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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. *The Anatomy of Prejudices.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996. 632 pp. $18.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-674-03191-3; $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-03190-6.

Reviewed by Brad Lucas (University of Nevada, Reno)
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To remedy the conceptual and methodological problems that have beset studies of prejudice, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl analyzes the historical progression of psychological and sociological prejudice scholarship in an exhaustive study of the interplay between the two fields of sociology and psychology. She articulates a typology of character traits, an approach that replaces the totalizing concept of the 1950s "authoritarian personality" which describes someone prejudiced against any and all "different" people. With three areas of inquiry centered on obsessive, hysterical, and narcissistic character traits, Young-Bruehl traces the complicated and often elusive nature of prejudice to argue for an acceptance and acknowledgment of the multiple and varied prejudices that affect all realms of culture.

The introduction provides a clear discussion of the three character types that Young-Bruehl returns to throughout the book. With this discussion as a point of departure, the first section of the book details the history of prejudice scholarship in twentieth century social sciences, following the growth of racism, sexism, and the "homophobias" up to our present-day cultural situation. The second, and largest, section of the book is a balanced and deliberate progression through Young-Bruehl's strictly theoretical explanation of "prejudices in the plural," where she examines the relationship between individual and social prejudices, describing the interplay of obsessional, hysterical, and narcissistic types. She draws the distinction between ethnocentrism and what she calls orecticism: the former being "in-group hatred of or claims to supremacy over out-groups," whereas the latter is "a worldview shaped by a desire, a desire that has produced an ideology or articulated itself into an ideology" (p. 185). The remainder of this section is largely the thorough analysis of prejudices based on her established claims about ideologies of desire. She unabashedly analyzes her own Freudian analysis, providing careful reflection on her method and its own development as a school of thought. The third section of the book supplies a discussion of means and methods of resistance to the powerful social forces of the prejudices, manifested in anti-semitism, racism, and the similar forces of sexism and the homophobias.

The Anatomy of Prejudices is the apparent result of laborious research and painstaking attention to detail. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl covers more than a century of critical thinking about prejudices, and she provides excellent contextualization and documentation. An established scholar, novelist, essayist, and biographer, Young-Bruehl guides her discussion to read as a lively and engaging lecture, with clear prose at an absorbable pace for a wealth of information. The book is lengthy, and at times repetitive, but the recurring themes provide a thorough education in the dilemmas of race, gender, and class and their inextricable influence on prejudices. With the flurry of scholarship in recent years covering these complex social forces, it is often difficult for readers to find a starting point, or a point of reference for inquiry into the nature of prejudices. *The Anatomy of Prejudices* serves not only as a excellent reference work about prejudices, but also as a critical apparatus for inquiring into human nature itself.

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