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### [Review of: S.R. Farris (2017) In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism]

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*In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism.* By Sara R. Farris. Duke University Press, 2017. 272 pages. \$94.95 (hardcover), \$25.95 (paperback), \$14.72 (e-book).

Sara Farris's *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* is neither about religious doctrine and substance nor about religious authority or how people live their religion. It nonetheless is highly relevant for scholars of religion, as our field, especially when it concerns work on gender and Islam, is so overdetermined by the politics of representation. Farris tackles this issue head on. In her book, she engages with the centrality of Muslim (and non-Western migrant) women's rights to political debate in Europe, and investigates the kinds

of work stereotypes about what these women do in the fields of politics and economics.

The book consists of an introduction and five substantial chapters. It has a huge number of footnotes (45 pages, in smaller print), which often are small essays in themselves and certainly well worth reading. Some of them are, in fact, central to the argument of the book, such as note 25 in the introduction, where Farris explains the use of “Western Europe,” and note 3 in chapter 5 where the terms “foreign-born” and “non-Western migrant” are explained.

Let me start by summarizing the main lines of argumentation of the book. Farris aims to understand “the surprising intersection among nationalists, feminists, and neoliberals,” who all “invoke women’s rights to stigmatize Muslim men in order to advance their own political objectives” (3). The common denominator amongst these various political actors is that “gender relations in the West are more advanced and must be taught to Muslim women” to rescue them from their patriarchal cultures (7). To name this convergence, Farris introduces the term *femonationalism*.

Farris first presents a genealogy of the mobilization of women’s rights in The Netherlands, France, and Italy from 2000 to 2013 by three specific political actors: nationalist right-wing parties; a number of prominent feminist intellectuals, politicians, women’s organizations, and femocrats; and neoliberal policy makers. Her central claim is that based on “a shared belief in the supremacy of western values,” a common space is constituted “in which seemingly oppositional forces such as feminism and right-wing nationalism can voice concerns about gender violence as the exclusive domain of the Muslim Other” (19).

She then argues against the idea that this phenomenon may be labeled as populism. Populism, dividing the world into us versus them, “can account for right-wing forces targeting Muslims and nonwestern others as enemies of western societies,” but it cannot explain that “these parties do not frame Muslim and non-western migrant women as enemies in the same way, or even how they offer to rescue these women” (7). For this we need to turn to theories of nationalism. Women not only embody the nation as “bearers of the collective” and as “biological reproducers of the nation” (72), but the “sexualization of racism” also produces different stereotypes of Othered men and women, while “the racialization of sexism” turns sexism into the exclusive domain of the non-Western and Muslim other (73).

Next Farris poses the question whether these nationalist parties limit themselves to evoking rescue narratives, or whether they “propose actual rescuing policies as well” (78). Here she focuses on the recent legislation on civic integration, implemented between 2006 and 2013 by neoliberal governments. Gender equality and women’s rights are central values that migrants are expected to accept and internalize. Taking issue with the work of authors such as Christian Joppke and Yasemin Soysal, who consider this evidence of the liberal, as opposed to the nationalist, character of the new trend, Farris underlines that the emphasis on

women's rights attests to the "strengthening, rather than the disappearance, of a nationalist (and racist) trope" (81). As these women are seen both as victims to be rescued and as the main carriers of the non-Western migrant culture, "civic integration is thus simultaneously a process of denationalization and renationalization, the way to divert immigrant women's loyalty away from the non-western nation of origin and towards the western nation of destination" (111).

Moving from policy-making to the implementation of these policies and from political to economic integration, Farris turns to civic integration programs. In these programs, non-Western migrant women are not only seen as mothers to be educated, but also as backward subjects who require emancipation through employment. Through the application of neoliberal workfare devices, non-Western migrant women are systematically directed towards care and domestic work in the private sphere, the very sphere "from which the feminist movement had previously tried to liberate women" (15). To understand this, Farris analyzes the historical significance for feminists of economic independence for women and their engagement in productive (rather than reproductive) work. With the advent of post-Fordism and neoliberalism, women's widespread entrance into paid work has become a reality, yet this simultaneously has engendered a racialized division of labor between women. Migrant women's socially reproductive work then "permits western European women and men not only to have the 'cheap' care that enables them to be active in the labour market, but also to retain the illusion that gender equality has already been achieved" (141).

Farris ends with an analysis of how the stereotypes of non-Western men as the dangerous other, and non-Western women as victims to be rescued from them, follows a political-economic logic. Whereas their male counterparts may easily be made redundant, non-Western women, in contrast, take up a strategic position in the care and domestic work sectors. With the retreat of the welfare state, these sectors—that, as emotional labor, cannot be easily automated or relocated—have become increasingly central to the reproduction of western European economies and societies. In short, there is "an economic rationale behind the representation of Muslim and non-western migrant women as 'redeemable subjects'" (21).

If the above summary of Farris's book is long, that is because I find her analysis of how stereotyping of Muslim and non-Western migrant women has not only had a political but also an economic effect very productive. Her book is an important contribution to a number of debates about the representation of Muslim women. Through her use of concepts such as convergence, the sexualization of racism, and the racialization of sexism, she lucidly analyzes the work the gendered stereotypes of Muslims and non-Western migrants do. Her analysis of this gendered divergence is certainly an important contribution to the broader question of how ideologies, their political function, and their material effects interact. Her criticism of the celebration of the increased access of women to the labor market and her observations about the very selective processes of inclusion of Muslim and non-Western migrant women in the labor market are

long overdue. By doing so her book also contributes more generally to rethinking theories about stereotyping, populism, and nationalism; the intersection of gender, class, race, and religion; the public-private divide; and about paid labor, production, and social reproduction.

Because of its broad scope, the book also evokes a number of questions. The author does not engage very much with others who have also addressed some of the issues she presents. Muslim women's rescue narratives have, for instance, also been central in the work of Lila Abu-Lughod, who points to the need to also take the international dimension of these narratives into consideration.

Another issue for discussion is the slippage between Muslim women and non-Western migrant women. Here it would be helpful to discuss commonalities and differences between these categories, especially with respect to citizenship, which may or may not engender differences in their ability to act. Whereas Muslim women's representation first and foremost as victims is well taken, under certain conditions, these women have also been considered as actors with an excess of agency (that is, the wrong kind of agency). As I have argued in the case of face-veiling, it is the tension between considering the women involved simultaneously as victims and as assertively present that causes a particular kind of discomfort.

Finally the relation between the private, the public, and reproductive labor can be further unpacked, as there are major differences between, for instance, "caring for people" and "cleaning things" as well as between employment by a public institution (where a large number of migrant men are also employed) or by private households. Inviting further discussion on these issues, Farris's book is a highly innovative and important contribution to the politics and economics of the representation of religiously labeled actors, that is, Muslim men and women.

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