
BOOK REVIEW**Stefanie C. Boulila. 2020. *Race in Post-Racial Europe. An Intersectional Analysis*. London: Rowman & Littlefield. 181 pp.**

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Stefanie C. Boulila's *Race in Post-Racial Europe* is published as part of the 'Challenging Migration Studies' series, edited by Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley. The series promises to provoke migration studies beyond policy orientation and to reconsider politics of migration as well as the very category of 'migrant'. Contribution of Boulila focuses, on the one hand, on the critique of silence around race in Europe, and on the contrary, on demonstrating how race shapes the European representations of gender and sexuality. As such, *Race in Post-Racial Europe* is best understood as a commentary to scholarly debates on intersectionality in Europe and as a (rightful) critique of the European feminist discussions, which have tended to overlook race. As Boulila shows, race is found all over the world—also in Europe.

Boulila promises to examine race 'from an intersectional perspective' and shows that 'including a strong theorisation of race at the centre of intersectionality is far from displaced in Europe' (p. 8). She does so by discussing three post-imaginaries—post-racialism, post-feminism and 'post-homophobia'—discourses that suggest that racial, gendered and sexualised oppression and exploitation are no longer an issue in Europe or that those are attached to racialised figures and bodies considered inherently non-European regardless of their location.

According to Boulila, the post-imaginaries function as performative scripts that organise the ways of understanding the present and the future (pp. 4–5). Drawing from the theorisation of intersectionality, she underscores how discussions on gendered and sexualised social phenomena reproduce the pervasive silence on race. Theoretically, she locates herself primarily in Feminists of Colour canon (p. 6), but she also draws from race critical theories as well as post-structuralist feminist discussions on nation and post-coloniality.

The book, consisting of eight chapters and a short introduction, is divided into three parts. The first part introduces perspectives of race critical theories and discusses how the European nation states and nationalisms are shaped by gender and race. Explaining the 'European racial denial' (p. 15), the unwillingness to acknowledge race as an oppressive structure in Europe and compiling theorisation of post-racial discourses is one of the key contributions of the book. In Chapter 1 in particular, Boulila provides insightful and clarifying summaries of central ideas with regard to the theorisations of burying race alive in the European context.

The second part of the book focuses on the prevalence of post-racialism in the discussions that Boulila places under the title post-feminism, or, the ways in which representations of gender and sexuality are shaped by race. Here, post-feminism designates the notion that feminism has reached its goal, become co-opted and too 'sexy' (p. 53) in its hollow claims and is addressed together with antifeminism and other gender conservative discussions. Boulila points out that post-feminism and post-racialism (p. 47) are rarely analysed together. This thought-intriguing observation hopefully prompts avenues for future research. Yet, discussing the heirs of 1990s television heroine Ally McBeal (p. 50), for whom feminism is supposedly taken for granted, together with contemporary, gender-conservative hetero-activists (p. 55) as well as stigmatising motherhood of non-white women in popular discourse (p. 85), makes Boulila's own contribution somewhat diffuse. Further, as one of her conclusions is that the post-feminist gender regime relies on the post-racial image of an exploited but desired migrant woman, the post-imaginaries bear resemblance to the previous analyses of race and gender—brown women continue to be represented in need of a saviour.

The third part, titled 'Liberal resistances' unpacks liberal discourses against homophobia, promoting diversity and resistance against intersectional feminism. Boulila aims to show first that the European discussions on homophobia are selective in reproducing a racialising division. In the last chapter (p. 123), she critiques diversity discourse as a tool against distinct social inequalities and oppressions because of the tendency of the discourse to equate all differences and undermine specific histories of oppression. Finally, Boulila summarises popular discussions that denounce intersectional feminism and undertheorised race in the European feminist theory.

Race in post-racial Europe brings together discussions that reproduce normative whiteness or racialised oppression by being silent of race. The arguments are illustrated through an array of examples and anecdotal evidence. These range from the British royal wedding to media representations of girls joining ISIS and German feminist publications, from the views of the European political leaders on Pussy Riot to INCEL online commentary, and from the reality show *Bachelor* to the mediatization of sexual assaults on New Year's Eve in Cologne in 2016 to name a few. At the same time, the methodology of the book is described very briefly, with a short reference to the Foucauldian discourse analysis. Given the empirical evidence that appears somewhat eclectic, it might be difficult to convince a sceptical reader about the relevance of the vast theoretical discussion Boulila addresses.

Despite the rigorous amount of topics, there is one particular theme Boulila does not comment on. Invested in analysing post-imaginaries in Europe, it is noteworthy that Boulila says nothing about 'post-communist' or about post-Soviet Europe. In fact, the analysis of the European modernity and supposed progress does not leave space for discussion on the intra-European differences that according to some are also constructed through racialisation (e.g. Todorova 2009; Krivonos 2019). For instance, Boulila's analysis on discussion on homophobia might appear different taking into account how LGBTIQ advocacy has often centred on Western Europe (cf. Kulpa & Mizielińska 2011).

Yet, the abundance of ingredients allows her to provide most cases only sweeping generalisations rather than rigorously grounded arguments. This is most evident when arguments made label a certain discussions or images as 'problematic'. 'Problematic' is a description regularly employed by critical theory scholars, and a guilty pleasure of the author of this review too, but it is also analytically unhelpful. Calling out problematic issues is a gesture that the critical theorisation of gender and sexuality—and perhaps of race—easily (but not necessarily) encourages one to make. The challenge is far from unique to Boulila's work, which indeed shows that representations in popular culture and public debate rely on racialised and racist

representations of gender and sexuality. Yet, it is still worthwhile to critically evaluate the gesture of identifying weaknesses in different discussion at hands. An impatient reader might want to know whether the critical theorisation applied also provides analytical tools for intervening if or if not actually altering everything that is labelled problematic. This applies to the overall argument of Boulila as well: race is all around us, often entangled with gender and sexuality. But what exactly is the analytical, transformative work we should do with it beyond mere labelling?

For a Nordic reader, immersed in post-colonial feminist discussions of the past 10 years, the entanglement of race and gender should be a familiar theme. However, as race continues to be a debated category also in Nordic scholarship on migration, the work of Boulila can inspire intellectual enthusiasm to further the argument that without an analytical understanding of race, analyses of migration remain short-sighted.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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