

BOOK REVIEW

Feminist Jurisography Law, History, Writing

by Ann GENOVESE. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2023. ix +142 pp. Hardcover: £120.00/AUD\$252.00; Softcover: £34.99/AUD\$73.99; eBook: £31.49/AUD\$66.99. doi: 10.4324/9780429461132

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Ann Genovese, a professor at Melbourne Law School, in writing this book, shares a part of her personal narrative. Uniquely crafting and drawing from her own experiences and those of fellow intellectuals through six essays from the latter part of the twentieth century, the work delves into the intricate interplay between individuals and their environments, as well as the intersectionality between the law and humanities. It scrutinizes the manner in which these dynamics underwent a transformative trajectory, evolving from the periphery to assume a prominent position within the vanguard of contemporary scholarly discourse. The author discusses her perspective on self-formation and preservation and highlights how an introspective approach places such a perspective into a more informed framework.

The author asks a seemingly simple yet profound question, “How should I conduct a life?”, with the answer to be gleaned from different realms and perspectives, and she refers to philosopher Pierre Hadot who said, “that it is the reality of one’s own experience that contours how the past is addressed” (p. 3).

The book provides an intriguing account of the distinctive practices of office-holding, elucidating both exclusivity and not so subordinate experiences for the ‘she’ across continents. A cursory reading of the text outlines the concept of ‘exclusivity’ as the inclination of conventional legal frameworks to elevate and focalize the narratives of the empowered and privileged, relegating the experiences of women to the periphery. Conversely, it posits a rhetorical inquiry, questioning whether certain encounters are inherently diminished or invalidated merely because they diverge from the prevailing discourse.

Emphasizing the ‘*Second Sex*’ by Simone de Beauvoir (p. 29), the author exposes the underlying irony – that, essentially, women’s growth, by gaining knowledge or by other forms, is expected and accepted to be for the benefit of men, with this incongruity continuing to be perpetuated by cultural norms and institutions.

In addressing feminist philosophy and the shared experiences of jurists and philosophers, the book sheds light on the essentiality of examining women’s plight in marriage and highlights the increasing divorce rate after the Second World War. Further, the process of divorce engenders mental anguish for the directly associated couple, but the lack of general awareness surrounding the divorce’s consequences also harms them. Consequently, divorce remains prejudicial to one of the parties, women. The author here again alludes to Beauvoir: “The successes and failures of her conjugal life have

much more importance for her than for the man ...” (p. 31). The author additionally cites the seminal work *Social Dimensions of Law and Justice* by the distinguished legal theorist Julius Stone, where he emphasizes that every generation needs to constantly renew, review, and revise what they have learnt according to their own situation. (p. 84). This proposition signifies a departure from the perpetuation of gender trauma through generations and advocates for a healthy, progressive approach to addressing a solution. However, she also acknowledges how feminists, while sometimes inhabiting disciplinary fields, have excluded women and, further, failed to recognize them institutionally.

The author makes a comparative study of the experiences of women from different continents and lineages to juxtapose Australian women’s experiences and encapsulate the vastness of the term, ‘Feminist Jurisography’. The book methodically approaches institutions and countries, along with historical transitions of culture and ethos, within a geographical and gendered context and concludes that no singular experience or timeline is sufficient to exhaustively explore this complex subject matter.

Competing interests. The author declares none.