracy? She proposes that “instead of focusing all energy on pinpointing implementation problems, on debating mechanisms that may best facilitate women’s inclusion or on evaluating strategies for the increase of the number of women in politics, it may be better to investigate initially the ontological foundations of policies and proposals that target the genuine inclusion of all in contemporary democracy” (p. 35). In Chapter 2, the discussion turns to the “underrepresentation” of women in political decision making. Moving beyond a mere quantitative assessment of the predicament, the author emphasizes that simply “imposing” more women in political decision making would not necessarily lead to their gaining more power as a social category or to the elimination of subordination (p. 43). Through an extremely sophisticated analysis of “representation,” she maintains that it is a means of “perpetuating” certain identities and interests, a perpetuation that can have repressive implications (p. 51).

In Chapter 3, an analysis of the gendered subject as citizen leads Pantelidou Maloutas to assert that “it is doubtful whether women claiming *as women* will ever become equal citizens to men” (p. 71, emphasis original). The fourth chapter discusses a conceptualization of the subject as gendered but not dichotomous. This discussion has several anchors: discussions of the “lived body,” of sex, sexuality, and gender that are fluid, changing, and socially constructed. Moving beyond a dichotomous gendered existence, the author presents a theoretical hypothesis concerning an “androgynous subject,” who is “neither man nor woman” and “signifies ultimately the end of gender, as we know it in contemporary societies, while it is a concretization at the level of gender of a conception of ‘partial’ identities, provisional and changing identifications, which substitute binary crystallizations” (p. 103). We might ask whether the notion of an androgynous subject reinstates another mode of universality that it

vehemently seeks to displace. Is it realistic to relegate sex to insignificance? Pantelidou Maloutas reminds us, however, that the deconstruction of sex does not entail its obliteration. Rather, what it seeks to eliminate are inflexible sex/gender stereotypes by emphasizing their contingent nature. Only thus can democracy become “substantial” with regard to gender, an ethical and political imperative (p. 104).

This book heralds the enormous diversity among/within women through its theoretical propellants of postmodernism and utopia. Pantelidou Maloutas selectively appropriates different nuances of postmodernism, “rendering eclecticism particularly appropriate in an endeavor combining theoretical and political aims” (p. 8). It is the spirit of postmodernism, however, that infuses the author’s examination. Her analysis seeks to move us beyond essentialist conceptions toward a visualization of multiplicity, ambiguity, and fluidity in our subjective identities. The book thus stands as an important rejoinder to feminist critiques that maintain that postmodernism has little “real” political valency beyond dissipating all our foundational claims. Pantelidou Maloutas makes an important contribution to this debate by employing postmodernism to illuminate the paradoxes in our political goals and help us envision a more just, equal, and democratic society. Postmodernism is harmonized with a utopian vision of a social order in conceptualizing a different gender-relations system to call for a substantial “deepening” of democracy, a deconstruction of today’s reality for a reconstructed tomorrow: “This reality will change only if the subjects are freed of their dichotomous gender, a process that will also alter the terms of their participation in the political process, since it will necessarily concern participation in *transforming* and no longer in preserving it, and for that reason, will also promote the development and the deepening of democracy itself” (p. 100, emphasis original).

Yes! A celebration of democracy’s potential for a hope-filled, truly emancipatory feminist future.

***Feminist Inquiry: From Political Conviction to Methodological Innovation.*** By Mary Hawkesworth. New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press. 2006. 286 pp. \$25.95.

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In this book, Mary Hawkesworth draws together into an integrated discussion an immense amount of the complex, interdisciplinary research