

Historicizing Fear: Ignorance, Vilification, and Othering. Travis D. Boyce and Winsome M. Chunnu, eds. Louisville: University Press of Colorado, 2019. ISBN: 9781646420018

For more than half a century, historians have employed Othering as a lens through which to understand processes of white supremacy, racism, colonialism, and other forms of systemic oppression. Originally emerging as a concept in the field of philosophy, “Othering” developed as a framework for understanding how groups in positions of power become positioned as the default or norm, while oppressed groups become defined as the inferior or even non-human Other. Postcolonial and subaltern studies scholars like Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak have since employed Othering as a lens through which to analyze colonial relationships and systems (7). Othering also proved influential in other fields; in particular, Simone de Beauvoir’s analysis of “woman as Other” in *The Second Sex* left its mark on generations of feminist scholarship. Now, with this collection of essays, editors Travis D. Boyce and Winsome M. Chunnu offer new perspectives on Othering in the context of the Trump Era.

From its opening pages, *Historicizing Fear* positions itself as a timely response to Trumpism and social upheaval spawned by the 2016 election. While addressing a broad variety of time periods and scholarly themes, the contributors are consistent in their approach to Othering as a political tool and key element of larger processes of marginalization. The collection’s essays address a wide variety of crucial spaces in which Otherness is produced and weaponized, including popular culture, media, state violence, and public health.

This analysis of Othering is organized into three sections. The articles in the first section confront the question of how benign difference is pathologized and transformed into the Other (9). In this section’s opening chapter, Quaylan Allen and Henry Santos Metcalf employ the stories of George Stinney Jr. and Trayvon Martin to discuss the ways in which fear has served as an integral part of the construction of Black masculinity as a threat (20). The next essay moves

from the modern United States to eighth-century China, where Adam C. Fong describes a process of regional Othering of Southern China by Northern Tang Dynasty officials (36). The first section concludes with Melanie Armstrong's analysis of the smallpox eradication campaign as "a public site to negotiate citizenship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (54).

Moving on from the question of how Otherness is initially produced, the second section considers the ways in which it is reinforced and propagated (9). This section begins with Kirsten Dyck's analysis of how white power music bolsters systemic racism by perpetuating narratives of "white genocide" (74). Guy Lancaster's chapter on Arkansas sundown towns adopts a similar focus on specific short-term actions such as the posting of anti-Black notices, arguing that these relatively small acts worked to reinforce larger systems of white supremacy (89). In one of the book's most compelling articles, Julie M. Powell's chapter on anti-immigrant Othering in the First Red Scare clearly illustrates the relationship between media representation and state repression through a focus on sources like political cartoons (112). Continuing this exploration of popular culture's role in racialized Othering, Travis D. Boyce and Winsome M. Chunnu conclude this section by employing *Birth of a Nation* and its centennial as a lens through which to explore images of the "Black beast" in American culture (127).

Finally, the essays in the third section of this collection address how Otherness is weaponized for political gain. This section opens with Lukasz Kamienski's analysis on the "myth of the addicted army"; as argued in this piece, narratives of drug-addicted Vietnam veterans were employed as justification for the domestic War on Drugs (157). Shifting to the eighteenth century, Jelle Versieren and Brecht De Smet conduct a comparative analysis of the role played by fear in the transition to capitalism in Britain and the Low Countries (176). The

book closes with Jeffrey A. Johnson's chapter on the use of anti-Semitism as a method of discrediting the labor movement and the American Left in the early twentieth century (195).

While the essays in this volume provide an excellent window into Otherness as a tool of white supremacy and empire, there is a curious dearth of attention to gender and sexuality. Simone de Beauvoir's influential analysis of woman as Other receives no mention in the introductory literature review, and there are no essays focusing specifically on the Othering of women or LGBTQIA+ communities. While it is not inherently problematic to adopt the specific areas of interest chosen for this volume, the absence of attention to women and gender raises questions about the book's explicit identification as a response to Trumpism; given the prominence of #MeToo and backlash against it, as well as the worrying rise in anti-trans* policy since 2016, these would appear to be crucial considerations in a discussion of Trumpist ideology. It would be unrealistic to expect any edited collection to delve into every single facet of Othering that could be considered a feature of the Trump Era, but some more detailed discussion of omissions and the parameters of the project in the introduction would have provided greater clarity on the issue.

Despite these questions, the collection stands as a significant contribution to the theorization of Otherness as a political weapon. The collection's greatest strength lies in its illustration of Othering as a process that occurs in multiple spaces rather than as a phenomenon emanating from a single consistent source. As a whole, this volume provides a view of Othering as a complex, historically, and culturally specific process. Finally, this collection admirably blurs the lines between scholarship and activism by situating the abstract question of Otherness in the context of all-too-timely oppression in our current political moment.

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