

The Attack of the Fifty-Foot Women, or How (White, Anglo-American) Feminism Went From Jouissance to Melancholy

By Victoria L. Smith, University of Cologne, Germany

Abstract:

Recognition of differences within feminism continues to produce charged and ambivalent relationships-particularly about the premises, foundations, and aims of feminism. These sorts of differences are sources of pain and pleasure-sites of ethical and erotic battle; yet, they are nevertheless profoundly productive." Prof. Smith's article engages itself with the current theoretical debates within Women's Studies from an American perspective.

1 In my first class of feminist theory in graduate school in 1985, Jane Marcus had us read (among many other things) Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One*. In it I read the following sentences:

But woman has sex organs more or less everywhere. She finds pleasure almost everywhere . . . the geography of [woman's] pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined – in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness. "She" is indefinitely other in herself. That is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious . . . not to mention her language, in which "she" sets off in all directions leaving "him" unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. (28-29)

I was amazed; I was delighted; here was a woman telling me I had pleasure spots all over my body (perhaps most importantly in my mind), that my pleasure and my language were complex (and connected), different from men's and certainly not heard correctly. All this on top of a witty and erudite demolition of Freud, Lacan and Western philosophy - we had read *Speculum of the Other Woman* the week before. No wonder I thought feminist theory was *cool*. Now, I admit that despite all the subsequent deconstruction of bodies and genders, charges of naive or willful essentialism, and dismissals of the white Euro-centric nature of French feminism that have passed I still find the desire (and critique) implied in those sentences - for pleasure, for bodies, for language, for difference - compelling.¹ That is so partly because of the yoked, but oppositional drives that produce feminism. As Teresa de Lauretis suggests, feminism is motivated, on one hand, by an erotic, narcissistic drive that wants difference, rebellion, daring, excess, and subversion and, on the other hand, an ethical

¹ As Hanssen puts it: "there doesn't need to exist a contradiction between, first acknowledging that the critique of French feminist theory's localism, classism, or luxurious literariness is justified from the standpoint of global diversified communities and second, celebrating it as an extraordinarily creative, rich phase in the history of feminist theory" (72).

drive that works toward community, accountability, and entrustment ("Upping" 266).² So in the end I find feminist theory sexy precisely because of my pleasure in Irigaray and her analysis of knowledge/body/language systems *and* the subsequent critiques of her work that ask me (and her) to be accountable for those pleasures and knowledges. I would maintain that these oppositional drives are what continues to animate feminism despite what some contemporary critics see as feminism's present crisis moment, a moment that, depending on the point of view, is either too full of the ethical drive or the erotic, narcissistic drive.³

2 In order to situate my reader in terms of feminism's current predicament I provide a short summary of recent appraisals of "what went/is wrong with feminism."⁴ I remind my reader, as she considers this list, that the road to hell, as my mother used to say, is paved with good intentions.

The Seven Steps to Hell: (order subject to change):

1. destruction of the unifying (for some folks) category of "woman"
2. institutionalization of women's studies (failing through success, I mean assimilation)
3. loss of political commitment/attention to the "real" of women's lives
4. impenetrable theoretical language (poststructuralism and its "purposeful" unintelligibility)
5. disappearance of joy/humor/eroticism connected with feminist scholarship (or who would want to be a feminist any more anyway?)
6. recognition of its historical constituency of white, middle-class, Western women (or we have met the enemy and she is us)
7. _____ (fill in favorite sin here - identity politics, post-modernism, French Feminism, Judith Butler, ungrateful and obstreperous daughters, controlling, old-fashioned mothers, gender studies, pro-sex radicals and /or anti-porn feminists, queer studies . . .)

3 According to some recent feminist accounts we have come to this gloomy moment from happier times. Feminism (particularly in its second-wave beginnings in the seventies)

² See for example Gubar's contention that many of the quarrels in feminist criticism result not from "healthy differences of opinion or vigorously competing methodologies but narcissistic posturing and myopic absorption in scholastic matters" ("Notations" 383).

³ The list of people who have marked feminism's crisis is a lengthy one; I name only a few: Modleski; Bordo; Elam and Wiegman; Hirsch and Keller; Looser and Kaplan; Benhabib, et al. See also the two *differences* special issues, *Women's Studies at the Edge* (Scott, ed.) and *More Gender Trouble* (Butler, ed.). Braidotti's interview/conversation with Butler is of special interest in *More Gender Trouble* insofar as it addresses different understandings of "sexual difference" theory and gender studies in both American and European contexts.

⁴ Although this list is a somewhat parodic account of the trouble with feminism, I want to stress that I nevertheless recognize the seriousness of the problems and the enormous amounts of intellectual and emotional energy that have gone into developing and refining these critiques.

was an intellectually exciting, erotically charged project where communities of feminists worked together to achieve concrete, recognizable goals in the name of women. For example, Biddy Martin longs for the days, "when 'love of women' and Women's Studies resonated with one another, [and] we seemed capable of eroticizing individual women's strengths, authority, even power, and of enjoying seduction without abandoning claims to justice." (355). And Jane Gallop says frankly, "I credit feminism with teaching me sexual pleasure. . . . For me feminism will always name the force which freed me to desire and to learn" (20-21). However, those times are (mostly) gone, these and other feminists go on to argue; instead they find the present state of feminism severely diminished - neither intellectually stimulating nor sexy nor even politically engaged. For Martin, the institutionalization of Women's Studies has produced a loss of "critical and intellectual vigor" (353), while for Wendy Brown, institutionalization was necessary but ultimately its own undoing, producing a loss of cachet, a loss of senior feminist scholars who no longer wish to be associated with Women's Studies, and a chasm between faculty and students in terms of knowledge and goals ("Impossibility").

4 Institutionalization, however, is only one of feminism's problems, for the institution itself is filled, according to various assessments, with careerists practicing intergenerational warfare.⁵ This notion of generations gives rise to troubling questions like Diane Elam's concerning feminism's trajectory in "Sisters are Doing It to Themselves": "Is feminism a *tradition* handed down by powerful ancestors, or is it a *progress* in which the latecomers, however dwarf-like, are always standing on the shoulders of those who came before, seeing farther, knowing more?" (56). One might note in this formulation the two drives at war in the internal dynamics of feminism - an ethics of respect and honor for the past versus a desire for new pleasure and knowledges. In addition to these dwarves and giants, other culprits within the institution include poststructuralist critics wielding theory-heavy (and jargon-ridden) clubs designed to smash the once unifying notion of "woman" to pieces, and feminists with "radicalized identity politics" who are obsessed with naming names and finding fault - particularly with white, heterosexual second-wave feminists.⁶ At least this is Susan Gubar's contention, and though a number of critics disagree with her conclusions - in particular Robyn Wiegman-critics of all stripes have been forced to come to terms with the impact of poststructuralist theory and of critiques of white, ethnocentrism on the feminist movement.⁷

⁵ See Looser and Kaplan's edited volume, *Generations*, for an extended meditation from feminists of all ages and professional standings, on generational conflict, the pressures of the institution, and a critical assessment of the paradigm of "generation" itself.

⁶ For a history of second wave feminism and essential essays, see Nicholson.

⁷ Perhaps one of the most enlightening discussions of the current state of feminism comes from the interchange between Gubar and Wiegman in *Critical Inquiry*. See also Wiegman's "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures."

5 Other critics maintain that in addition to feminism's diminished intellectual, critical, and institutional vigor - it seems to have lost its lust for life - it has also lost its sense of political and public commitment. In a particularly hostile attack, Martha Nussbaum writes that the most insidious thing to happen to (academic) feminism is its "virtually complete turning from the material side of life, toward a type of verbal and symbolic politics that makes only the flimsiest of connections with the real situation of real women" (38). Indeed she sees "despair" and a "void" at the heart of this feminism.⁸ These lamentations for what has been lost, the need to recover, in Rosi Braidotti's phrase "the merrymaking of a movement that aims to change life" (*Nomadic* 167), present feminism as a diseased body - riddled with its own "fierce self-scrutiny" (Greene 17)- verging on suicide.

6 I recount this perhaps familiar melancholy narrative - a narrative that gives rise to what Wiegman describes as "post-exuberant despair" ("Feminism" 109) - in order to make some observations, perhaps interrupting various kinds of narratives - be they elegiac, utopian, apocalyptic or what have you. I suggest that the utopic past might be better figured as an absence rather than as a loss.⁹ In seeing a unified feminist past as absent (perhaps it wasn't really there like that) rather than lost we can avoid misplaced nostalgia as well as blame for those who somehow ruined and contaminated paradise and thus made "us" lose. Instead of endless melancholy where we remain incapable of working through what has happened, we can recognize the difference of the past from the present and simultaneously remember and take leave of it, allowing for critical assessment and a reinvestment in the present state of feminism. In this way, we can also move away from a rhetorical construction of feminist history where one moment (or wave) supersedes a previous one and instead conceive of a more continuous use of time where each moment had and still has productive meanings and value. We might, to rephrase Faulkner, (re)think of the feminist past as not dead or lost or even absent, as, in fact, not even past. Finally, in this effort, we might resist narratives of *either* progress *or* tradition.

7 Secondly and intimately connected to the above, I would submit that feminism is

⁸ Nussbaum's notorious attack was aimed at Judith Butler, whom she charges with participating in and producing a kind of "moral passivity" and with "collaborat[ing] with evil." Nussbaum suggests this is the case because she claims (rather astonishingly) that Butler is "adamantly opposed to normative notions such as human dignity." Nussbaum's attack garnered a number of rebuttals from such well-known feminists as Gayatri Spivak, Joan Scott, Drucilla Cornell, Nancy Frazer, Linda Nicolson, and Seyla Benhabib. Of particular interest here is Benhabib, who engaged in a lengthy and complex debate with Butler in *Feminist Contentions* over precisely the same sort of issues that Nussbaum brings up - questions of accountability, intentionally, normative goals, and self-determination. Needless to say, that debate between Benhabib and Butler was a much more nuanced and carefully argued discussion of values and methods within feminism. See also Wiegman for a thoughtful response to Nussbaum, as well as a discussion of the "idiom of failure" in assessing Women's Studies ("Feminism").

⁹ See LaCapra for a comprehensive examination of the differences between absence and loss.

currently engaged in precisely this sort of working through, that it is in a state of productive melancholia. The very articulation of the current "wrongs" of feminism - in particular its skepticism of the value of poststructuralist methods (and effects) in overturning the conventional and restrictive categories of women, sex and gender - is paradoxically producing a richly lucid conversation filled with change, pleasure and danger. Perhaps Freud is correct when he observes that melancholics seem to have a "keener eye for the truth" than those who are not. Indeed if one recalls Freud's understanding of melancholia, we might see that we are witnessing the reshaping of feminism's "ego." I say this because melancholia, for Freud, was not simply a pathological condition where a person loved and lost an object (which could be "a loved person or . . . some abstraction . . . such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on") and was left with a psychic "open wound" ("Mourning and Melancholia" 243).¹⁰ Rather, he claimed that the mechanisms of melancholia are intimately connected to the construction of the ego and subjectivity, for in response to loss or psychic deprivation, the ego identifies with the lost object so as to preserve it in some way. Thus, the ego sets up the lost object inside the self as a kind of compensation; indeed the ego *builds* itself by way of the lost object. I would suggest, then, that this sort of melancholic "remembering" is generative.¹¹ So we might conceive of feminism's ego to be building itself slowly and carefully through specific lamentations of what has been "lost." That is, we might conceive of feminism to be both keeping and letting go of (working through) past triumphs that were simultaneously proleptic cracks in its formation.

8 To posit an ego for feminism may at first seem strange, even inappropriate - for isn't feminism too diverse, too fragmented? Indeed, "we" are hardly a collectivity. Yet, there does seem to be a name, an object of desire (not to say subject) over which and through which various groups struggle. In this sense, then, feminism seems to me to constitute a kind of entity, capable of being read through psychical structures. Indeed, the current crisis of feminism lends itself to this reading insofar as its crisis (or working through) reveals its love/hate (hate because the object is lost or is absent) relationship with the very "objects" (i.e., people, values, methods) that created it - that is, with itself. Ambivalence seems the key to understanding the state of feminism, both its power and its conundrums.¹² And this returns me

¹⁰ Throughout this discussion of Freud and melancholy, I use the traditional and standard term "loss" rather than "absence"(as Freud himself does) in order not to confuse the reader. However, as I suggested earlier, the notion of absence rather than loss seems more appropriate for figuring feminism's past.

¹¹ See my "A Story beside(s) Itself" for a more detailed discussion of the productivity of melancholia for women.

¹² See Johnson for the idea that ambivalence is healthy for feminism. See also Juliet Mitchell's assertion that "postmodern feminism is a politics of relevant fragmentation" (12). As a politics of fragmentation and ambivalence, feminism necessarily produces conflict and contradiction and assures us of change and growth.

to my original formulation of feminism with its yoked but oppositional drives of eros and ethos. These are not simply two sides of the same coin of feminism; rather I would say that each fuels the other and without its partner, so to speak, the drive and feminism cease to exist. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that one drive doesn't stir without the other (to paraphrase another passage from Irigaray) - especially given that these drives are directed both outward - toward law, language, epistemology - and inward toward the changing structure of feminism with its own laws, languages and epistemologies. These drives, in varying degrees and ways, provide both "the critical negativity of [feminism's] theory and the affirmative positivity of its politics" (de Lauretis *Technologies* 26).

9 Before turning to my next point, it is perhaps necessary - insofar as feminism might be seen as a subset or outgrowth of left political movements - to note how my formulation of productive melancholy is unlike the melancholy rejected by Wendy Brown in her assessment of "new left melancholy." In that short essay, Brown draws on both Freud and Walter Benjamin in order to suggest the "Left" (she leaves the word unspecified in terms of its constituency) is attached more to ideals of the past or even to the failure of those ideals than to "seizing possibilities for radical change in the present" ("Resisting" 20). She sees the Left performing a kind of self-defeating fetishistic ritual with its own lost ideals. Brown goes on to describe the Left's conservative and backward looking glance at its own failures, a glance which highlights the "loss of a unified analysis and movement" and blames some of the same culprits that have fragmented feminism-identity politics and poststructuralism. While Brown's description of the Left certainly seems similar to the scenario that I have painted, I am less pessimistic about feminism's backward glance for it seems a way to orient and manage the present and to assure a future for feminism. Indeed Wiegman argues that feminism is "motivated less by an overwhelming sense of past loss than by a fear about the failure of the future" ("Feminism's " 807). She reads this anxiety about feminism's future as a "profoundly productive . . . aspect of academic feminism's contemporary knowledge formation . . . providing a way to think more carefully even creatively, about difference, disciplinarily, and the limitations of the present time" ("Feminism's" 815). Finally, then, in thinking about the present of feminism and what looking backward and forward might do, I differentiate between generative melancholy and a degenerative one and maintain that feminism is in the process of recounting "enabling" losses.

10 There is, however, one commonality between the Left as Brown describes it and the academic feminism of the story above - their whiteness. This racial constituency, however, remains unspoken in Brown's account (as it has in mine), implicit rather than explicit. Though

Brown stages her analysis partly through Stuart Hall's account of the crisis of the left (as outlined in *The Hard Road to Renewal*), it seems clear that a portion of the Left she refers to is precisely that which would be most threatened by an identity politics that stresses racial and ethnic differences rather than class - based solidarities - that is, white people. In the context of the narrative of feminism I presented above, if we rewrite the preceding sentence substituting "gender-based" for "class-based" solidarities, we get something like this: the feminists I named as lamenting and enumerating the current conflicts in feminism would be most threatened by an identity politics that stresses racial and ethnic differences rather than gender-based solidarities. An attentive reader would have recognized the feminists I named above - Gubar, Wiegman, Irigaray, Gallop, Braidotti, etc. - to be white. I point this out in order to mark their narratives as partial perspectives on feminism's past. One need only glance at early work by Audre Lorde, Michelle Wallace, Angela Davis, or those writers involved with *This Bridge Called My Back* - Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, Barbara Smith, the Combahee River Collective, among others - to realize that a 70s vision of feminist unity did not exist for them. Or rather, to put it more precisely, while many of these feminists met together to share their concerns as women of color and achieved solidarity among themselves, they were largely excluded from the dominant, white feminist movement. This recognition of the blindspot of race for white feminism has produced two conflicting, yet complimentary sentiments: a disappointment in its own ethical failure to produce a more inclusive movement (we have met the enemy and she is us) and a desire to hold onto (and to celebrate) the positivity of the past in terms of effective uses of the concept of "woman" to bring about change.

11 This is of course not news; nevertheless this history and its legacy continue to affect relationships among feminists of all colors. Assessments by women of color of feminism's history and current problems tell a different tale than the laments outlined previously and tend to focus less on say, the loss of a unified subject for feminism - for obvious reasons. Contemporary women of color (usually of a younger generation than those listed above) who have looked back, particularly African American women, have been more concerned with invisibility (or its obverse, hyper-visibility), the silence surrounding black women's sexuality (especially by black women themselves), and the need to reclaim the female black body "which can be and is still used by others to discredit [black women] as producers of knowledge and as speaking subjects" (Hammonds 99).¹³ Their narratives tend to be more

¹³ See for example Williams; Valerie Smith; Crenshaw; Lubiano; Spillers; Alarcón; Chow; Saldívar-Hull; duCille; Carby; hooks; Morrison; Spivak; Giddings, to name only a few.

ambivalent and paradoxical insofar as the measure of exclusions both as women and as women of color are of a double nature. So, we might say that the melancholic narratives that women of color tell about feminism have an added and somewhat different set of losses, absences and sadnesses. It is clear, then, that the construction of the melancholic narrative of feminism enfolds within itself a kind of melancholy of race.

12 If there is a need for feminism on the one hand to work through (and within) the melancholy of race, there is also a need, on the other hand, to work through the dilemmas of poststructuralism - at least insofar as poststructuralism seems to have provoked many of the crisis items on my initial list of "what went wrong" with feminism. These two dilemmas are of course related; I will return to them below. Suffice it to say here, problems with poststructuralist theory have not gone unnoticed by feminists of all colors. Barbara Christian, for example, in her well-known 1987 essay, "The Race for Theory," condemns the take-over of literary studies by critics using obscurant Western philosophers and by critics who yearn for attention for themselves rather than attending to more deserving fictional texts written by women of color. She also attacks poststructuralist theory's mystifying language and asks in the end: "For whom are we doing what we are doing when we do literary theory?" (77). In other words, Christian echoes in her essay and her question some of the same concerns highlighted in my list-concerns about institutionalization, the use-value of theory, accessibility of language, and a connection to "real" people.¹⁴

13 That poststructuralist theory has been both fruitful and problematic for feminist theory is clear from Toril Moi's most recent book *What is a Woman?*, reassessing Simone de Beauvoir's work. In this new text Moi is working through (not always successfully) - that is, critically reassessing and remembering - some of the same vexed issues that have been faulted for bringing feminism to its deathbed and also, not incidentally, the very issues that have provided for feminism's ascendancy and critical purchase. I would like to offer a reading of Moi's book in part to support my initial declaration that feminist theory is still pleasurable (useful and flawed) after all these years and to show (hopefully) how to do things with pieces of the past that aren't really past in feminism - legacies, if you will. Moi is of course not an idle choice; her first book, *Textual/Sexual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* was also

¹⁴ We could also add here the destruction of enjoyment caused by reading some poststructuralism. Christian, who is not alone in her sentiments, writes, "I am appalled by the sheer ugliness of the language, its lack of clarity, its unnecessarily complicated sentence construction, its lack of pleasurable quality" (72). One could read this as simply theory basing, as I once did, when in the throes of too much fun reading Spivak. However, I have tempered my view. Theory does sometimes need complex language and sentence constructions that remain difficult to parse and in the end produce a meaning that is deliberately ambiguous. That does not mean, however, that every sentence must be obscure and bewildering, nor does it relieve its writer from the responsibility of precision and careful thought.

assigned for the same Marcus class where I read Irigaray. Perhaps I am also thinking through my own feminist past.

14 Moi's first book is perhaps best known for slamming Anglo-American feminist critics for their naive empiricism, attachment to a unified (female) subject, and an uncritical view of authorship.¹⁵ One might notice that the things Moi condemns in 1985 bear a striking resemblance to some things that were lamented as lost in my original "Seven Steps to Hell" list - a unified subject, a connection to the real. The irony of this will hopefully become apparent. *Textual/Sexual Politics* is also known for celebrating poststructuralism's - especially the French versions developed by Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and of course Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous - dismantling of humanism, with its attendant death of the author, assertion of the endless deferral of meaning and exposing of phallogocentrism. Despite what Moi's book has come to signify in American academic feminism, we should note that she sought in that text to produce a feminist materialist critique of both Anglo-American Feminism and French feminism (especially Cixous and Irigaray). Indeed, Moi assailed my then hero, Irigaray, as ahistorical and essentialist, and¹⁶ suggested she was a "patriarchal wolf in sheep's clothing" (146). Citing the same passage as I did in my opening paragraph, Moi dismisses Irigaray's notion of women's language difference ("womenspeak") as a "tale told by an idiot." Even in this brief sketch of the history of one text, we have ample evidence of feminism's oppositional pulls at work, a struggle that pits newfangled French poststructuralism against the achievements of (American) gynocriticism, a "younger" generation against an "older" one, and less overtly, white, straight conceptions of feminism against those of lesbians and/or women of color.¹⁷ I leave it to the reader to decide who to cast as narcissistic and who as ethical. What is of interest now - some 15 years later - is that Moi, in her effort to "work [her] way out from under poststructuralism" (xii), finds herself aligned with some of the same feminists she criticized in 1985 - Susan Gubar being a particularly vivid example. My point here is that two bright women, with two very different investments in theory and writing (though perhaps not in feminism), have arrived at similar conclusions about what ails feminist criticism - particularly in terms of the obfuscating language of some poststructuralist theory

¹⁵ These Anglo-American critics include Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Annette Kolodny, Myra Jehlen, and others.

¹⁶ For a particularly insightful reading of Moi's failures especially in terms of her inability to read race as she seeks to valorize poststructural textual politics, see Chow.

¹⁷ There is virtually no mention of lesbian and/or black women's writings. This is Moi's reasoning: "[*Sexual/Textual Politics*] purports to deal with the theoretical aspects of feminist criticism. So far, lesbian and/or black feminist criticism have presented exactly the same *methodological* and *theoretical* problems as the rest of Anglo-American criticism" (86). With that the subject is closed for Moi.

and the axiomatic nature of its conclusions.¹⁸

15 The major element in Moi's new work is her steadfast belief that Beauvoir has much to offer feminist theory. Moi insists that we need to revise and revisit feminist theoretical and methodological projects in terms of their political and practical efficacy and she believes that Beauvoir is an especially good case in point. In *What is a Woman?*, Moi argues that Beauvoir's justly famous statement, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," has been misconstrued by a host of feminist theorists and indeed these misreadings have led to some of the current impasses in the thinking of sex and gender, problems that now have little to do with women per se. Instead sex/gender remain, if you will, theoretical stumping grounds - that is, locations where feminist theory remains stumped or puzzled. In asking us to reconsider Beauvoir's statement, Moi points us to the notion of the "lived body," an essential (though not essentializing) way to think of women (and men), and to Beauvoir's use of everyday examples and language to support complex theoretical ideas. Moi believes that this conception of the body and this way of writing/theorizing might be able to liberate the word woman from "the binary straitjacket that contemporary sex and gender theory imprisons it in" (ix). In a move that could be seen as embracing the ethical drive of feminism (insofar as it posits a need for commonality), Moi asserts that we need to be able to "say the word woman without having to blush and instantly mumble something about 'strategic essentialism'" (x). In looking at Moi's *What is a Woman?*, we recognize some of the fundamental conundrums of feminist theory, and here I return to the list I offered initially - issues of pleasure, bodies, foundational categories, clear language, and connections with the real.

16 The bulk of *What is a Woman?* reconsiders these problems in the context of what has been a fundamental concept in feminist theory - the distinction between sex and gender, that is, in traditional feminist terms, the idea that sex refers to a biological category and gender to a socially and culturally constructed one. This distinction has been essential in undermining the idea that biology produces "natural" social and sexual behavior (i.e., the foundations of essentialism and heterosexism). Moi looks at what has happened to this distinction since its initial academic feminist articulation by Gayle Rubin in her groundbreaking 1975 essay, "The Traffic in Woman," and its subsequent revision and dismantling by people like Judith Butler in her *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*. In rethinking the history of the concept of the sex/gender system, Moi asks us also to remember some fundamental questions in the practice of feminist theory: In what circumstances is a discussion of any particular distinction useful?

¹⁸ There are more similarities - especially the need for a way to disagree critically without resorting to *ad feminism* arguments.

What is the aim of deconstructing this concept? Are the goals met? How might the distinction or deconstruction of the distinction be meaningful in terms of the politics of everyday life? Her answer in terms of thinking about "what a woman is" (i.e. in terms of producing a theory of subjectivity) is clear: "the sex/gender distinction is woefully inadequate" (35). However, Moi does not simply dismiss poststructuralism, rather she asks might some other tools be more useful? She also acknowledges that recent poststructuralist delineations of the sex/gender system have produced "remarkable critiques of sexist ideology and misogynist abuse of power" (25); further, she credits Butler for her work in elucidating the mechanisms of heterosexism and homophobia and in giving voice to a number of gay and lesbian critics.¹⁹

17 However, despite its enormous (past) usefulness for feminist theory, Moi now questions the poststructuralist paradigm of the sex/gender system in terms of whether it has "produced concrete, historical understanding of what it means to be a woman (or a man) in a given society" (4-5). Moi recounts the following history. Rubin's initial distinction between sex and gender invited thinking about sex as a term outside of history and culture - that is, the split seemed to produce a kind of binary opposition, where sex (nature) acted as a ground to culture. This, of course, left the category of sex ripe for deconstructive critique. Poststructuralist feminists (Moi takes Butler and Donna Haraway to be representative examples) then showed the category of biological sex (hormones, chromosomes, etc.) to be as culturally constructed as gender; that is, to paraphrase Butler, sex was always already gender. In Moi's reading of Butler both sex and gender become products of the same discursive norms and so sex is no longer the ground of gender but the effect of it (46). In other words, the category of sex is a historically marked idea and hence not a fact but rather is itself produced by the category of gender. This has the result, Moi writes, of producing "woman" as a kind of "congealed ideological construct. For Butler a woman is gender and gender is simply an effect of an oppressive social power structure" (75). The problem with this conception, Moi argues, is that if we consider "biological sex differences an effect of 'regulatory practices' and picture such discourses as all-encompassing" then we produce just "as oppressive a theory of femininity as biological determinism." (29, fn 42). The body, in effect, has disappeared and sex has become a uselessly abstract category. This view of sex supports what she sees as the misguided idea that "as soon as the body acts, walks, and talks it becomes gender, that is to say an entity not produced by chromosomes, hormones, and so on" (26). Finally, she argues

¹⁹ In stressing what Moi credits, I want to make clear her difference from critics like Nussbaum, who attack poststructuralism for its failure to make an adequate political intervention in the lives of real women - the theory/praxis problem. This simplistic critique leaves unnoticed and unassessed feminist poststructuralism's ability to articulate the material and constitutive force of representation itself.

that these moves create a host of new theoretical problems - in particular how to conceptualize women's agency and subjectivity - "that poststructuralists feel compelled to resolve, but which no longer have any connection with bodies, sex, or gender. The result is work that reaches fantastic levels of abstraction without delivering the concrete, situated and material understanding of the body it leads us to expect" (31).

18 As an antidote to the obscuring "theoreticist" language and to the disconnection from the historical body that "loves, suffers and dies" of some poststructuralist thinking, Moi suggests a return to Beauvoir's concept that "the body is a situation" - an existential concept that was developed first through the phenomenology of Husserl and later Merleau-Ponty (and less through Sartre). It is a controversial and difficult idea which I will render here only in its outlines.²⁰ In part, what Moi wants to do, through a return to Beauvoir's "lived body," is to revive sexual difference as workable category - that is, not essentialized in either a discursive or a biological way, but yet acknowledges that being born with a male or female body will have specific yet unforeseeable consequences. Moi wants to make clear that the body "is subject at once to natural laws and to the human production of meaning and it cannot be reduced to either one of these elements" (69). We can read this as a kind of excess that escapes these binaries. The concept of the "lived body" foregrounds lived experience or "the way an individual makes sense of her situation and actions" (63) and in that sense the mind and the body are not separable. The body is seen as "ambiguous": it does not carry meaning on its surface, but neither is it simply a blank slate for discourse. So the situated body resists causality or any kind of determinism; it is neither involuntarily produced by biology (or psychology or discourse or whatever), nor is it voluntarily produced by any sort of agent, as in an "agent or cogito who somehow takes on or appropriates gender"; this is Butler's suggestion in *Gender Trouble* (8).²¹ Instead, the body, in actively taking on specific decisions, should not be conceived as acting out of free will. Rather, they are bodily postures or attitudes taken in specific situations. In other words, to return to the concept of woman, we can never really define what she is in a metaphysical sense; we must always return to specific bodies.

19 My somewhat long excursion into Moi's work was designed in part to show that

²⁰ The idea is controversial in that Moi reads against the grain of many understandings of Beauvoir; these readings see her as an essentialist - as conceptualizing woman as essentially different from man and a theorist, stuck in her white, bourgeois conception of the world, who simply wants access to the same agency as man. Braidotti, for example, writes: "Beauvoir sees the difference that woman embody as something that is as yet *unrepresented*. Beauvoir consequently concludes that this devalorized and misrepresented entity can and must be brought into representation" (160). Braidotti contrasts Beauvoir's position with someone like Irigaray, who evaluates women's otherness not merely as that which is not yet represented but as that which remains *unrepresentable* within this scheme of representations. (160).

²¹ For a discussion of Beauvoir's philosophy with regard to her understanding of the concept of the "lived body," see Bauer; Vintges.

feminism is forever re-arriving at answers, questions, concepts - particularly about what constitutes "woman" and indeed if anything should or can. This is not simply a compulsion to repeat - but an effort to repeat with a difference each time, addressing and revising what are the animating and/or toxic concepts that continue to worry feminism. In Moi's effort I find much to commend: her insistence that we be more careful readers of Beauvoir and her insistence that sex/gender theories "yield significant understanding of concrete cases" (115). Both suggestions offer good advice for feminist practices in general. I also applaud Moi's own effort to write about difficult ideas with clarity and precision. Finally, I admire her effort to reject dualisms of mind/body or culture/nature and her desire to use the concept of the "lived body" as a strategic term designed to upset the frameworks of binary pairs.²²

20 However, this return to the body is also problematic for me as well. We might summarize (and simplify) Moi's central point: what gets lost in the relentless conversation about sex/gender is paradoxically the body. Or to reframe this in terms of my melancholic narrative of feminism, for Moi, what feminist poststructuralism helped us lose or occlude is the "lived body." This is a loss of some proportions and one that is differentially distributed among different groups depending on their race, sexual orientation, class etc. How are we to understand the differential nature of reclaiming our losses, our "lived" bodies? I ask this not to reinstall some sort of hierarchy of losses - for example that losing the raced body is worse than (or not as bad as) losing the sexed body. Rather I am trying to mark the awkward and dissimilar returns to the lived body. For example, white women must contend with a legacy that cements woman within a body that is uniformly devalued for its weakness, unruly and uncontrollable impulses, hormonal irregularities and its paradigmatic difference from the (white, male) mind. African American women must contend with something quite other in taking back the lived body, especially given a legacy (among other things) of literally and figuratively disappeared bodies. Asking for our bodies back then is a perilous endeavor.²³ These different meanings and painful recoveries remain unexamined by Moi. And this is perhaps where her own melancholic working through remains incomplete. I would suggest that this is in part due to Moi's insistent focus on Butler's work - who in some sense because of feminism's obsession with her work (for good and ill) is dictating the terms through which

²² As Elizabeth Grosz argues, "the sexual specificity of the body and the ways sexual difference produces or effects truth, knowledge, justice, etc. has never been thought" (4). Grosz's book, while addressing Beauvoir only indirectly and Moi not at all, is an interesting study of how to rethink subjectivity in terms of bodies and sexual difference. It has chapters devoted to Merleau-Ponty as well as Irigaray, and extensive discussions of the usefulness of Deleuze and Guattari for feminist theory.

²³ For a number of interesting essays dealing with feminism and the body see Price and Shildrick.

we consider bodies and sexes and genders.²⁴ Moi ignores those critics, poststructuralist and otherwise, who have consistently made efforts to keep the (raced, classed, etc.) mind and body together.²⁵

21 I am thinking here in particular of a poststructuralist critic like Hortense Spillers - especially in her 1987 essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." I read this essay as an example of a stunning analysis of the situated body. In it Spillers offers a startling and radical return to the body - not an essentialized body - but a racialized, historicized and gendered female body. Spillers begins to mark out a sexual as well as a racial difference in the face of a traditionally masculine and racially uninflected psychoanalytic economy, an economy of *colorless sameness*. Spillers's analyzes the black female in slavery within an American context in order to arrive at, and to mark, the ground where the idea of a black female social subject might begin and where dominant psychoanalytic and feminist theories fail or need to be revised. Her work highlights the importance of discursive constructs as well as the need for understanding a particularized body. As she recounts her (re)search of the history of slavery - what she calls the "retrieval of mutilated female bodies" - she notes, "we might concede, at the very least, that sticks and bricks might break our bones, but words will most certainly *kill* us" (68). Spillers explores the way certain discourses name and position the black female, and in doing so construct a symbolic order - an order Spillers sees as a peculiarly "American grammar" (68). Spillers's work demonstrates the ultimate writing out of black women from the systems of representation and so parallels, for example, Irigaray's racially unmarked project of reading "woman" as an absence or "hole" in signifying economies of Western representation. I believe it is this complete writing out that leads Spillers to conclude that the slave trade to the New World involved a "theft of the body" - in literal and figurative senses - for the black woman that must still be reckoned with today. Indeed, Spillers believes that this "severing of the captive body from its motive will" forced a loss of gender difference, so that "the female and the male body [became] a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific" (67).

²⁴ This seems to be a problem not only for Moi but with much recent academic criticism in general. Butler has become the Poststructuralist Gender Diva who must be attacked.

²⁵ An example is Donna Haraway, whom Moi groups with Butler. Certainly to me these two theorists don't quite fit comfortably in the same poststructural basket, especially insofar as we recognize the immense utopian impulse in most of Haraway's work - see especially "Situated Knowledges." That is, while we can certainly see strains of racial constructionism in Haraway's work, she makes it clear that "we need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies are made, not in order to deny meaning and bodies, but in order to live in meanings and bodies that have a chance for a future" ("Situated" 187). In short, Haraway is dealing much more overtly with the ethics of feminism than Butler. Further, in her "Gender for a Marxist Dictionary," we must note that Haraway - long before Moi decided that she had to expose this - recognized the binary straightjacket at work in the conceptualization of the sex/gender system particularly in terms of the way it wrote race out of the picture - something that Moi consistently fails to see.

22 Spillers suggests that "before the 'body' there is 'flesh.'" That is, prior to the differentiation of subjects based on gender (in its most conventional sense), within the system of slavery there is an initial differentiation between subject and object, or in Spillers's terms, human and non-human. The crucial distinction between captive and liberated subject positions is that the captive is rendered a thing, an otherness, not subject to discursive distinctions that would specify sexual difference. Spillers sees this flesh as "vestibular" to culture-designating a site which stands before the entrance of white Western culture. Spillers argues that slavery transformed the black woman; she "became the principal point of passage between the human and the non-human world. Her issue became the focus of a cunning difference - visually, psychologically, ontologically - as the route by which the dominant male decided the distinction between humanity and 'other'" ("Interstices," 76). That is, the enslaved African woman became a conduit between two worlds, but "unspeakable," "unknowable," and "undecidable" in and of herself. However, while Spillers discusses two conflicting dichotomies - human/non-human and male human/female human, these two spheres interrupt each other even as Spillers posits them as separate. That is, claims of gender cannot be precisely separated out. She argues that the flesh/body distinction operates to differentiate human from non-human prior to gender or sexual differentiation, but she cannot maintain this distinction. The very notion of sexual dichotomy interrupts the notion of the flesh/body distinction at the moment of its formation to differentiate sexually the enslaved mother/woman/reproductive organ from the other flesh of the enslaved male. That is, enslaved African American woman becomes perversely (re)gendered. Sexual difference, gender, the body, and language take on vastly different configurations for the African American woman.

23 Spillers's recounting of the recovery of these lost bodies and the body trauma experienced by enslaved African American women brings me to a final observation about feminism's melancholic narrative. I would argue that it is precisely the discourses of melancholy, trauma and loss that are fueling some of the most interesting work in current feminist theory - work that necessarily bridges gaps between lived bodies and discursive production, the personal and the political, the theoretical and the practical, the margin and the center, white perspectives and those of people of color - a kind of working through that opens up empowering possibilities that are neither totalizing answers for the present and future nor some sort of redemption of the past but rather a creative/creating moment in the institutions and practices of feminism. Spillers's work is an early example of this sort of work, but there are other, more recent examples that illustrate the enormous versatility of these concepts in

terms of expanding boundaries of genre, articulating the necessary connections between the psychic and the social or, to put it another way, bridging a gap between theory and politics, reminding us to stay embodied (in terms of race, class, etc.) and examining the effects of being embodied. Some examples include Anne Anlin Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race* which provides an acute reading of the way melancholy functions in terms of race (and less overtly, how gender is imbricated in this racial melancholy) - for both people of color and whites in America.²⁶ Leigh Gilmore's discussion of the coincidence of trauma and self-representation in recent memoir production in *The Limits of Autobiography* provides another example of effective work using conceptions of trauma and loss for feminist theory. She suggests writing about trauma, particularly for those who have been disempowered by dominant constructions of the individual and the nation, stretches the boundaries of autobiography (and also the meaning of trauma) and offers a place to critique, for example, kinship systems, the legal system, and the class system.²⁷

24 The trend in recent accounts of feminism and in feminist criticism itself that I have discerned in this essay might be labeled the melancholy of difference. Recognition of differences within feminism continues to produce charged and ambivalent relationships - particularly about the premises, foundations, and aims of feminism. These sorts of differences are sources of pain and pleasure-sites of ethical and erotic battle; yet, they are nevertheless profoundly productive. These conflicts in feminism, then, reveal also a melancholy *with* a difference. For as feminism recognizes difference - whether this is an ethical, sexual, generational, racial, critical or some other difference - it generates an inventive, sometimes disturbing, working through. It is a sustaining melancholy that remains, necessarily, unfinished but a clear sign of a vibrant present.

²⁶ Cheng focuses primarily on the destructive, rather than the productive, aspects of melancholy as I did in my first section. As the reader might recall, the melancholic internalizes and identifies with a lost object. But this identification is not without costs. For though the object is kept within the ego, there remains an ambivalence; feelings of love and hate (hate because the object was taken away) are incorporated. Cheng uses this structure and maps it onto the American psyche. She suggests first that the racial other is the melancholic object for the dominant white psyche. She writes: "racialization in America may be said to operate through the institutional process of producing a dominant, standard, white national ideal, which is sustained by the exclusion - yet - retention of racialized others (10). This is so in the sense that dominant white identity in America operates melancholically by consuming the lost object, feeding on it. Yet the subject reviles that which he or she has introjected - the hate aspect of melancholy's deep ambivalence. So in a certain sense that object remains stuck in the national subject's throat. This process is an "elaborate identificatory system based on psychical and social consumption-and-denial (11). Cheng next moves this melancholic paradigm in the other direction toward the "racial other" (of dominant white America) and suggests that the raced subject is not only a melancholic object (that which is lost in the white imaginary) but also a melancholic subject insofar as the raced subject has introjected the raced self as lost as well. Thus the raced subject internalizes rejection and installs a scripted context of perception - where one perceives oneself to be invisible or lost.

²⁷ Other examples of recent critics using the concepts of melancholia, loss and trauma to produce insightful feminist criticism include Moglen; Cvetkovich; Robinson.

Works Cited

Alarcón, Norma. "The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism." *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras*. Ed. Gloria Anzaldúa. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1990. 356-69.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987.

Bauer, Nancy. "Beauvoir's First Philosophy, *The Second Sex*, and the Third Wave." *Labyrinth* 1.1 (1999). 16 August 2001.

Benhabib, Seyla and Judith Butler, et al. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Feminism By Any Other Name." Interview with Judith Butler. *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6.2-3 (1994): 27-61.

_____. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

Bronfen, Elizabeth and Misha Kavka, eds. *Feminist Consequences: Theory for the New Century*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001.

Brown, Wendy. "The Impossibility of Women's Studies." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 9.3 (1997): 79-90.

_____. "Resisting Left Melancholy." *Boundary 2* 26.3 (1999): 19-27.

Butler, Judith, ed. *More Gender Trouble: Feminism Meets Queer Theory*. Spec. issue of *differences : A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. 6.2-3 (1994).

_____. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.

_____. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Carby, Hazel. "It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime: The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues." *Radical America* 20.4 (1986): 9-22.

_____. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. *The Melancholy of Race*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.

Christian, Barbara. "The Race for Theory." *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987): 51-63.

Chow, Rey. "When Whiteness Feminizes: Some Consequences of a Supplementary Logic." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11.3 (1999/2000): 138-68.

Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement." Moraga and Anzaldúa 210-18.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color." *Critical Race Theory*. Ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas. New York: The New Press, 1995. 357-83.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *In the Archive of Lesbian Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and the Lesbian Public*, forthcoming.

Davis, Angela. *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage, 1981.

de Lauretis, Teresa. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1987.

_____. "Upping the Anti (sic) in Feminist Theory." Hirsch and Keller 255-70.

DuCille, Anne. *Skin Trade*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1996.

- Elam, Diane. "Sisters Are Doing It to Themselves." Looser and Kaplan 55-68.
- Elam, Diane; Dan Robyn Wiegman, eds. *Feminism Besides Itself*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. Vol. 14. London: Hogarth, 1914-16. 243-58.
- Gallop, Jane. "Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment." Bronfen and Kavka 18-37.
- Giddings, Paula. *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*. New York: Bantam, 1984.
- Gilmore, Leigh. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. New York: Cornell UP, 2000.
- Greene, Gayle and Coppelia Kahn, eds. *Changing the Subject: The Making of Feminist Literary Criticism*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.
- Gubar, Susan. "Notations in Media Res." *Critical Inquiry* 25.2 (1999): 380-96.
- _____. "What Ails Feminist Criticism?" *Critical Inquiry* 24.4 (1998): 878- 902.
- Hammonds, Evelyn M. "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problem of Silence." Price and Shildrick 93-104.
- Hanssen, Beatrice. "Whatever Happened to Feminist Theory?" Bronfen and Kavka 58-98.
- Haraway, Donna J. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 575-99.

_____. "Gender for a Marxist Dictionary: The Sexual Politics of a Word." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 127-48.

Heinamaa, Sara. "What is a Woman? Butler and Beauvoir on the Foundations of the Sexual Difference." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. 12.1 (1997): 20-39.

Hirsch, Marianne and Evelyn Fox Keller, eds. *Conflicts in Feminism*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, 1984.

Hull, Gloria, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*. Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

_____. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

Johnson, Barbara. *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race, and Gender*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1998.

Kavka, Misha. Introduction. Bronfen and Kavka. ix-xxvi.

LaCapra, Dominick. "Trauma Absence Loss." *Critical Inquiry* 25.4 (1999): 696- 727.

Looser, Devoney and E. Ann Kaplan, eds. *Generations: Academic Feminist in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984.

Lubiano, Wahneema. "Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means." *Morrison* 323-61.

- Martin, Biddu. "Success and Its Failures." Bronfen and Kavka 353-380.
- Mitchell, Juliet. "Psychoanalysis and Feminism at the Millennium." Bronfen and Kavka 3-17.
- Modleski, Tania. *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age*. New York: Routledge: 1991.
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual Textual Politics; Feminist Literary Theory*. London: Routledge, 1985.
_____. *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Moglen, Helene. *The Trauma of Gender*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001.
- Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back. Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981.
- Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.
- _____, ed. *Racing Justice, Engendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*. New York: Pantheon, 1992.
- Nicholson, Linda, ed. *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Nussbaum, Martha. "The Professor of Parody." *New Republic*, 220.16 (February 22 1999) 37-45.
- Price, Janet and Margrit Shildrick, eds. *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Reagon, Bernice Johnson. "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century." *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. Ed. Barbara Smith. Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983. 356-68.

- Robinson, Sally. *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*. New York: Columbia UP, 2000.
- Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward an Anthology of Women*. Ed. Rayna Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975. 157-210.
- Saldívar-Hull, Sonia. "Feminism on the Border: From Gender Politics to Geopolitics." *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Ed. Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar. Durham: Duke UP, 1991. 203-20.
- Scott, Joan. ed. *Women's Studies on the Edge: Spec. issue of differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 9.3 (1997).
- Smith, Barbara. "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism." Hull, Scott, and Smith 157- 75.
- Smith, Valerie. *Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narratives*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987.
- Smith, Victoria L. "A Story beside(s) Itself: The Language of Loss in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*." *PMLA* 114 (1999): 194-206.
- Spillers, Hortense J. "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words." *Pleasure and Danger*. Ed. Carol Vance. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984. 73-100.
- _____. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* (1987): 65-81.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Culture and Politics*. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Vintges, Kare. "Simone de Beauvoir: A Feminist Thinker for Our Times." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 14.4 (1999): 133-45.
- Wall, Cheryl, ed. *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory and Writing by Black Women*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1989.

Wallace, Michele. *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*. London: Verso, 1990.

Wiegman, Robyn. "Feminism, Institutionalization and the Idiom of Failure." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11.3 (1999-2000): 107-36.

_____. "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures." *New Literary History* 31 (2000): 805-25.

_____. "What Ails Feminist Criticism? A Second Opinion." *Critical Inquiry* 25.2 (1999): 262-79.