

Debating Patriarchy

Julia Adams, Benita Roth and Pavla Miller

This piece is an updated set of panel contributions on Pavla Miller's book *Patriarchy* (Routledge, 2017) at the Social Science History conference in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2018.

Miller's brief book is part of the Routledge Key Ideas series, which covers the main concepts, issues, debates and controversies in sociology and the social sciences. The blurb summarises the book as follows:

Patriarchy, particularly as embedded in the Old and New Testaments and Roman legal precepts, has been a powerful organising concept with which social order has been understood, maintained, enforced, contested, adjudicated and dreamt about for over two millennia of Western history. This brief book surveys three influential episodes in this history: seventeenth-century debates about absolutism and democracy, nineteenth-century reconstructions of human prehistory, and the broad mobilisations linked to twentieth-century women's movements. It then looks at the way feminist scholars have reconsidered and revised some earlier explanations built around patriarchy. The book concludes with an overview of current uses of the concept of patriarchy from fundamentalist Christian activism, over foreign policy analyses of oppressive regimes, to scholarly debates about forms of effective governance. By treating patriarchy as a powerful tool to think with, rather than a factual description of social relations, the text makes a useful contribution to current social and political thought.¹

The panellists included Julia Adams and Benita Roth.

1 Pavla Miller, *Patriarchy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017).

Julia Adams: Patriarchy Resartus

Patriarchy is back. The concept, that is. Readers may recall Steve Bannon's over-heated words, delivered after he had watched Oprah Winfrey's speech about Harvey Weinstein and his ilk at the Golden Globes:

It's primal. It's elemental. The long black dresses and all that—this is the Puritans. It's anti-patriarchy. If you rolled out a guillotine, they'd chop off every set of balls in the room ... Women are gonna take charge of society. And they couldn't juxtapose a better villain than Trump. He is the patriarch. The anti-patriarchy movement is going to undo 10,000 years of recorded history.²

So Pavla Miller's slender, meaty book, in Routledge's Key Ideas series, is timely. All too timely, perhaps.

Patriarchy adopts a couple of major tacks to narrow this huge topic. First, it focuses on 'the West', an increasingly ambiguous but broadly understood term. Second, it pursues some salient highlights of how people have used the concept of patriarchy, rather than trying to explore in any detailed way the relationship between theory and empirics. For Pavla Miller, patriarchy is 'a powerful set of conceptual tools with which social order has been understood, maintained, enforced, adjudicated, and dreamt about for over two millennia of Western history'. That is a reasonable focus, and the textuality of the author's choices seem completely defensible. One needs to draw boundaries in the genre of the theoretical essay (150 pages or less). This genre, seemingly so limiting, is also thereby freeing: since it is impossible to 'do justice' to any topic in such a constricted length, the writer has a lot of say-so, with aspects that they themselves care about coming to the fore. Think John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, for example, another great feminist theoretical essay.³ The broad-brush approach necessarily invites quibbles, of course, so my comments will mention areas of critique as well as things that I love about the book.

But first I want to note that Pavla Miller has been working with the concept of patriarchy for a long time. Many will necessarily read this book in light of Miller's earlier, excellent *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500–*

2 Charlotte Higgins, 'The Age of Patriarchy: How an Unfashionable Idea Became a Rallying Cry for Feminism Today', *Guardian*, 22 June 2018, www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jun/22/the-age-of-patriarchy-how-an-unfashionable-idea-became-a-rallying-cry-for-feminism-today.

3 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1990 [1972]).

1900.⁴ The first part of that text explored what is the historical mid-section of the present book: the moment of early modern patriarchalism and the shift to fraternalism, via the wave of great European revolutions that kicked off in the eighteenth century. Throughout Miller argued that the concept of patriarchy had its problems, but still did a decent job of capturing the range of early modern tutelary and governance relations, those linking not just fathers and children, and rulers and subjects, but also husbands and wives, masters and servants, and even, initially, some capitalists and workers. Miller was most influenced by Carole Pateman, herself building on Sir Robert Filmer, the social contract tradition, and Sigmund Freud. Thus the big political story is the transition from absolutist father-rule to fraternal revolutions that excluded women from the nascent public sphere. Miller's take was more attuned to political economy than Pateman's—for example, that earlier book also surveys 'challenges to patriarchy that derived from economic changes such as proto-industrialisation and groups such as the journeymen's guilds and Masons that were masculinist, but not patriarchal'. She also noted that the concept was deployed within and across these varied early modern relationships, by the actors themselves, so presented a picture of contradiction and struggle rather than tidy stage-sequential development. But the basic political-conceptual story is the overthrow of father-rule by the lateral alliance of brothers.

Perhaps the existence of this earlier book is why the advent of modernity in the West gets such short shrift in *Patriarchy* (just five pages), basically boiled down to Jean Bodin, Filmer, Rousseau and Pateman, though Miller returns to the legacy of Max Weber's concept of patriarchal patrimonialism at the end of the book, including my and Mounira Charrad's work, and her own terrific essay on Australia's patriarchal patrimonial 'squattocracy' in one of our coedited volumes.⁵ Why linger on this centuries-long 'moment' in a conceptual-theoretical story of millennia of Western patriarchy? It was a meaningful and deeply influential transition—including in the history of the concept and associated practices itself—and it is one with which we are still grappling in the historical present.

4 Pavla Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500–1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

5 Pavla Miller, 'Antipodean Patrimonialism? Squattocracy, Democracy and Land Rights in Australia', in *Political Power and Social Theory: Patrimonial Capitalism and Empire*, Vol 28, eds. J Adams and M M Charrad (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2015), 137–63, doi.org/10.1108/s0198-871920150000028006.

In this general ‘patriarchal/familial’ conceptual approach, as Isaac Reed and I have noted, patriarchy and its fraternalist conceptual cousin is a crucial category of analysis and practice.⁶ Modernity emerges, in part, as the result of fathers attempting to ensure the legacy of family lineages. They act on behalf of their future sons, their vision of their ancestors, and the powerful ideology of father-rule itself. They do so through strategic marriages and alliances, lineal property holding, and inventing collective capacities to possess and control state offices and privileges. As an unanticipated consequence, they help usher in modernity and in particular modern statehood. As father-rulers, uniting to preserve their respective lineages, these patriarchs create what turn out to be not only bureaucratic rule-regulated forms and lateral practices of political collaboration, but also norms of fraternity. This explains a great deal about the character of state building and patterns of state dissolution, and specific gendered forms of anti-monarchical violence in the great revolutions, including the French Revolution. Furthermore, although this mechanism does not by itself explain the nature of the public sphere or the variety of institutions that characterise democratic societies, it illuminates why so many ostensibly individualist or neutral public institutions in fact embody masculinist norms and legacies.

Max Weber’s concept of ‘patriarchal patrimonialism’ is one fount of this perspective. Feminist theories of cultural patriarchy (e.g. Joan Landes on the French Revolution) are another.⁷ As I have just articulated it in shorthand here, it applies mostly to elites. But Joan Landes’ theory of cultural patriarchy in the French Revolution is fundamentally about its basis as a *cross-class* political alliance. And the patriarchal *modus operandi* stands no chance of reproduction without enabling a great chain of social being in which men—those who are deemed men rather than something more disqualified—of the lowest orders have some symbolic and practical possibility of participating. This is precisely where the history of even the concept of patriarchy again intersects forcefully with race, ethnicity and class. But when and how does the patriarchal form become detached from actual fathers and sons and become a working metaphor for governance in situations that are not ideal-typically patriarchal? How do contemporary

6 Isaac Reed and Julia Adams, ‘Culture in the Transitions to Modernity: Seven Pillars of a New Research Agenda’, *Theory and Society*, 40 (2011): 247–72, doi.org/10.1007/s11186-011-9140-x.

7 Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2 vols, trans. Guenther Rot (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968 [1922]); Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

patriarchal patrimonial states, in which these relations are encoded in law—and patriarchal politico-legal projects, such as Donald Trump’s—interact with representatives of modern postpatriarchal formations? And to return and take off from Pateman, how do we separate the wheat from the chaff, detaching the ‘false abstract universalism’ of the rational-legal, the conflation of the paternal with the human and sexual with contractual control, without losing the liberal individual, and the idea of self-determination? In these fundamental ways, that eighteenth-century moment is still with us.

An aside: this is not to suggest that Western patriarchy stopped dead in 1800. In fact, just as Pavla Miller urges us, it is important to consider whether there are essential aspects of modernity—or should I say modernities plural—that are essentially patriarchal. Is there such a thing as a Fordist patriarchy, for example? Contrary to the Marxist tradition, which named and developed the concept, patriarchy could be construed as a core ingredient of the Fordist political economy that underwrote the American Century.⁸ In Henry Ford’s vision of the automobile factory, the workers who worked on the assembly line for what was then a generous \$5 a day wage would then be able to purchase its products. As the Fordist production-consumption cycle was generalised and came to characterise mid-century American manufacturing, it grounded a cross-racial working-class ideal of the father-worker identity; the fraternalism of male associationalism in trade unions and the like, and a gendered spatial incarnation of the public/private split. At its most dramatic, this ideal was incompletely available to all, but remained a resonant cultural ideal, whose demise haunts present-day American politics.

In pre- or early modern Western societies, family lineage was co-extensive with authority and the imagined future of society. How do those living in modern societies explicitly and publicly imagine the future? They certainly do not do so solely through the scrim of sons-and-sons’ sons. In modernity, in other words, it has seemed that the power of patriarchy cannot constitute an alluring or comforting imagined future. Or ... have we only mistaken this? For another indication that the concept is coming back to the fore is that the *absence* of father-rule is being lamented, whether by those in power or at least some of those who feel themselves

8 Antonio Gramsci, ‘Americanism and Fordism’, in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, eds. Quentine Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971). See also Bob Jessop, ‘Fordism’, *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Sage Publications).

disempowered and abandoned. Recently, for example, *The New York Times* ran a striking article on ‘angry East German men fuelling the Far Right’, the men who were left behind, demographically and otherwise—by the women who fled to West Germany after the Wall came down, and from rural tracts to urban centres—and who excoriate Angela Merkel as a cause.⁹ Like the North American INCeLs, there is even an element that calls for the forcible redistribution of women—*Elementary Structures of Kinship* revisited but in fascist form.¹⁰ What do we make of this, analytically? Where do we stand, as democratic intellectuals?

In closing, to begin with, let me underline three important things that I really like about this book. First, over the course of 30 pages (pp. 53–83), ‘Patriarchy and the Making of Sisterhood’, it restores complexity to 1960s–1970s-era feminist theoretical thought, too often caricatured these days. This is the period when the focus shifted from the huge civilisational narratives particularly beloved of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers to people (women, mostly) trying to make sense of the relationship between structures and practices of male domination and capitalism. Friedrich Engels wrote about both—‘the world historical defeat of the female sex’—as well as the relationship between production and reproduction, and he was a major inspiration, as Miller notes.¹¹ So one set of 1970s-era debates revolved around whether the fundamental dynamics of the capitalist mode of production reside in the contradiction between the forces and relations of production, or relations between production and the market, or whether the linked but relatively autonomous organisation of production and reproduction are the driving forces of development and crisis. Another set of related debates tried to determine the role of women’s household labour in capitalist development and political struggle. These debates had major practical political outcomes—and they also shaped academic debates across the disciplines.

9 Katrin Bennhold, ‘One Legacy of Merkel? Angry East German Men Fueling the Far Right’, *The New York Times*, 5 November 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/11/05/world/europe/merkel-east-germany-nationalists-populism.html.

10 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (New York: Beacon Press, 1969 [1949]).

11 Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2010 [1884]).

We are not so far past this analytical moment as we sometimes think, because, again, we're not past it historically. For example: what kind of 'gender order' *do* we inhabit in contemporary capitalism, in the United States, comparatively, and global-transnationally? What are its features, fissures, dynamics, futures? How should we orient ourselves to it, as academics or otherwise? Is patriarchy at all helpful in tackling these questions? A recent paper by Eric Mace in *Social Politics* argues that 'composite gender arrangements' are a better conceptual lens.¹² Have even the political institutional spaces that so uneasily interlock reached a level of complexity that they are no longer articulated by any version of father-rule, or even male dominance? What does Pavla Miller herself think, I wonder? *Patriarchy* is scrupulously neutral on this important point.

Second, I greatly appreciate *Patriarchy's* attention to social psychology—and to the social and social-psychological as two sides of one analytical coin, as it were. True, I would have liked that to be marked with respect to the concept throughout the entire historical arc under examination. Instead, this important feature emerges when textually thematised, with the theorists of patriarchal subjectivities—that is, Freud, Jacques Lacan, Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, to name a few. Nonetheless, it is extremely important to have it there, and it constitutes an important ground with which people will engage with the book and with the question of whether patriarchy is of the vintage of the truly *longue durée*, and if so, from whence that longevity emanates. I would in addition note that if scholars are going to think this expansively, collectively, they will also need to rigorously examine the relationship between the social-historical domain and co-evolving empirical areas, concepts and theories that have generally been deemed beyond its boundaries, such as the 'natural' and 'biological'.

Third, I very much like the way that the book situates itself, deconstructively at the end, in empire and the contemporary global and transnational turn, thereby tracing not simply its own but many of our collective theoretical limitations. But what are the implications for the book's own starting point, which flags the Bible and the Roman Empire? For the development of the

12 Eric Mace, 'From Patriarchy to Composite Gender Arrangements? Theorizing the Historicity of Social Relations of Gender', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 25, no. 3 (2018): 317–36, doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxy018. See also Ann Shola Orloff and Renee Monson, 'Citizens, Workers or Fathers? Men in the History of US Social Policy', in *Making Men into Fathers: Men, Masculinities and the Social Politics of Fatherhood*, ed. Barbara Hobson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 61–91, doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511489440.004.

Western patriarchal concept itself, which first appeared in an imperial setting? The book's own geographic and cultural ambit, the West, is not simply one that is mainly European core and its contemporary imperial extensions, but those that are primarily coded as 'Western' only because the European part of that legacy remains culturally dominant. And it does so because there, in these now nationally contained spaces, the genocidal effects and even deliberate projects of European settler colonialism were most thoroughgoingly effective. This is certainly true among the English-speaking colonies: the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are all exemplars. I am not contending that it is illegitimate to focus on these spaces. But it would be well for us to remember that the persistence of the patriarchal conceptual heritage of Roman Law, for example, is if anything even more fraught than represented here.

And yet, at its best, what is known as Western feminism continues to raise the banner for some of the cherished legacies of these struggles. And to fight not simply on behalf of women, but on behalf of all—men very much included—for the right to be an individual, to be considered a full social and legal person. The right to be 'seen', socially recognised and respected. To be paid equally. To be able to have a family, or not. To be remembered. To be free.

Benita Roth: Patriarchy and Intersectionality: The Price of Popularity and the Project of Recovering Meaning

To prepare for the 2018 'author meets critics' panel of Pavla Miller's book *Patriarchy*, I asked an academic friend if she used the concept in her work or teaching. She answered 'yes', but also commented 'I've never had to define it super carefully'. I also thought about how I, a feminist intersectional scholar, didn't use the concept in my work. In stark contrast, a Turkish graduate student of mine could not have written her dissertation on agrarian reform and Turkish women's land occupations during the Green Revolution without writing often of the 'patriarchal', in terms of how households were formed, in analysing power relations in villages, towns, and in describing Turkish government programs.

Reading Miller's book clarified for me why my Turkish student needed to wrestle with patriarchy as an analytical concept and why I hadn't. We do know that patriarchy is a key idea for some (many?) feminist scholars; one of the issues Miller tackles in this book is how and when the idea of analysing gender through a lens of patriarchy was attractive to feminist (and other) scholars. Miller is interested in 'how the term patriarchy has been used and what conceptual work it was expected to perform ... the book treats patriarchy as a powerful tool to think with, rather than a factual description of social orders'.¹³ She argues that the meaning of patriarchy has not been fixed over the years. Miller covers three 'episodes' in the history of conceptualisations of patriarchy (among Anglophones): seventeenth-century debates about absolutism and democracy, nineteenth-century reconstructions of human prehistory, and the broad mobilisations linked to twentieth-century women's movement. Miller does not have as her end goal a definition of patriarchy as such; rather, she is interested in continuities and discontinuities in how scholars and activists assessed the state of male rule over women. Miller hints that for some (many?) feminists, 'patriarchy' as a concept has been emptied of meaning, citing as an example historian Leila Rupp's objections to the way that the use of the term obscures that which needs to be explained.¹⁴ Miller does see the concept of patriarchy as having content, and at the same time agrees with Cynthia Enloe: '[p]atriarchy ... is not a sledge hammer being swung around a raving feminist head. It is a tool; it sheds light at the same time as it reveals patterns of causality ... "it reminds us we are investigating power"'.¹⁵

As scholars we have seen this process of the popularisation of concepts to the point of meaninglessness before, and continue to see it. A similar process of popularisation into meaninglessness is happening to 'intersectionality', as it has travelled beyond the US academy into other scholarly spaces and the non-academic press. I want both concepts—patriarchy and intersectionality—to co-exist, but not as empty of meaning, and so I had two main reactions in reading Miller's book as a feminist intersectional scholar. First, I wanted more discussion about the 'patriarchal bargain' and how that concept has been used as a tool to assess the everyday decisions

13 Miller, *Patriarchy*, 1.

14 *Ibid.*, 92.

15 *Ibid.*, 103.

made by women within structures of inequality.¹⁶ Second, I wanted some discussion by Miller about the way in which ‘intersectionality’ has come to be seen as an alternate framework for feminist investigations of power.

To the first point, Turkish scholar Deniz Kandiyoti put forward the concept of ‘the patriarchal bargain’ in her 1988 article ‘Bargaining with Patriarchy’. To simplify, Kandiyoti argued that women uphold patriarchal norms in order to gain some power/resources in households. I’ve seen the concept used overtly and implicitly in studies as diverse as Arlie Hochschild’s landmark *The Second Shift*;¹⁷ Susan Mannon’s 2017 book *City of Flowers: An Ethnography of Social and Economic Change in Costa Rica’s Central Valley*;¹⁸ Lisa Wade’s article on the sociology blog site ‘The Society Pages’, where she analysed Serena Williams’ decision to play up her sexuality so as to avail herself of ‘the heightened degree of fame and greater earning power we give to women who play by these rules’; and, of course, my student’s dissertation.¹⁹ Maybe the use of ‘patriarchal bargain’ by disparate feminist scholars means that the concept is also empty of rigour, but it seems useful for many because we must *spell out* the terms of the bargain, highlight how accommodation and contestation with male dominance is continually made by women, and so we explore the bargain’s specifics. This seems consonant with Miller’s view of patriarchy being a disputed and changing analytic tool.

On the second point of addressing intersectionality, Miller does note that intersectionality ‘became an influential way of simultaneously attending to issues of race, gender, and class’. She defines intersectionality by way of other authors, stating that the concept ‘is an attempt to elevate and make space for the voices and issues of those who are marginalised and a framework for recognising how class, race, age, ability, sexuality, gender, and other issues combine to affect women’s experience of discrimination’.²⁰ But Miller fails to recognise that intersectionality represents an *alternative* framework for feminist analysis, one that in US

16 Deniz Kandiyoti, ‘Bargaining with Patriarchy’, *Gender & Society*, 2, no. 3 (1988): 274–90.

17 Arlie Russell Hochschild with Anne Machung, *The Second Shift* (New York: Avon Books, 1990).

18 Susan Mannon, *City of Flowers: An Ethnography of Social and Economic Change in Costa Rica’s Central Valley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

19 Lisa Wade, ‘Serena Williams’ Patriarchal Bargain’, *The Society Pages*, 22 May 2011, thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/05/22/women-damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-dont/.

20 Miller, *Patriarchy*, 89.

feminist realms has largely replaced patriarchy as a conceptual means of understanding domination. Intersectionality seems to make patriarchy too one dimensional, too focused only on gender.

And yet intersectionality seems to be losing some analytical utility, even as it becomes more popular, perhaps due to what sociologist Kathy Davis has called its ‘ambiguity and open-endedness’.²¹ Perhaps it is the case that neither concept—patriarchy or intersectionality—can be deployed without care. Vrushali Patil argues that the framework of patriarchy has been displaced by intersectionality, and sees the latter as an improvement, but she also argues that intersectionality retains some of the shortcomings of patriarchal analysis, such as: ‘the uncritical acceptance of the nation as a necessarily meaningful unit of analysis for feminists’, and the limits of intersectional ‘attention to cross-border dynamics’.²² Patil wants more attention to the transnational and the transpatial in feminist intersectional analysis, citing the moment of UN General Assembly debates over decolonisation being shaped by what Patil calls ‘contending patriarchal metaphors’.²³ Patil then calls for ‘an approach the production of various patriarchies as intersectionalities emergent from multiple histories of local-global processes, or as emergent from layers of multiple locals and globals that exist relative to and in relation to each other’.²⁴ Patil fills the content of intersectionality with the content she thinks they should have, while employing a similar strategy to Miller’s of analysing episodes of public consequential debates about meaning.

I would argue that recapturing meaning for both concepts—patriarchy and intersectionality—relies on thinking of either (both?) concepts as lens, and so I appreciate Miller’s historical exploration of patriarchy. Since we are now in the age of ‘intersectionality studies’, let me just note that the idea of intersectionality as methodological lens fits with what the originator of the term Kimberlé Crenshaw, along with co-authors Sumi Cho and Leslie McCall, see as its future. They write that intersectionality is:

21 Kathy Davis, ‘Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful’, *Feminist Theory*, 9, no. 1 (2008): 67, doi.org/10.1177/1464700108086364.

22 Vrushali Patil, ‘From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We’ve Really Come’, *Signs*, 38, no. 4 (2013): 851, doi.org/10.1086/669560.

23 Patil, ‘From Patriarchy to Intersectionality’, 849.

24 *Ibid.*, 863.

best framed as an analytic sensibility ... What makes an analysis intersectional—whatever terms it deploys, whatever its iteration, whatever its field or discipline—is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. This framing—conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power—emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is.²⁵

To use either patriarchy or intersectionality in a meaningful way means deploying it as method; the scholar makes decisions about which lens to use; about the nature of socially salient categories, and their interpenetration; about the histories of power configurations; and about the interplay between ideologies of power and their incarnations as practices. I don't want to supplant Miller's project of understanding the debates around patriarchy with one about understanding the debates around intersectionality. Both projects are necessary, and since Miller takes us on the road toward recapturing the utility of patriarchy, I welcome her effort.

Pavla Miller: Where Next?

In 2005, the US sociologist Julia Adams published an important book dealing with the history of patrimonial politics in the Netherlands. Her argument was that elite family patterns and dynamics first fuelled that country's spectacular rise in the emergent world economy of the eighteenth century, and its decline a 100 years later. In effect, Adams argued, the power of elite patrician families stymied the transformation of political power from one sort of patriarchy to another, something that became necessary in order to compete with other emerging nation-states on the world stage.²⁶

In commenting on her book several years ago, I admired her achievement, but asked for more social history, and in particular for more material on changing relations between economies, family dynamics, and demographic patterns. My own book, *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500–1900*, sketched out some of these patterns and relations, but

25 Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Leslie McCall, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, applications and praxis", *Signs*, 38, no. 4 (2013): 795.

26 Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

was of necessity limited by my knowledge of world history and social theory.²⁷ The *Patriarchy* book was in part motivated by an attempt to better understand the key concept I used in my previous work. As diligent essay writers would do, I initially tried to find a satisfactory definition of patriarchy. A fruitless search, spanning several years, finally led to a simple insight: what I was trying to achieve could not be done. There were simply too many people—feminist, non-feminist and anti-feminist—using the term in often powerful and insightful but finally incompatible ways. Theorists who valiantly tried to reconcile this messy literature proved unconvincing—both to me and to a wider scholarly audience. Armed with this realisation, I sidestepped debates about whether patriarchy remained a useful feminist concept and what precisely it meant, and researched how it had been used in different important episodes of Western history.

The project has provided me with an apparently obvious answer to Roth's suggestion that to use either patriarchy or intersectionality in a meaningful way means deploying the concept as a method.²⁸ I disagreed. As far as I could tell from my reading, the causality tended to go the other way around. Feminists with extensive training in one of the social sciences (myself included) tended to be guided by the conventions of their discipline and their scholarly preferences and affiliations. Even activists using what could be called vernacular sociology use the concept of patriarchy in many different ways, informed by local traditions of dissent and theorising. Intersectionality did suggest a more coherent method, but even here what writers and activists actually did was dependent a great deal on their background, education and social movement experience. In all, as Roth herself put it in an earlier paper: 'What we have come to understand is that the second wave was comprised of feminisms, plural: organisationally distinct feminist movements that developed and grew along different paths'.²⁹

Careful reflection, and re-reading of some of Roth's work, produced a more nuanced answer. A powerful and widely shared narrative does indeed associate the term patriarchy with a particular approach to activism and research. As a shorthand summary, patriarchy denotes men's

27 Miller, *Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500-1900*.

28 Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511815201.

29 Benita Roth, 'Second Wave Black Feminism in the African Diaspora: News from New Scholarship', *Agenda*, 17, no. 58 (2003): 46.

enduring and pervasive oppression of women. Under patriarchy, men are the main perpetrators of violence and oppression, and women the victims. Less developed countries and ethnic groups tend to have a stronger patriarchy, and so warrant patronising interventions by their more civilised, enlightened and liberated peers. Women's shared experience of subordination gives rise to a universal sisterhood, and logically points to a linked series of questions, approaches and categories. Together, these amount to a feminist research method.

My *Patriarchy* book—and indeed much of Roth's work on feminist movements—attempted to dismantle this schematic (and often racist) account, together with the narrow methodological choices it implied. And yet, in answer to Adams' question, the enduring strength of the shorthand summary, not just in popular discourse and activist politics but among scholarly colleagues and friends, for a long time led me to tone down or cease using the concept of patriarchy in my own work. After all, who was I to redefine the implications and uses of a powerful and widely used term?

Would intersectionality, as Roth suggests, provide a better feminist conceptual tool? Certainly, attention to diverse and interlinked forms of oppressive and unequal relations is a good thing. As a shorthand activist tool, intersectionality is far superior to one-dimensional focus on the oppression of women as an undifferentiated group by 'men' or 'patriarchy'. As one online definition puts it: If feminism is advocating for women's rights and equality between the sexes, intersectional feminism is the understanding of how women's overlapping identities—including race, class, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation—impact the way they experience oppression and discrimination. Roth herself has emphasised that Black feminists in the US began organising at the same time that white ones did; they just did not join white groups. The failure by authors of earlier case studies to recognise early Black feminist organising has led to idea that white feminism was a template that Black feminists later used, or one from which they 'deviated'. By the same token, Roth notes, a deep understanding of the intersectionality of oppressions was part of Black feminist thinking from its inception. While I do not believe that intersectionality, of itself, provides a coherent method, it has made a powerful and lasting contribution to 'provincialising' Western social and political thought, and highlighting the strengths of 'southern theory'. Together with many other voices and theoretical contributions, intersectionality has helped shake the certainty of white privileged thought.

Bargaining with patriarchy, Roth suggests, is another useful tool in assessing the everyday decisions made by women within structures of inequality. I agree that the term represents another particularly useful and productive metaphor. Those subject to the mastery of others, it suggests, do not lack agency. Rather, of necessity, they deploy it in ways less likely to spark off violent retaliation. Here again, a user-friendly and widely employed conceptual tool has contributed to a broad effort, both in social sciences and diverse forms of activism, to take respectful account of the agency of those often regarded as passive victims. More broadly, individual and collective bargaining with patriarchy, as Adams and I both argued, has at times led to fundamental transformations of existing forms of (patriarchal) social governance.

In her comments on *Patriarchy*, Adams returns to this broad area of research. She takes it as read that patriarchy is historically variable, involves forms of both imperial and class-based domination, concerns both gender and generational relations, and is fuelled by the agency of both rulers and ruled. Given her interest in early modern state formation and the rise of modernity, she wants more material on how precisely was legal rational authority infused with what could be called the transgenerational rule of fathers, and beyond that how patrimonialism and fraternalism infused the making of societies we now recognise as modern. I agree that these are important and exciting questions. I also endorse the complicated program of research on the gendered making of modernity in her *Theory and Society* article with Isaac Reed, even though I would supplement it with materialist dynamics—the changing balance between populations, technologies, forms and relations of production, and natural resources, the results of both purposive action and unintended consequences.³⁰ Such a wildly ambitious project can benefit from the impressive accumulation of research since our respective books were published. Among many other things, it can be informed by debates on gendered welfare state regimes, maternalisms and racial formations.

So, to answer Adams' question, yes, I believe that the concept of patriarchy remains a useful category of analysis, not least as a reminder of the many discursive, cultural and institutional traces previous uses of the term have left in everyday life. How, for example, do notions of mastery and social infancy derived from legal codifications of the rights of patriarchs

30 Reed and Adams, 'Culture in the Transitions to Modernity'.

affect women and men, the young and the elderly, those with disabilities, indigenous peoples and those from diverse cultural backgrounds—and in different regions and jurisdictions?

I want to conclude with two sobering thoughts. First, a more sophisticated theory does not necessarily lead to better and more effective social action. Conversely, those armed with complex experience and shorthand vernacular sociology can achieve profound results, even if they lack academic sophistication and get their historical facts seriously muddled. Second, large projects dealing with historical transformations of patriarchy, the overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage, or the activism of subaltern populations, need to be a collective rather than individual undertaking. As Rayna Rapp put it in 1977, 'It will easily be decades before the feminist critique can do for us what a Marx, a Weber, a Freud, a Lévi-Strauss have done for their areas of inquiry'.³¹ Yet the point of feminist critique was fundamentally different from the process 'by which individual men, stunningly well-educated as scholars, and totally confident of their mission as critical thinkers, redefine a tradition, and give it a new direction'.³² Rather than trying to replicate this highly individualist project:

What we are now attempting is something at once less grand and more consciously collective. For if we are children of the patriarchs of our respective intellectual traditions, we are also sisters in a women's movement which struggles to define new forms for social process in research and in action.³³

31 Raina Reiter Rapp, 'The Search for Origins: Unravelling the Threads of Gender Hierarchy', *Critique of Anthropology*, 3, no. 9–10 (1977): 16.

32 Rapp, 'The Search for Origins', 16.

33 Ibid.

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