

the Mediterranean Nation-States, 2004; M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Mediations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*, 2005).

If we take seriously the authors' suggestion that feminist methods are personal, collective, conflictual, political, and systemic experiences, then each conversant must ask: What are the questions and operations I am assuming within feminist articulations? Whose feminist authority has been cultivated through this production? Whose labor is necessary to do what feminist work? What are the implications of "our" political (mis)alignments, and of multiple feminist interventions?

Overall, this text is productive and can be used in feminist inquiry courses. It contributes a particular feminist perspective to the depth and breadth of methodological knowledges already circulating within feminist IR and within critical interdisciplinary feminist locales.

***Marriage and Democracy: Equality for All.* By R. Claire Snyder. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 2006. 176 pp. \$60.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.**

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R. Claire Snyder's book is published in the series *Polemics*, designed to engage controversial ideas in a way that appeals to both "the most accomplished scholar" and "the general reader and student." Her polemic intervention does both, and is important given the Senate's June 2006 vote on a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. In this hearing, numerous arguments were rehashed by those opposing same-sex marriage: It is against God's will, it is too great a deviation from what marriage has historically meant, it will lead to polygamy and bestiality. Snyder's work responds to these arguments; equally important, the author makes the case that discrimination against gay and lesbian people through the denial of marriage benefits is incompatible with liberal democracy because it denies the necessary foundation of equal citizenship. The denial of same-sex marriage, then, leaves unfulfilled the promise of equal rights and the possibility of democracy.

After a brief chapter that outlines democratic theory and the plan of the book, Snyder explores the history of marriage. Here she argues against the assumptions, shared by many senators and other Americans, that marriage

has always been a state-defined relationship, a religiously recognized relationship, or a relationship based on love. Such understandings simply read an idealized version of the present onto the past. A better view, advanced in the third chapter, suggests that since marriage is a recognized fundamental right in America, to deny it to gay and lesbian people enshrines inequality and violates constitutional principles. Courts that rule in favor of same-sex marriage, then, are not activist but adjudicate following the tradition of American law, which is often ahead of public opinion. In the fourth chapter, Snyder draws from numerous sources to demonstrate that to see heterosexual marriage as foundational to Christianity both is historically incorrect and ignores the serious debates about homosexuality broadly and same-sex marriage more particularly taking place within many Christian denominations. In some communities, these debates are resolved in ways that make possible religious recognition of gay and lesbian relationships even without legal recognition.

Undoubtedly, the force of opposition to same-sex marriage comes from the Christian Right, whose constituency is mobilized by this issue. Snyder disputes their arguments, including the argument that homosexuality is explicitly condemned by biblical mandate. Rather, she traces the Right's opposition to a continued effort to preserve "tradition" (and a constituency) by denying citizenship rights to previously excluded groups, including African Americans and women (p. 108). She illustrates this by discussing links between antigay activism and neopatriarchy. She might also have explored the extent to which the Right's opposition to same-sex marriage is interwoven with racism and how antigay rights rhetoric is important for policy, such as welfare reform, that continues to limit the opportunities of poor people, particularly poor people of color. Marriage enforces gender roles that circumscribe rights, a point Snyder mentions (p. 125) but does not develop. Discussing this reality more could illuminate how many people, including some Democrats, benefit from the work of the Christian Right. They need not state that American society relies on gender and racial inequality, reinforced in two ways: by promoting heterosexual marriage (providing both two breadwinners and caring labor that rests disproportionately on women in the home, and poor workers whose labor can be bought in service industries), and by punishing those who do not marry yet have children. Indeed, welfare reform, and the encouragement of marriage built into it, has received bipartisan support.

Chapter 7 is a response to progressive queer scholars, including me, who deny the importance of marriage. Despite my own perspective, Snyder's

case is persuasive: Whether or not one thinks that marriage should be central to society, it is a central institution. Individuals should have equal access to it if we are to live in a just liberal society. I continue to think, though, that it is important to ask whether pursuing same-sex marriage as a primary goal is a good political strategy for gay and lesbian organizations. Snyder's answer to this question strikes me as too simple. She suggests that this is not a battle chosen by gay activists, but one pushed to the fore by the "American court system" (p. 170). This is somewhat accurate: The Hawaii case that began organizing for gay marriage stemmed from individuals filing a lawsuit. Only after it was clear that the Hawaii Supreme Court would find in favor of the plaintiffs did legal and activist groups decide that this was an important fight (see David R. Pinello, *America's Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage* [2006], pp. 25–26). Nonetheless, engaging the fight for this right and focusing resources on it has been the active, not passive, choice of major gay organizations.

After reading Snyder's discussion of why same-sex marriage is just, I still believe it is important to highlight the argument that reinforcing marriage, heterosexual or same-sex, serves to uphold the idea that care labor should rest on women, increasingly women of color, poor people, and the family. In her recent book, *Sex Among the Rabble* (2006), Clare Lyons argues that monogamous marriage became institutionalized in early Philadelphia (1730–1830) in order to contain the sexuality of both women and African Americans, thereby institutionalizing white patriarchal power and a vision of appropriate family. Her text illustrates that the civil rights of people of color, women, and those whose sexuality was not contained within the monogamous family have been linked throughout American history. Perhaps the genius of the Right over the past 30 years has been to mobilize a constituency that recognizes this connection. If the monogamous heterosexual model of family declines, it will lead to demands for new systems of support, precisely what the Right broadly and neoliberals (including many Democrats) oppose. The failure of feminists, welfare rights activists, and gay and lesbian activists may be the inability to articulate an alternative to marriage that better fosters social equality. In the end, Snyder thoroughly arms the reader with persuasive arguments about why our society should choose to endorse same-sex marriage. Yet, I remain troubled by prioritizing this goal, rather than attempting to build an alternative vision.