

*Women and Work: Feminism, Labour and Social Reproduction.* By Susan Ferguson. Northampton, England: Pluto Press, 2019, 192 pp., \$24.95 (paperback); \$99.00 (hardcover); \$14.95 (e-book).

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Susan Ferguson's *Women and Work: Feminism, Labour and Social Reproduction* provides a detailed analysis of feminist and nonfeminist theories that explain women's paid and unpaid labor in an oppressive capitalist system. Ferguson offers three trajectories—equality, critical equality, and social reproduction feminism—to aid our understanding of the variation of feminist perspectives of women's labor. Ferguson builds the case for social reproduction feminism as a lens through which we can expand our notion and perception of class and broadens our analysis of oppression as a whole, one that cannot be reduced to either paid or unpaid labor and one that must not only be used to advance the position of *some* women in society.

The author draws from a variety of texts citing earlier central theoretical and feminist writings to uncover the diverging ways feminists have conceptualized the work of women in connection with both oppression and freedom. Demonstrating that wage labor is not the sole source of women's oppression, Ferguson challenges us to rethink earlier theorizing on gender and class oppression by identifying shortcomings in existing social theories and calls for us to account for gendered labor in the home that is entirely devalued and contributes to the oppression of women in the workforce and in society as a whole. Ferguson draws attention to the ways in which unpaid reproductive labor is drawn on by capitalists and used to the benefit of capitalism and, therefore, must not be discounted.

Through a historical analysis of theories on social class, labor and women's oppression with an emphasis on theories from the 1700s through today, Ferguson traces the development of theory showing that linear progress has not been made, but has rather followed a nonlinear pattern. The book interweaves the complex histories of both feminist theory and social movements, highlighting why prior movements have led to the

advantage of some privileged women while simultaneously disadvantaging the majority of women. Ferguson takes to task earlier theories for their lack of attention to race and calls for attention to the multitude of ways race and racism shape the work of all women. By devaluing particular forms of labor (unpaid reproductive labor), we are devaluing the people who perform this labor.

The book highlights social reproduction feminism for its role in creating a world where human needs such as health, security, and creativity are prioritized. Ferguson argues that the view of labor should not be reduced to one solely of productive labor and challenges prior socialist feminists' understandings of what constitutes work. It uncovers the contradictions that are inherent in longstanding views of labor and oppression. The book highlights the revival of social reproductive feminism that now takes on racism and various other forms of oppression as important to address in advancing the rights of and position of *all* women in society. Central to class struggle is the need to fight against *all* oppression, not just class oppression. It challenges society to reconsider longstanding notions of work and labor as productive and highlights the ways in which reproductive labor have long benefited the capitalist structure. Ferguson draws attention to the ways in which reproductive labor has been more beneficial to some women than others due to racism and oppression. "Once one accepts that social reproductive labor is essential to (and therefore "inside") capitalism, it necessarily becomes capitalistically "productive" labour" (125).

Ferguson sees the contributions of black feminists as an integral piece of social reproduction feminism and takes more of an intersectional approach in advancing the need for social reproductive feminism than earlier theorists. This perspective is more inclusive than prior works, which narrowly point to women's paid or unpaid work as the source of their oppression. Ultimately, Ferguson proposes ways in which capitalism can be challenged and goes beyond simply pointing out the flaws inherent in a capitalist system.

Ferguson applies social reproduction theory widely to contemporary issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement and demonstrates the importance of extending analyses of oppression to cross class, gender, *and* racial lines. Ferguson's analysis can be applied to the current social and political climate today.

*Women and Work: Feminism, Labor and Social Reproduction* is an engaging, timely piece. The author sheds light on central questions social reproduction feminists grapple with today. This book should be assigned

in both sociological theory and gender theory courses. Ferguson provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which labor and its value are impacted by gender and race and argues for protections for all as opposed to protections for some.

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