

Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis or dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis or dissertation in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis or dissertation. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation.

Feminist Aporetics: On Negativity and Alterity
By
Emily Parker
Doctor of Philosophy
Philosophy

Michael Sullivan
Advisor

Debra Bergoffen

Thomas R. Flynn

Pamela M. Hall

Cynthia Willett

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Date

Feminist Aporetics: On Negativity and Alterity

By

Emily Parker
M.T.S

Advisor: Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., J.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy
2009

Abstract

Feminist Aporetics: On Negativity and Alterity By Emily Parker

Escalating feminist disagreement over the status of the name “women” locates a deeper question of feminist subjectivity: is the feminist that which theorizes a subjectivity that does not yet exist (a new woman “becoming”) or is the feminist moment precisely in preemption or critique of the very grounds for subjectivity? This dissertation develops a feminist response to Theodor Adorno by asking where the figure of Antigone, Sophocles’ tragic heroine, might be figured in Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*. In doing so, I offered an Adornian contribution to feminist theories of subjectivity by arguing that the feminist exists in the aporia between thinking the political salience of the dialectic (the political opposition of object to a presumed, neutral subjectivity) and the immanent critique of dialectics. An interpretation of the disagreement among Judith Butler, Naomi Zack, Luce Irigaray regarding the significance of Antigone’s resistance invokes the question of feminist subjectivity. In the final three chapters, aporetic interpretations of the feminist, that in which the feminist consists, are explored in the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Eve Sedgwick and Gayatri Spivak, respectively. This project speaks to more general questions of the political and the ethical, self and knowledge through the articulation of the question of subjectivity as a primary ethical and political question.

Feminist Aporetics: On Negativity and Alterity

By

Emily Parker
M.T.S

Advisor: Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., J.D.

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy
2009

Acknowledgements

The director of this dissertation Dr. Michael Sullivan has also become through the years a trusted mentor and confidant. This dissertation has developed in response to our countless conversations, in which I have learned to assume that my questions are taken seriously and that my own voice is encouraged to appear. I wish to thank him for the courage that this support has given to me especially in the finishing stages.

I encountered questions at the heart of this dissertation for the first time in Dr. Pamela M. Hall's Philosophy graduate seminar Narrative and Women's Selfhood. Our many subsequent conversations have taught me to carry these questions as ethical, to pose them not only as questions of knowledge and power, but as questions for an ethics that might yet think beyond the "I."

Dr. Cynthia Willett's counsel, especially at a crucial point, has enabled this dissertation to assume a shape. For encouragement and for showing ways of articulating not only a scholarly voice, but also a voice that cannot be mistaken for complacency, I am grateful.

I want to thank Dr. Thomas R. Flynn and Dr. Debra Bergoffen Professor of Philosophy and member of the Women's Studies and Cultural Studies faculties at George Mason University for serving as readers and for important discussions. I especially want to thank Dr. Bergoffen for long-distance guidance in the final stages of the development of the dissertation.

Dr. Deepika Bahri, Associate Professor of English, Dr. Lynne Huffer, Professor of Women's Studies and Dr. Holloway Sparks, Assistant Professor of Women's Studies provided guidance at various stages of this project.

I want to thank Frances Campbell, Academic Department Administrator in Philosophy, Catherine Hall, Graduate Program Coordinator in Philosophy and Berky Abreu, Academic Department Administrator in Women's Studies. I could not have found my way through academic life without their knowledge of the system as well as their willingness to explain some things again and again. I also want to thank Alayne Wood, Graduate Program Coordinator in Women's Studies.

Thank you to Bill Gillis, Jennifer Meares and Ericka Tucker for proofreading in the final stages. Thanks also to a legendary writing group, who saw me through writing a very first chapter that didn't even make it into the dissertation, but who have left marks on this project just the same. Thanks for introducing me to the dissertation-writing process as well as to writing (or at least the aspiration of writing) otherwise than as a tangled graduate student: Jennifer Meares and Dr. Molly McGehee.

Thank you to Peter Milne. Even while working through his own studies, he has shared steady conversation and stillness.

I wish to thank my parents Nancy Lyles Parker and Steven Howard Parker and my sister Kathryn Lyles Parker for felt love and support. My parents have been dreaming for their daughters since long before we learned to create dreams for ourselves. And they have unwaveringly supported even the most outlandish of my dreams. It is with my sister that I have shared most of the imaginings which this dissertation attempts to gather. With deepest affection, I dedicate this work to them.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	
Introduction	1
Chapter One Aporia and the Question of Feminist Subjectivity	17
Chapter Two Negativity and the Nonidentical: Negative Dialectics and Feminist Aporetics	56
Chapter Three Claiming Antigone: Butler, Zack, Irigaray	99
Chapter Four Erotic Freedom and Woman as Other: Two Themes in Beauvoir	149
Chapter Five Impasse and Aporia: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Tropes of Gender	200
Chapter Six Strategic Use of Essentialism and the Question of Subaltern Speech: On Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Living Reading	236
Conclusion	280
Works Cited	288

Introduction

One hopes for heaven, one for earth, and each
 To strike a concord through cross-purposed speech.
 So split and halved and twain is every part,
 So like two persons severed by a glass

...

Confused in object and in aim
 That they cannot their pleasure name....¹
 Daryl Hine

But we are not only oppressed as women, we are oppressed by having to be women, or men as the case may be. I personally feel that the feminist movement must dream of even more than the elimination of oppression of women.²

Gayle Rubin

She has this fear
 that she has no names
 that she has many names
 that she doesn't know her names³

Gloria Anzaldúa

Personally, if I did not stop halfway on the path to identification [with "the traditional form of philosophical thinking"], it was because I thought I saw the possibility of a fork in the path ahead, and thus of throwing in my lot with a philosophical practice which was still to come.⁴

Michele Le Doeuff

Woman, women, she, female. This project began as an attempt to make sense of this string of names that are everywhere rejected and also everywhere invoked. How? Why? Two years ago, while intending to write on Margaret Fuller, author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*⁵ and German Romantic scholar and translator, I noticed that Fuller's literary efforts to rewrite the confining, accommodating bluestocking script available to a privileged few contained both unqualified rejections and anticipatory

¹ Excerpt from the poem, "The Doppelganger," by Daryl Hine in A. J. M. Smith, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, in English and French* (Toronto, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 426-427.

² Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex.," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 204.

³ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinster/Aunt Lute, 1987., 43. Discussed in Norma Alarcón, "Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of "The" Native Woman" in Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón, and Minoo Moallem, *Between Woman and Nation : Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999), 64-65.

⁴ Michèle Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 79.

⁵ Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century, Dover Thrift Editions* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1999).

invocations of Woman. Her transcendentalist interpretations of *Bildung* required both a rejection of all available gendered frameworks that confined her personhood as well as contemplation of various powerful Greek goddesses, alternative gendered frameworks which project unfamiliar possibilities for Woman. While reading Fuller I also read Denise Riley's important work *Am I That Name?*, which offers an interpretation of such contradictory modern feminist pursuits. Riley argues that

“women” is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change; “women” is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of “women” isn't to be relied on; “women” is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, “being a woman” is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation. Yet it must be emphasised that these instabilities of the category are the *sine qua non* of feminism, which would otherwise be lost for an object, despoiled of a fight, and, in short, without much life.⁶

Riley goes on to evaluate feminist theory and activism from the 1790s to the 1920s with an eye for the ambiguity of the name women, the title of the book being taken from lines spoken by Desdemona:

Desdemona: Am I that name, Iago?
Iago: What name, fair lady?
Desdemona: Such as she says my lord did say I was.
 (William Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act IV, Scene II, 1622)⁷

While Riley's work does not assume the stability of the female⁸ as a background category she maintains that “so long as the sexes are socially distinguished, ‘women’ will be nominated in their apartness.... So feminism, the reaction to this state of affairs, cannot be merely transitional, and a true post-feminism can never arrive.”⁹ And she maintains that “feminism must be agile enough to say, ‘Now we will be “women”—but

⁶ Denise Riley, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸ In the final chapter, “Bodies, Identities, Feminisms” Riley argues that “‘the body’ is not, for all its corporeality, an originating point nor yet a terminus; it is a result or an effect. *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History*, 102.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

now we will be persons, not these “women.””¹⁰ Thus for Riley feminist pursuits are divided between asserting the name women and asserting the name person or human. As we will see, my own paradoxical interpretation of the feminist is divided quite differently. And although Riley is particularly interested in the history of white European modernist feminist activism including Fuller’s historical period, her work encouraged me to take another look at *contemporary* feminist writing. Where have such contradictions traveled? Do they appear to have marked contemporary feminist thought? What role do such contradictions play in relationships among feminists and among feminist theories—critical race, queer, lesbian, postcolonial? In Chapter One I say more about the relationship between Riley’s work and my project. Particularly Riley’s language of women as *name* has remained with me. Names bring forth what might not have existed before; names can be unofficial terms of endearment, unlike the scientific Hegelian “concept.” In this project, I do not think of women as a concept—a lesson which I take from Adorno, Butler and Irigaray; nor as a notion, which is sometimes a synonym for concept. “Name” is surely not clear of the connotations of these discarded monikers—and concepts and notions are likewise as Hegel has shown discursive, historical formations. But a primary question of my dissertation is how best to learn from post-Hegelian feminist philosophies given that the Hegelian tradition does not in fact confer the overrated status of the concept on Woman, women, she, female. I do not presume to stand outside of this tradition as I critique, and I do not deny that intellectual work preceding mine enables as much as it obscures. Still, *how* to articulate my concerns is a substantive question. Simply to speak of the “concept of woman” when Hegel did not, Adorno can not, Butler cannot, Spivak cannot and Irigaray does not would mislead the

¹⁰ Ibid., 113.

reader, especially as the last four have been my primary conversation partners in the dissertation. Thus I stick to Riley's poetic wording which ties my discussion to Desdemona's internally quarrelsome question: *am I that name?*

Woman, women, she, female. Of "Writing, Writers, the Writing Life," Margaret Atwood asks, "Is this subject like the many-headed Hydra, which grows two other subtexts as soon as you demolish one? Or is it more like Jacob's nameless angel, with whom you must wrestle until he blesses you?"¹¹ I have constantly felt while writing the dissertation that the question of feminist subjectivity is both. And I have felt not only the frustration implied but also the threat *of* such characterizations throughout due to the frequency with which woman, women, she are always already raced, classed characterizations of animalistic and/or mythical beasts with which our/dear/hero must wrestle. How peculiar that I (to invoke Simone de Beauvoir) by means of whose body is written the interpretation of the animal/angel, must also wrestle? Aren't I *privy* to any information necessary to solve such a puzzle? Where *is* my body in this question? Aren't I the locus of the thwarting of such narrow terms? Aren't heroes also animals, some angels also heroes? Indeed, this characterization of myself as animal/angel set against the hero that I am not threatens always to come *too* easily; when in my life does it not come so easily? What aspects of my body preempt such a reading? Where am I capable of rendering such a dichotomy—hero versus animal/angel—meaningless? This project is an attempt to think (not merely "think about") the dialectic *and* its excess.

I follow Le Doeuff (of the epigraph) and Adorno (discussed in Chapter Two) who insist for different reasons that if such puzzles must be considered, it is a philosophical

¹¹ Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

practice “still to come” that will make such consideration remotely possible. What I mean to convey by this epigraph is the question of what philosophy might be instead of the creation of concepts and categories. Again, it has been precisely the moments of the dialectic which enable feminist philosophy and theory in the post-Hegelian tradition that have both made possible and made very difficult this project: woman, women, she, female. I have struggled with these purportedly simple names; here I want briefly to say something about my changing terminology and its significance. The difficulty in deciding who (which? what aspect? where? when?) I mean to speak about—woman, women, she, female—should be regarded throughout as the question at hand. Another word to be added to this list is “the feminist,” which I attempt to theorize in this project in a way that opens up space for asking—what is “the feminist”? (I will say more about this in Chapter One.) These words reference complex and variegated genealogies which fall outside of the scope of this project. And yet I assume throughout that such genealogies might be written. At any rate, these words have entirely different meanings—but they are presumed to tie “feminist” theories (in quotes because what this means is precisely the question) together in a smooth, unified or unifiable manner. I argue that they do not, cannot, and should not for ethical and political reasons. Throughout, I use the language of the particular author whom I consider. What is the significance of this? I argue that the question of feminist subjectivity (again, I say more about what I mean by this in Chapter One) located by disagreement over the names woman, women, she, female cannot ultimately be answered except aporetically. I argue that no stance with respect to the names woman/women/she/female/feminist escapes controversy, and that this is precisely because, far from the singularity that these designations imply, feminist theories both

augment and deny the name women and the possibility of a feminist subjectivity.

Exhaustive disagreement concerning the name women locates this wide-reaching open question of feminist subjectivity.

Each of these intellectual gestures expresses a moment of the feminist which cannot be made consistent with other interpretations of the name women without significant ethical and political loss. But the very same can be said by substituting “female” for “women.” I encourage the reader to make the substitution for herself or himself as I have frequently done while writing. What I mean to say is that when the texts to which I turn are written in terms of the female, then I make that argument instead.

I am leery of the tendency of feminist theories to place gender at their center, placing on a different plane race, ethnicity, ability/disability, class, sexuality. It is for this reason that throughout I am particularly interested in one moment of the feminist as the elaboration of feminist subjectivities. Of course one feminist subjectivity is still the hope of some; however it seems to me that the hope for a unified subjectivity only renews the erasure of difference. I do not fully agree with Irigaray that “sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not in fact the issue, of our age.”¹² (This claim is also discussed in Chapter Four.) While I do clearly regard as pressing theoretical projects articulating modes of expression silenced by the Hegelian injunction of the same, I am not interested in artificially singling out gender as a project that can be thought apart from “other” important questions of our age. An alternative that I would endorse might be the following: difference in its multifaceted complexity as well as its possibilities for articulation are burning questions. And yet, this phrase loses the striking edge of

¹² Luce Irigaray, *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5.

Irigaray's famous statement. It is this problem that I understand Lyotard to address when he speaks of the "feeling of pain which accompanies silence":

In the differend, something "asks" to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away. This is when the human beings who thought they could use language as an instrument of communication learn through the feeling of pain which accompanies silence (and of pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom), that they are summoned by language, not to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist.¹³

Together with the pleasure which accompanies the invention of a new idiom, articulations of the inadequacies, confusions, shortcomings of existing idioms are necessary. One such inadequacy of existing idiom according to the scope of this project is the inability of feminist theories and philosophies to articulate discontinuity, the inability not to assume what the very word "feminist" means but to interpret variously among and within different texts in what the feminist consists. The feminist, that which is "feminist," espouses feminism, characterizes itself as feminist, is differently interpreted in and often within texts in which the word appears—and in my view this is a vastly underappreciated point. Discontinuity with respect to the feminist is an important ethical and political value which continues to be ignored in surprising places. For example, in this project I have been motivated in part by Judith Butler's interest in uniting "antihomophobic, antiracist, feminist, trans and intersex activism" under a concern to end "phobic violence against bodies."¹⁴ Here Butler takes for granted that these adjectives will go and ought to go under one seamless banner. I am entirely sympathetic with her claim, "That feminism has always countered violence against women, sexual and nonsexual, ought to serve as a basis for alliance with these other movements...." Later in the same text Butler insists, "It

¹³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, *Theory and History of Literature, Volume 46* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 13.

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.

is precisely in the course of engaged political practices that ... internal dissension emerge[s]. And I would argue emphatically that resisting the desire to resolve this dissension into unity is precisely what keeps the movement alive.”¹⁵ I am more sympathetic with the latter claim. But I am interested in this dissension precisely as it shows itself within the feminist. An important question for me has been *why* such an alliance among antihomophobic, antiracist, feminist, trans and intersex activism is not *obvious*? It seems obvious—but if it were, then no such plea as Butler’s would be necessary. Indeed I read Butler’s earlier statement above as a *plea* for such continuity. If the apparent clashes among the queer, the feminist, the multiracial are interrogated *within the feminist* as interrelated and yet irreducible to each other, as opposed to explained away, or assumed consistent, might the clash itself not continue to hold exactly the same sway? Thus I will argue that an appreciation for what I name “feminist aporetics,” numerous responses to the question of feminist subjectivity formulated here, will allow for discussions which will make Butler’s hope expressed in the former claim above all the more tangible.

Before giving an overview of the project, allow me to briefly comment on the relationship between my work and that of Adorno. I attempt in Chapter Two, to borrow a phrase from Gayatri Spivak, to use and go beyond Adorno’s critique of the subject, which I do not celebrate as feminist theory as such.¹⁶ It is important to note that it is reading and reflecting on Adorno’s work which offers a way of posing the question of feminist subjectivity. Woman/women/she/female as either the negative or a name is famously not

¹⁵ *Undoing Gender*, 175.

¹⁶ Said of Derrida in Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

subjected to scrutiny by Adorno. As Simon Jarvis argues,¹⁷ Adorno's comments on sexual oppression are applications of his larger theory of domination. I argue further that in Adorno's work, women are considered one-dimensionally—that is, that sex/gender is considered as apparently free-standing, without reference to other social dimensions and that thereby Adorno's work centers relatively privileged experiences of white heterogender of an assumedly monolithic group “women.” In short, nothing interesting or promising in Adorno's own reflections on the name women has influenced directly my work on the question of feminist subjectivity.¹⁸

The dissertation has developed into an articulation of disagreements over the name women as evocative of a deeper disagreement over how to think the question of feminist subjectivity. Is the feminist that which theorizes a feminist subject(s), subjectivities under construction, a potential subject or subjectivity? Or is “feminist subjectivity” an oxymoron in that the feminist preempts subjectivity, in that the feminist is found precisely in preemption of subjectivity(ies)? The former entails exploration of the negative, explored for example by reading *Antigone* as a multidimensional opposition to the Same. The latter looks for and expresses the excesses of the dialectic of concept and negation, in particular man and woman. For this latter view, the feminist is only possible insofar as misgivings with this dialectic might be expressed. This latter moment of the feminist is explored by reading *Antigone* as the excess of the dialectic of concept

¹⁷ Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1998), 84.

¹⁸ See Eva Guelen, “No Happiness Without Fetishism”: *Minima Moralia* as *Ars Amandi* in Renée Heberle, *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno, Re-Reading the Canon* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). Wilke and Schlipphacke, “Construction of a Gendered Subject” in Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaart, eds., *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997). Jessica Benjamin, “Authority and the Family: A World without Fathers,” *New German Critique* 13 (1978), Jessica Benjamin, “The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology,” *Telos* 32, no. 1977 (1977).

and negation. In what follows I attempt from numerous angles to perform in a pronounced way the confusion enacted between these two interpretations of the feminist. I aim to perform feminist aporetics, aporia which I read widely in feminist theoretical literatures, demanding that “the feminist” and the names woman/women/she/female not be assumed as understood but instead be interpreted in each one. I do so by turning to a reading of what I characterize as post-Hegelian feminist theory and philosophy. I take the reader through contemplations of what “the feminist” means for various writers and at various moments *within* the work of these writers. In the end I am interested to show that feminist aporetics haunts this particular literature that I have gathered; however I mean to raise questions about the confusions that I argue are invoked by much wider usage of the names woman/women/she/female. These names are absolutely under dispute; and yet for many the answer to the dilemma of being caught between having “no names” or having “many names” has been to insist upon “a position,” Chicana, in the case of Gloria Anzaldúa of the epigraph also quoted by Norma Alarcón, in order to locate resistance.¹⁹ Indeed this location of resistance for Alarcón is a way of settling “historical conjunctures of crisis, confusion, political and ideological conflict, and contradictions of the simultaneous affects of having ‘no names’, having ‘many names’, not ‘know[ing] her names...’.”²⁰ In the same paragraph she insists that “there is no fixed identity”; thus taking the name Chicana as a “name of resistance” is a decision. But why should the feminist be located in a personal (political) decision? What is going on in such disagreement over the very names that the feminist often requires? Thus, throughout this project my reading has consisted in more than post-Hegelian feminist philosophies and

¹⁹ Norma Alarcón in “Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of “The” Native Woman” in *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State.*, 65.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

theories, and yet perhaps by virtue of the close relationship among Marxist thought and Marxian interpretation and the development of feminist thought and interpretation, I have found that approaching my questions through this post-Hegelian set of thinkers has somehow given me a way of reading even more widely than the literature gathered here. In future incarnations of this project, I would like to confine myself to commenting on a smaller body of literature. Here however I have been following a question that in my view could not yet be confined to a small body of literature.

The dissertation is presented in six chapters as follows. In the first chapter, *Aporia and the Question of Feminist Subjectivity*, I discuss disagreement over how to regard the name women as well as the feminist in a number of contexts. I discuss a panel entitled “*Whose Vagina Monologues?: A Forum for Feminist Critique of V-Day*” which took place last spring at Emory University. The members of this panel on my reading disagreed internally in their understanding of the feminist. Their negotiations of the name women and the feminist are shown to be relevant for similar internal disagreements facing numerous feminist theories and philosophies. This chapter introduces key vocabulary used in the dissertation.

In the second chapter, *Negativity and the Nonidentical: Negative Dialectics and Feminist Aporetics*, I argue that an understanding of this disagreement over how to regard the name women and the question of feminist subjectivity that it locates might begin with a reading of the tension in *Negative Dialectics* over the status of dialectical thinking. For Adorno, dialectical thinking enables “thinking against thought”; dialectical thinking allows internal challenges to surface. And yet, dialectical thinking can only gesture beyond itself; the “beyond” of dialectics can only surface in dialectics. Negative

dialectics anticipates the nonidentical, that which exceeds dialectical thinking; however negative dialectics also defends dialectical thinking because this alone allows for challenge to the concept. And yet the feminist in post-Hegelian feminist philosophy and theory is interested I argue not in the concept, the same, the Absolute, the One, but instead in a rereading of the *negative*. Adorno is also interested in a rereading of the negative, but his situation as a theorist does not necessarily depend on the status of this negative. Thus I turn my attention to Antigone, who does represent the negative—or does she represent that which falls outside of the concept/negativity negative dialectic? It is not the negative dialectics but feminist aporetics, which are differently related to the negative than the negative dialectics, which allows for an inconsistent interpretation of the question of feminist subjectivity.

In the third chapter, *Claiming Antigone: Butler, Zack, Irigaray*, I leave the negative dialectics behind and turn to the feminist aporetic which articulates “the feminist” of post-Hegelian feminist theory and philosophy. Disagreement over the figure of Antigone is read in this chapter as disagreement over the name “women,” and that conversation I argue locates the question of feminist subjectivity. Antigone in the work of Zack and Irigaray is a rereading of the negative in a way that seeks a feminist subjectivity; Antigone in the work of Butler is a mobilizing of the beyond of the negative, the nonidentical or alterity of dialectical thinking. Within each of these interpretations of Antigone, the concerns of the “other” view are present. Thus I conclude that there is not just one way of reading Antigone; these readings of Antigone might then be read as working through the question of feminist subjectivity and finding no definitive interpretation. A turn to Irigaray near the end of the chapter opens up the moment of the

feminist to which Zack's work relates; however, Irigaray resists closed definitions of the name women. Instead she proceeds by rewriting the dialectic in the hope of a new subjectivity which has yet to take place. Irigaray's work comes under criticism for its apparently strict focus on the relation between man and woman; here I turn to the work of Cynthia Willett who articulates problems with locating the feminist in a rewritten relation between man and woman.

The fourth chapter, *Erotic Freedom and Woman as Other: Two Themes in Beauvoir*, offers a reading of the feminist in the work of Simone de Beauvoir. Contemplation of the feminist as negation as well as anticipation of the nonidentical, that which exceeds the dialectic, in Beauvoir's work are necessary moments of the feminist. Each of these moments of the feminist in Beauvoir calls the other into question, and yet each captures important concerns regarding the question of feminist subjectivity. For Beauvoir, exploring the themes of *Woman as Other* is an important mode of the feminist, but the feminist cannot strictly be articulated under the rubric of man/woman. For many, this inconsistency in Beauvoir is problematic. Either one or the other of these views, it is argued, is the proper feminist moment or holds the key to the future of feminist theory and philosophy. I argue that contemporary disagreement over the feminist import of Beauvoir's work misses the subtlety of the feminist in Beauvoir; her work does not need to be made internally consistent, as some have argued, in order for Beauvoir to be read as a contemporarily relevant feminist thinker. However, I am also concerned in this chapter with the feminist moment that presumably takes its cues from Beauvoir in aspiring to a unified feminist subjectivity. Such a project is not necessarily to be found in Beauvoir, but I explore it here as a way of responding to the notion of the feminist in Tina Chanter's

work on Irigaray. In order to do so, I explore some attempts to redress the limitations of the dialectic of man and woman, which I argue is what Patricia Huntington means by “the symbolic dyadic structure.” Huntington raises concerns about the symbolic dyadic structure to which I argue the names woman/women/she/female always threaten to return. I mean for this discussion to bear on Chanter’s hopes for moving beyond the limitations of the feminist in Beauvoir toward the feminist in Irigaray.

In the fifth chapter, *Impasse and Aporia: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Tropes of Gender*, I argue that Sedgwick anticipates the feminist aporetic without articulating its import for the very meaning of the feminist and disagreement over the name women. Sedgwick appreciates the impasse of gender definition, closely related to the impasse of homo/heterosexual definition, and this impasse has much in common with the feminist aporetic. However, I argue that aporia is not merely impasse; it is a mutual undermining that leaves one actually with no position at all rather than with a multitude of interpretations from which to draw.

In the final chapter, *The Strategic Use of Essentialism and the Question of Subaltern Speech: On Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s Living Reading*, I turn to the work of Spivak, who articulates the feminist dialectically in her strategic use of essentialism as well as anticipates its excess with the question of gendered subaltern speech. However, where Sedgwick’s response to impasse is to insist on the coexistence of inconsistent interpretations, Spivak argues that dialectical thinking is not properly feminist—it is rather “anti-sexist.” This attempt to reconcile the aporia at the heart of the question of feminist subjectivity is also seen in her substitution of the question of gendered subaltern speech for interpretation of the name “woman.” I argue that neither of these attempts to

sidestep aporia is successful. Thus while Spivak's work negotiates the feminist aporetic, it cannot fully articulate what is at stake in such substitution and negotiation.

I remain interested in the possibilities opened up by recognition of disagreement. I agree with Butler that "the rifts among women over the content of the term ought to be safeguarded and prized, indeed, that this constant rifting ought to be affirmed as the ungrounded ground of feminist theory," as is quoted in the epigraph. However, I am concerned that the mere insistence on valuing disagreement has tended in fact to paper over important internal criticisms that express a more nuanced meaning of the feminist. If we are all feminists regardless of our beliefs, how is it that insisting on this prevents us from then asking what it is that is meant by the feminist? I am interested in the feminist as a name that begs to be interpreted in texts that go under its heading. In what does the feminist consist in this particular text or that one? How do such texts disagree? How are new meanings opened up or obviated? The feminist has as many meanings as times it is used, and yet this dissertation attempts to describe some characteristic and interrelated aporetics (subjectivity or no, woman/women/she/female or no) with which the feminist routinely grapples.

This dissertation ought to convey the discomfort caused by confusion regarding the question of feminist subjectivity. Where is the feminist? Is it to pursue a unique feminist subjectivity which requires dialectics that erase important other insights? Is it instead to critique the very grounds for subjecthood—and thereby erase the possibility of a discrete articulation that defends women or the female *as* women or *as* female? The disagreement over the very name women is an internal disagreement that will not let its practitioner go, will not allow her a comfortable location from which to speak. Feminist

aporetics preempt a singular, clear feminist “position.” I can only suggest here that there is no gesture to the feminist untouched by this dilemma. While discontinuity and dissension offer valuable challenges and opportunities for growth, it is important not to romanticize situations in which dilemma and dissension are the only modes of understanding one’s choices. Instead of applauding the diversity of the feminist then, my aim throughout is to ask how it is that the feminist can be expressed in aporia, since this is necessary. How might these disparate moments articulate something of why the feminist must move in two different directions at one time? “So like two persons severed by a glass,”²¹ are the moments of the feminist that one can only arrive at understanding these moments by interpreting their “cross-purposed speech.”²²

²¹ Daryl Hine, Smith, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, in English and French.*, 426-427.

²² Ibid.

Chapter One

Aporia and the Question of Feminist Subjectivity

To translate, to open up a path through a language by using its resources, to decide upon one meaning, is to escape the agonizing, aporetic impasses of any translation, to make the philosophical gesture par excellence: the gesture of betrayal. To recognize the untranslatability of poros and aporia is to indicate that there is something about the terms, which Plato borrows from a whole tradition, which breaks with a philosophical conception of translation, and with the logic of identity that it implies.²³

--Sarah Kofman

For both a concentration on and a refusal of the identity of 'women' are essential to feminism. This its history makes plain.²⁴

--Denise Riley

I stood for a moment between the pains of two violations, the mark of gender and the unlivability of its absence.²⁵

--Susan Stryker

When the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist.²⁶

--Judith Butler

On February 12, 2008, in the Harland Cinema on the campus of Emory University a panel²⁷ was held entitled "Whose *Vagina Monologues*?: A Forum for Feminist Critique

²³ Sarah Kofman. Andrew E. Benjamin, *Post-Structuralist Classics, Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1988).

²⁴ Riley, "Am I That Name?" *Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History.*, 1.

²⁵ Susan Stryker, "My Words To Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage" in Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, *The Transgender Studies Reader*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2006. Pp. 244-256. Previously appeared in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1(3) 1994 : 237-254.

²⁶ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 8. And yet the Hegelian "I" on my reading can only be inhabitable by Butler (or another attempting to interpret in feminist voice) if Butler aspires to presumably agendered, aracial, asexual Subjectivity. My own formulation of this provocative statement might be—when the not-I or when the "beyond" of the I seeks to give an account. . . . But how is it that the not-I or the "beyond" of the I/not-I might actively seek to give an account? It would only be in some yet-unseen reinterpretation of the not-I which releases it from its reading as contradiction; the "beyond" of the I/not-I contests its own ability to give an account. This statement of Butler's comes up in the context of a reading of Adorno in which Butler takes on Adorno's own voice; here I will argue that that is not possible for the theorist attempting to write in feminist voice, in a mode that is not agendered, aracial, asexual. *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 3-9.

²⁷ The event was sponsored by the following: Student Advocacy Committee of the Center for Women, The Center for Women at Emory, The Department of Women's Studies, WS Graduates, Office of LGBT Life, Emory Pride, Office of Multicultural Programs and Services, Department of Psychology, Candler Women, Student Health Services, Emory Reproductive Health Association, Emory Alumni Association, Intimate Partner Violence Committee, AHANA Theater, V-Day Atlanta.

of V-Day.”²⁸ The panel was held as part of a week-long series of events culminating in performances of *The Vagina Monologues*, a play composed by Eve Ensler on the basis of interviews with numerous women appearing in her book *The Vagina Monologues*.²⁹ V-Day is an organization founded in 1998 by Eve Ensler to raise awareness of violence against women and funds for local activist efforts in the wake of widespread popular enthusiasm created by the play *The Vagina Monologues*.³⁰ The V-Day College Initiative, encouraging local productions of the play, had been one program of V-Day.³¹ More recently as part of the College Campaign colleges and universities are invited to produce a local showing of one of three V-Day events: “performances of The Vagina Monologues; staged readings of V-Day's *A Memory, A Monologue A Rant and A Prayer* and screenings of V-Day's documentary *Until The Violence Stops*.”³² V-Day's efforts have also broadened in its ten years, now raising awareness of items in a “violence glossary” with “anti-violence resources” and “violence against women statistics”

²⁸ An announcement of the event “Whose *Vagina Monologues*?” includes the following description. “V-Day campaigns have become a powerful force, bringing visibility to various feminist and “women’s” issues on college campuses all over the U.S. While widely celebrated as a local and global achievement for feminism, V-Day’s “movement to end violence against women” raises red flags for many feminists. The reclamation of the “vagina” (as opposed to the clitoris, vulva, labia...) as a site of female sexuality has been critiqued by feminists concerned with V-Day’s heteronormativity. The use of vagina as that which defines and unites “women” has been broadly critiqued by feminists concerned with both intersex and trans politics. Post-colonial and antiracist feminist critiques have also been concerned with the deployment of “vagina” as a concept with shared meaning and significance for women globally. Bringing together panelists with a wide range of concerns about and investments in V-Day and *The Vagina Monologues*, this event will provide a forum for debate about the pros and cons of the V-Day movement and the nature of our engagement with it. Immediately preceding the panel discussion, there will be a performance of alternate monologues.” <<http://www.womenscenter.emory.edu/SAC/vday2008.html>> accessed August 3, 2008.

²⁹ Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*, Rev. ed. (New York: Villard, 2001).

³⁰ Kim Q. Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues*” *Hypatia* 20, no. 1 (2005), 100.

³¹ An Emory announcement of performances of Eve Ensler’s play *The Vagina Monologues* includes the following description: “The Student Advocacy Committee of the Center for Women is proud to bring *The Vagina Monologues* back to Emory for the 10th anniversary of V-Day. Eve Ensler’s award winning play is a brazen and heartfelt celebration of the female body and calls for the end of violence against women. All proceeds benefit organizations committed to ending violence against women and girls.” <<http://www.womenscenter.emory.edu/SAC/vday2008.html>> accessed August 3, 2008.

³² <<http://v10.vday.org/take-action/organize-a-local-group>> Accessed on August 4, 2008.

included on the website: domestic rape and rape as a war crime, incest, “dowry deaths and bride burnings,” acid attacks, honor killing, female infanticide, female genital mutilation, stalking, sexual harassment, assault/battery, “sexual slavery.”³³ In 2007 alone, V-Day sponsored events in Kentucky, Louisiana, Northeast Ohio and New York (co-hosting with Omega Institute a conference “W{} men, P{}wer and Peace” which involved numerous recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize) as well as Democratic Republic of the Congo (in conjunction with Unicef) and Haiti (in conjunction with Minister of Women’s Affairs and Rights opening a “Haiti Sorority Safe House”), raising money for localized efforts to address various forms of violence against women.³⁴ In 2007 alone, according to the V-Day website, “over 700 campuses participate in the College Campaign and over 400 cities participate in the Worldwide Campaign, totaling over 3000 benefits in 58 countries.”³⁵

The Emory panel “Whose *Vagina Monologues*?: A Forum for Feminist Critique of V-Day” was organized as part of a week of events participating in the College Initiative and culminating in performances of *The Vagina Monologues*. As the title of the event suggests, the panel was meant to provide an open forum for discussion of feminist concerns about the international fame of the play and to allow for presentation of “alternate monologues,” feminist resistances to the feminist subject projected by the play.

³³ Phrases in quotes are taken from V-Day website and somewhat unique to the website in terminology. <<http://www.vday.org/contents/violence/glossary>> Accessed August 4, 2008. Critique of this list itself offers insight into the boundaries of V-Day’s notions of violence and of the feminist: one thinks at least of sweatshop labor the world over in which women of color make up the vast majority of laborers, increased suicide rate for LGBTQ youth especially those of color, the climbing numbers of mysterious rape and murder cases of female U.S. soldiers uninvestigated in Iraq whose deaths are labeled suicide by the U.S. government, not to mention violence against intersex persons as ISNA points out.

³⁴ <<http://v10.vday.org/timeline?targetNode=79>>, <<http://v10.vday.org/timeline?targetNode=125>>, <<http://v10.vday.org/timeline?targetNode=129>>, <<http://v10.vday.org/timeline?targetNode=131>> Accessed August 4, 2008.

³⁵ <<http://v10.vday.org/timeline?targetNode=133>> Accessed August 4, 2008.

My interest in the panel is in the moments of contest between competing understandings of “the feminist,” who feminism might be said to be for, that which is feminist or that which engages in feminist theoretical criticism, expressed by members of the panel.³⁶ In fact, the chapters that follow might be read as a way of coming to terms with and coming to words for the moments of dissonance within such concerns.

I argue that feminist subjectivity, the feminist or that which is feminist or that which engages in feminist theoretical criticism (and I can only here suspect activism) is best understood as aporetic— both feminist elaboration on, augmentation of a new subjectivity *and* feminist critique of the means by which coherent subjectivity is affected. By “the question of feminist subjectivity” I mean to ask about the significance of this phrase—is “the feminist,” that which is feminist, engaged in theorizing a new subjectivity or in critiquing the erasures that subjectivity entails? In asking this question I mean to make available the following questions: What is “the feminist”? What is the relationship between this word and the name women? How is “the feminist” differently interpreted in different texts? To what ends? For what reasons? What might it mean to present competing definitions of “the feminist” together and allow them to push against one another, to raise a mutual challenge? After discussion of the ways in which concerns raised by this Emory panel speak to the question of feminist subjectivity, I devote the rest

³⁶ I am in complete agreement with the postcolonial, intersexual, anti-racist and queer theoretical critiques of the homogeneity of women’s voices represented by *The Vagina Monologues*. Indeed an interesting question is why *more* panels with such excellent critiques are not convened. It is my understanding that this panel was not easily put together or unilaterally supported by feminist Emory University community members. However, I am interested in the concern present on the part of the panel to make it clear that the panelists do not mean to question an “end to violence against women” as a good. And yet it seems clear that postcolonial, intersexual, anti-racist, queer theoretical critiques of the subject of the play are unquestionably good. *Why* then the rarity and (mentioned briefly in Question and Answer period following panel) struggle to convene such a panel? There was some difficulty on the part of panelists to voice and audience members to understand that the panelists were not trying to detract from the aims of V-Day, but rather to augment and to critique the characterizations of its constituency that Ensler defends. It is precisely the tension between these aims on the part of the panel that my project struggles to contemplate.

of the chapter to a number of other articulations of the question in contemporary feminist theories.

Let me say a bit more about my interest in the panel together with related writings in order to set up one appearance of the question of feminist subjectivity in which I am interested.³⁷ Neither the panel nor I myself would be as interested in critiquing the phenomenon of *The Vagina Monologues* if it were merely a form of entertainment. As one panelist put it, V-Day and *The Vagina Monologues* are proclaimed repeatedly to be a means of feminist movement, feminist activism and more than simply entertainment. Especially insofar as that is the case, V-Day requires critical attention from those on whose behalf it proposes to speak. Still, in what follows my interest is less in criticizing Ensler's work, though this is an important step in the discussion. I am more interested in the significance of Ensler's limited interpretation of her audience. In a manner similar to Kim Q. Hall discussed below, I want to ask what I am to make of this failed attempt to celebrate the female body? Any answer to this question anticipates the question of feminist subjectivity in which I am interested.

“Whose *Vagina Monologues* ?” panel members while stressing the importance of the play for raising awareness and funds were concerned to point out the feminist concerns raised by the play itself. The panelists expressed commitment to the aims of V-Day and the play to call attention to violences against women. Let me be clear: my interest is precisely in the keen awareness of the panelists that their concerns were not

³⁷ There is no video available of the event, so my description of the panel, while trying to maintain contact with this local event, will rely on my notes from and memory of the event as well as similarly sympathetic scholarly critiques of *The Vagina Monologues* existing prior to the panel. Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues*”, Esther Morris “An Additional Monologue,” <<http://mrkhorg.homestead.com/files/ORG/AdditionalMonologue.htm>> accessed August 3, 2008.

exactly in opposition to the pursuits of *The Vagina Monologues* but instead were aimed at the ways in which the play communicates who its concern is for. Their negotiations of this subtle point are my interest. I understood their concerns to be with the subject projected by the play: whose vagina monologues are these? Why is the vagina the mobilizing anatomical part? Why must feminist activism require a “trademark” (not only the vagina as trademark, but also slogans such as “Until the Violence Stops” are ubiquitous as are the signature pink shades and the more recent emblem of the vagina in event titles ({}); performances of College Initiative and College Campaign must adhere to Eve Ensler’s stipulations) for such success? Does feminist activism require a trademark? Why do the majority of monologues included in the play assume a white, economically privileged, American, heterosexual, “able-bodied” audience? The experience of having and reappraising the vagina as a unifying experience of feminist women, in fact something that might suggest what it means to be a woman to the feminist has been critiqued by feminist scholars.³⁸ But members of the panel brought these discussions to bear on the popular phenomenon of the play, its commercial success, and its conveyance through personae selected and crafted by Eve Ensler. One alternate monologue raised questions about the limited number of voices of women of color in the play and the presence of one African American woman of color whose voice and story are rendered belittlingly comic by a heavy accent and the use of the name “coochi snorcher” instead of vagina throughout the monologue. A panelist discussed the history of activism petitioning Eve Ensler to add appreciation for intersexuality (instead of

³⁸ Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender : Biological Theories About Women and Men*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992), Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body : Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Elizabeth Grosz, “Criticism, Feminism and the Institution,” *Thesis Eleven* 10/11 (1984-1985). Suzanne J. Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

understanding it as heterosexual inadequacy or deficiency in need of surgical fix) to the play. A member of the audience who had previously attended a performance of *The Vagina Monologues* play, commented in the Question and Answer period on her surprise in realizing only during the panel that there are no monologues in the play which reflect her experiences as a differently-abled woman. Still another alternate monologue presented an image of an improved (in the vocabulary of this project) subjectivity: four women, three wearing skirts and one wearing pants. Under the first skirt, “the vagina we hear so much about,” under the second, intersex anatomy, “free of surgery and able to enjoy sexual experience,” under the third a penis or a place where a penis used to be. The fourth wears baggy pants with boxers hanging out of the top. This image invokes a complex picture of whose alternate monologues might create an alternate play. Importantly this image is perhaps not even complex enough. I now want to ask: for whom would such a collection of monologues be compiled? For women? Or would the fuller phrase “an alternate play for women” lose the very complexity of this nuanced image—would it lose the challenge of this image to the constricted meaning of the name women? The constituency of the play and the event V-Day for Eve Ensler is the transnational group “women,” equivalent to “females,” a discrete set of persons with an only slightly more or less idealized female body. For the panelists, I was not clear (this is part of what I am trying to work out) as to whether in their view this constituency envisioned by Ensler’s play is far too narrow (and so they want to add persons to this narrow constituency)—or if they meant to reinterpret the very same constituency in which Ensler is interested. Thus I understood the panelists as concerned both to augment and to fundamentally critique the subject of *The Vagina Monologues*.

Kim Q. Hall, in an article which critiques the book *The Vagina Monologues* out of which the play was written, raises similar concerns, and addresses what she refers to as a “theoretical conundrum” raised by the text.³⁹ For Hall, Ensler’s book and the play are problematic precisely because they do not project the complexity of their constituency that alternate texts might project. Hall argues that Ensler’s interpretation of the constituency of feminisms and feminist theories must change. But let me back up a bit. What is the theoretical conundrum that the book and play bring forward for Hall? I want to develop what I mean by the question of feminist subjectivity through an articulation of Hall’s work. I am ultimately dissatisfied with Hall’s response of resolving the conundrum, but not because I disagree with her assessment. I am discontent with Hall’s resolution because it neither takes note of nor asks enough questions about the familiarity of this conundrum.

The conundrum, as Hall puts it, is this:

To the extent that Ensler’s reclamation and celebration of the vagina marginalizes intersexed bodies [however note that it is not only the erasure of intersex persons in which Hall is interested], it reinforces heteropatriarchal regulatory norms that have historically infused the vagina with the very meanings Ensler wishes to critique. In what sense, if any, do some human beings have bodies? If the meaning of sex, like gender, is an effect of discourse, what are feminists to make of attempts to reclaim and celebrate the female body? Is it possible to celebrate the female body without reinforcing the terms of sexual difference at the core of heteropatriarchal structures of oppression?⁴⁰

For Hall, it is clear that Ensler’s texts assume a naïve definition of the female, one which is not sensitive to its own collusion with racist, nationalistic, colonial,⁴¹ ableist and heteropatriarchal (classism not discussed) narratives. When The Intersex Society of North America (hereafter ISNA) raised concerns about the only portrayal of intersexuality in

³⁹ Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues*”, 101.

⁴⁰ Ibid.101.

⁴¹Ibid., 103.

the book,⁴² arguing that Ensler's texts make invisible violence against intersexed people, Ensler responds that "Whenever I have tried to write a monologue to serve a politically correct agenda, for example, it always fails. Note the lack of monologues about menopause or transgendered women. I tried."⁴³ Hall argues that it is as a result of ISNA's concern to point out merely the invisibility and not the inadequacy of Ensler's projected subject (my language) of the play that they ultimately recommend the "additive solution" of their V-Day challenge. This additive solution encourages people who organize performances of the play to distribute literature on intersexuality and violence against intersex people and to encourage donations to ISNA. For Hall, this diagnosis of invisibility and its additive solution miss the point, the theoretical conundrum which Ensler's texts raise. How is *the interpretation* of the constituency of V-Day the problem—how should "women" (in quotation marks because this is precisely the question Hall means to raise) understand themselves, their bodies? Hall might be said to repeat a mistake that is increasingly recognized—that feminists frequently make use of brief work on intersexuality to articulate their own concerns rather than to discuss intersexuality per se. However, Hall's interest is I think in intersexuality—in the significance of not merely its invisibility but rather the thematic implications of inclusion of the diversity of intersexualities upon the interpretation of the vagina for feminist purposes. For Hall, it is not enough to "include the intersexed" because intersexuality says something about the very constituency about whom Ensler writes. Hall's question is not simply how to articulate women as the foreclosed vaginas that they are rather than have, under the assumption that the singular measure of "patriarchal violence is the extent

⁴² Ibid., 103-4.

⁴³ Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues*, xxvi-xxvii quoted in Hall, "Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues*", 106.

to which women are unable to think of their vaginas as themselves.”⁴⁴ The question is also-- why is the female in so many other ways synonymous with the vagina? *Must* the constituency of V-Day efforts be synonymous with an anatomical part (or trademark in the words of one “Whose...?” panelist) in order for advocacy to continue? What about women of color whose vaginas and thereby whose status as women are erased—the occasion for Alice Walker to wonder why it is so difficult for a white feminist artist to imagine that Sojourner Truth had a vagina?⁴⁵ Why, when a woman interviewed in Ensler’s book realizes as a young adult that she has no vagina or uterus, does her father announce, “We’re gonna get you the best homemade pussy in America. And when you meet your husband, he’s gonna know we had it made specially for him.”⁴⁶ Why does Ensler herself, as Hall notes, skip entirely over the point in the interview in which this woman says that it was in playing with a girlfriend and comparing genitals that she discovered that “hers were different”? Both the woman’s father and Ensler herself presume a heterosexual future for this woman whose voice in the narrative dissipates, and Ensler pronounces a triumphant end to the story with the acquisition of this “new pussy.”⁴⁷ As Esther Morris puts it, “Being born without a vagina was not my problem. Having to get one was the real problem... The standard normal we aim for is imaginary.

⁴⁴ Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ”., 104.

⁴⁵ Alice Walker and Pratibha Parmar, *Warrior Marks : Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993). quoted in Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ”., 110.

⁴⁶ Eve Ensler, *The Vagina Monologues* (New York: Villard, 1998). quoted in Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ”., 103.

⁴⁷ Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ”., 103-104. Compare Anne Fausto-Sterling’s work on the variable outcomes of surgery intended to “fix” a multiplicity of intersex “conditions” for an imagined binary. Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body : Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality.*, 78-114.

We alter women's bodies when our attitudes need adjusting."⁴⁸ A "Whose...?" panelist also spoke in an alternate monologue of having been born without a vagina and the childhood surgery and aftermath she has endured. As she put it, her anxiety has also not come from being born without a vagina, but from being pressed to understand that state as loss. And some of that perception of loss, she said, has come *from feminist* efforts to "reclaim the vagina." For Hall, the question is—and again this she regards initially as a conundrum and in the end as problem—how to articulate a more nuanced constituency of would-be V-Day efforts—if empirical monolithic femaleness fails? *How* might one advocate what Ensler already advocates while still maintaining appreciation for that which her advocacy erases with respect to that same constituency? And why is this—as a textured mass of concerns—so difficult to articulate clearly or at all?

I agree entirely with Hall's evaluation that Ensler's understanding of whom V-Day and book and play *The Vagina Monologues* as well as the more recent augmentations of V-Day's enterprises are for is inadequate; moreover Ensler's responses

⁴⁸ <<http://isna.org/library/missingvagina/html>> quoted in Hall, "Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ", 109. See also <<http://mrkhorg.homestead.com/files/ORG/AdditionalMonologue.htm>> in which Morris describes the series of surgeries she endured to create a vagina in addition to the "postoperative therapy to keep my vagina *functional*. A functional vagina is 'a vagina that will be able to accept a normal size penis.'" Morris explains that other symptoms of her condition (back pain, hearing loss) posed a far greater medical threat to her at the time and received no attention at all from medical professionals than her lack of a "functional vagina." At the age of 15 ½, Morris was given "vaginal dilators for postoperative therapy, and brief instruction to insert one and wear it every night. The problem was solved, for everyone but me. I was left out of the experience." In her early thirties, Morris had a fifth surgery, a double hysterectomy when a doctor "found" her two ovaries, which had not been noticed or involved in any way in the earlier surgeries. She has now identified her condition as "Mayer-Rokitansky-Kuster-Hauser Syndrome... a condition that involves congenital absence of the vagina, fallopian tubes, cervix and/or uterus. Some women have uterine remnants, or horns. External genitalia are normal. Chromosome karyotype is 46XX(normal female). The incidence rate is approximately one in 5000. Other symptoms involved to varying degrees are kidney abnormalities, skeletal problems and hearing loss. The cause is somewhat unclear, but the Syndrome occurs sometime during the 4th-6th week of fetal development. There is not much research on the whole body, it's mostly about creating vaginas for 'normal sexual function.' My main concern is not how the Syndrome develops, but how women are transformed because of it." All of this Morris has had to learn on her own—at the library. On the basis of interviews with other women with MRKH, Morris reports that doctors routinely perform surgeries and prescribe dilation to create the vagina *without* diagnosis.

to and apparently willing ignorance of criticisms of the play and V-Day are unsettling. However, here I am more interested in Hall's response to the conundrum. I am ultimately dissatisfied with Hall's response to the conundrum-- not because I disagree with Hall's assessment, but because Hall overlooks the implications of her own excellent assessment.

Hall's response to the conundrum is first, interestingly inconsistent and second, approaching the question of feminist subjectivity. How is Hall's response to the conundrum of the play inconsistent? Hall holds both that "the categories woman and vagina enable feminists to name the bad things that happen to those who are perceived as women and to that which is perceived as a vagina"⁴⁹ and that these "categories" must be vigilantly critiqued through what Hall names "disidentification."⁵⁰ For Hall, feminists cannot abandon "all reference to vaginas or women or race. Rather, feminists must adopt strategies of resistance that have the potential to change our relationship to the female body and the category woman." Thus, the "effective feminist body politics would adopt a strategy of disidentification regarding the relation between being a woman and having a female body." Disidentification is a queer feminist strategy that recognizes that "identity matters politically, but not because it is a foundational ground that unites members of an oppressed group across their differences."⁵¹ Instead identities matter politically because they "are the sites of perpetual struggle for meaning. Because we are compelled to be our bodies and our bodies are compelled to reveal our selves, our bodies are, in a sense,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁵⁰ I put "categories" in quotes because this is precisely the question. In what sense is women a category? I am interested in why feminists and nonfeminists alike refer to women as a category or a concept—from where does this designation come?

⁵¹ Compare to discussion of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in Chapter Six. I want to suggest that this is by now an unduly familiar and unsatisfactory way of negotiating the question of feminist subjectivity.

battlegrounds.”⁵² As discussed above, Hall is concerned not that some women should be added to the already established constituency of V-Day, but rather that the interpretation of those already included needs to change. How should that interpretation change? Hall’s response is to say that disidentification, with this complex understanding, offers that new interpretation: one that takes identity seriously as a political necessity, but one which demands on the part of V-Day that

they will also have to constantly critique rather than assume the connection between vaginas and female embodiment. We do not challenge dominant systems by emphasizing the normality or naturalism of bodies and body parts and their relation to identity. As disability studies⁵³ demonstrate, such pretensions of the normal are always based on exclusion, marginalization, and pathologization of those bodies defined as abnormal. In order to effectively resist patriarchal devaluations of vaginas and women, *The Vagina Monologues* will also have to challenge two core beliefs that sustain institutions of patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality, and compulsory able-bodiedness: (1) the belief that genitals are prediscursive and thus natural... and (2) the belief that the vagina is an essential part of normal female embodiment.⁵⁴

Despite the finality of this statement and Hall’s offering of the strategy of disidentification, Hall promotes conversations as well as contests around the feminist body art of Judy Chicago, Carolee Schneeman, Tee Corinne and the goddess movement in feminist art and the feminist health movement.⁵⁵ Each attempts to redefine the female body in ways that defamiliarize the vagina in a manner similar to Monique Wittig’s⁵⁶ claim not to have a vagina; Wittig emphasizes the sole dependence of the meaning of woman on a heterosexual economy. Thus Hall proposes that valuing the vagina remain a key concern for feminist theories, even as its status as vagina is disputed. Hall recognizes the unresolved character of her essay in saying, “Rather than answer this question [of

⁵² Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ”., 114.

⁵³ Hall draws especially from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Feminist Theory, the Body and the Disabled Figure,” in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁵⁴ Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* ”., 115.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-113.

⁵⁶ See also Chapter Four on Beauvoir and the feminist aporetic. I read Wittig’s famous appropriation of Beauvoir’s phrase “One is Not Born a Woman” as an elaboration on one moment of the feminist aporetic in Beauvoir.

what the implications of disidentification will be for feminist theories and activism], I have attempted to articulate a problem that I hope will inspire further dialogue.”⁵⁷ But Hall does argue that her own queer feminist response to the theoretical conundrum raised by Ensler’s work is disidentification. I argue that this view polarizes identity (woman=female body, necessary for politics, still understandably not clear what “female body” can possibly mean for Hall) and its sheer opposite disidentification (woman~≠vagina), and ultimately must choose the latter in an effort to deflate the inconsistency. Nevertheless her interpretation explicitly resists erasure of (a ubiquitously contested) “female body.”

This theoretical conundrum of which Hall so eloquently writes has far larger significance than her article allows. I argue that this conundrum is in fact felt widely by and within feminist theories. Those participating in the “Whose *Vagina Monologues?*” panel were also participating in the negotiation of a complex set of concerns which relate to the question of how to regard the names “woman,” “women,” “she,” “female,” “feminist.” In fact, it has become commonplace in feminist theory and philosophy of the Anglophone academy to suggest that, though the modernist concept of women had been taken to identify the subject or consciousness of feminist theory, what George Sand calls “the women’s cause” (*la cause des femmes*),⁵⁸ “women” as a one-dimensional subject position cannot critically address the multi-dimensionality or intersectionality—gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability/disability, geography—of problematically normative theories and practices.

⁵⁷ Hall, “Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues*”, 114.

⁵⁸ Naomi Schor, “Feminism and George Sand: Lettres a Marcie” in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds. (New York: Routledge, 1992), 41-53, 41.

There are three motivations for this concern. The first two are closely related in feminist transnational literatures while the third emerges especially in feminist queer theory. First, not only race, gender and class but also ethnicity, sexuality, ability/disability and geography each is fundamental to either the possibility and/or the impossibility (depending on whom one asks) of the name “women.”⁵⁹ Second and relatedly, not only race and class but also ethnicity, sexuality, ability/disability and geography are relevant to the project of critically addressing the gendering of normative theories and practices.⁶⁰ Third, and generally considered at some remove from the first two, the modernist name women relies upon a conceptually polarized binary that does not

⁵⁹ Here, a number of works assume women to be a “category” standing in need of attention to criticisms that do not erase race, ethnicity, ability and geography; the name women for these works can and must be reconstituted after these criticisms. (Cf. Footnote 7.) Hazel Carby, “White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood,” in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (London, 1982). Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991.) Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 179. bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman?: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981.) Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg, *Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations between Women and Men, 3rd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1994.) Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.) Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Padmini Mongia (London, 1996.) Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres, eds. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.) Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminisms* (New York, Routledge, 1997.) Bernice Johnson Reagon, “Coalition Politics: Turning the Century,” in Barbara Smith (ed.) *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, New York, 1983), 356-68, 357. Maxine Baca Zinn, Lynn Weber Cannon, Elizabeth Higginbotham, and Bonnie Thornton Dill, “The Costs of Exclusionary Practices in Women’s Studies,” *Signs* 11 (Winter 1986): 290-303. Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, “Theorizing Difference From Multiracial Feminism” *Feminist Studies* vol. 22 no. 2 (Summer 1996): 321-331 republished in Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2003.) Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁶⁰ Here, a number of works understand women to be a problematic name in light of criticisms that do not erase race, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, religion, ability/disability. Gloria Anzaldúa *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Meztiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.) Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999). *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table Press, 1981.) Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse” in *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990.) Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 3-8. Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993.) Trinh T. Minh-ha *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.) Monique Wittig “The Straight Mind” in *The Straight Mind: Collected Essays* (New York: Routledge, 1990,) 21-33.

take into account the conceptual, physical, often violent and ever present regulation of the diversity of configurations of gender and sexuality to this binary.⁶¹ This binary is racist, classist and ableist, but it also does not take into account the ways in which this diversity of gender expression resists such regulations, or even the fact that “so few people actually match any given community standards for male or female.”⁶²

And yet wholly to abandon the question of what it is to be socially positioned as a woman or as the group women, to reject a gesture naming women, she (as seen in excerpt from Anzaldua’s poem in Introduction epigraph), the female, to reject articulations of what meanings these might have, and not subsequently to be able to ask about the ways in which women, she, female have been written out of, silenced by, collapsed and imagined in diverse discourses—not only philosophy, but also biology, psychology, psychoanalysis— seems an equally profound mistake. To remove women, say, as a

⁶¹ Here, a number of works understand women to be a problematic name insofar as it is premised upon the salience of the discrete category female and in light of reflections on the degree to which so few exhaustively meet the expectations for and for the differences between “male” and “female”: Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995.) Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory, and Psychoanalytic Discourse.” Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 3-8. Butler, *Bodies that Matter*. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History From Joan of Arc to Ru Paul* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.) Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues: A Novel* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 1993.) Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough,” *Sciences* March/April 1993, 20-24; “The Five Sexes, Revisited,” *Sciences*, vol. 40, 4 July/August 2000, 18-24; *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998.) Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: New York UP, 2005.) Suzanne J. Kessler “The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants” *Signs* Vol. 16, No. 1 (Autumn 1990), 3-26. Jean Bobby Noble, ed. *Masculinities Without Men?: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004.) Sharon Preves, “Sexing the Intersexed: An Analysis of Sociocultural Responses to Intersexuality” *Signs* Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter 2002), 523-556. Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.) Linda S. Kauffman, *American Feminist Thought at Century's End : A Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex. .”, Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, “Sexual Traffic. *Interview*,” in *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (London: Pandora Press, 1989).

⁶²Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1998), 20.

“category of analysis” threatens to erase the visibility and salience of such projects.⁶³ It is also argued that deemphasizing in feminist literatures the salience of the name woman/women/she/female also threatens to repeat time-honored misogyny and relatedly to preempt modes of interpretation which would make visible and explore the ways in which all women of color have been written out of, silenced by, collapsed and imagined in diverse discourses—not only those mentioned above but also by feminist theory itself. To mitigate consciousness of gendered dialectics, and with them appreciation of the salience of the name women, itself preempts attempts to mitigate misogyny. To erase women from feminist theory would be to tie the hands even of those for whom the question of women remains a theoretical one, but for whom the name women nevertheless remains a necessary critical term.

Thus I find myself in a situation that I will characterize as aporetic: women must and must not serve as a name for ethical and political imagination. This contradictory situation informs widespread disagreement in Women’s Studies classrooms and in feminist theoretical literatures over how to regard what seems to be a founding presupposition of Women’s Studies and Feminist Theory—the notion, the concept, the political imaginary, the category of analysis, women. Currently profound disagreement is masked by the ubiquity of what Denise Riley referred to as “the name,” Woman, woman, women. And indeed, to pose these questions for me is to return to Riley’s influential book, *“Am I That Name?”: Feminism and the Category of Women in History*. This book would greatly influence the early work of Judith Butler whose *Gender Trouble:*

Feminism and the Subversion of Identity answers Riley’s question with refusal in arguing

⁶³ As will be explained, I am trying to hold this claim together with compelling challenges to this claim such as Judith Butler Linda J. Nicholson, *Feminism/Postmodernism, Thinking Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1990)., 342-339.

that an unreflective adherence to the name women opposes the opening up of “the field of possibility for gender.” The name women always already entails normative regulation for Butler, and as Butler puts it, “no one who has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is ‘impossible,’ illegible, unrealizable, unreal and illegitimate is likely to pose”⁶⁴ the question of the value of opening up possibilities which subvert the name women. It was a primary theme of that work to point out that the heteronormativity of the name women in feminist theories stands for gendered expression which is “true and original” over and against homophobic readings of non-normative gendered expressions which are understood as “false or derivative.”⁶⁵ Butler insists that her criticisms are an expression of immanent critique⁶⁶ of feminist theory.⁶⁷ I add my own work to such

⁶⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), viii.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, viii-xi.

⁶⁶ Immanent critique or the notion of critique “from within,” Susan Buck-Morss argues can be traced to the correspondence between Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno and Adorno’s later formulation of German idealism as necessitating a “logic of disintegration,” Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 64. And yet the Hegelian dialectic (and see footnote below on Socratic elenchus) already include the understanding that the negative or “refutation... derived and developed from the principle itself, [is] not accomplished by counter assertions and random thoughts from the outside.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Arnold V. Miller, and J. N. Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 13. And yet as Buck-Morss points out Adorno turns this understanding back onto Hegel: “What separated Adorno’s goal from sheer nihilism was his belief that a new logic could be deduced out of the very contradictions of idealism,” *Ibid.* Still, “a new logic” may be overstating Adorno’s aim; in the work referenced, “The Actuality of Philosophy,” Adorno rejects totalizing philosophy, in fact philosophy itself, in favor of interpretation, Theodor W. Adorno and Brian O’Connor, *The Adorno Reader, Blackwell Readers* (Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000). 23-39. For more on the relationship between the work of Adorno and Walter Benjamin, see Andrew E. Benjamin, *The Problems of Modernity : Adorno and Benjamin, Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989), Walter Benjamin, Gershom Gerhard Scholem, and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute*, Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism : An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁶⁷ “As I wrote it, I understood myself to be in an embattled and oppositional relation to certain forms of feminism, even as I understood the text to be part of feminism itself. I was writing in the tradition of immanent critique that seeks to provoke certain examination of the basic vocabulary of the movement of thought to which it belongs,” *Ibid.*, vii.

immanent critique of feminist theoretical pursuits, to post-Hegelian feminist philosophies and theories.

While my own work remains profoundly indebted to Judith Butler as does that of a generation of queer and feminist theorists for whom identity and recognition remain key and open questions, this dissertation is a return to Riley's earlier project which attempted to answer the question of the name ("*Am I That Name?*") with carefully articulated ambivalence—neither simply reconsideration nor rejection. Butler has famously argued that “the rifts among women over the content of the term ought to be safeguarded and prized, indeed, that this constant rifting ought to be affirmed as the ungrounded ground of feminist theory.”⁶⁸ I argue that this interpretation, of that in which the feminist consists, sticks strictly to only one part of Riley's project. Where Butler's early work has become the valuable touchstone for interpretations of the name women which render the name wholly untenable, I am interested in bringing that work together with work that remains committed if uncomfortably to reconsideration of the name women as a multidimensional site of contest and resistance. In this respect, I am influenced by the work of Chicana feminists, black feminists, queer feminists, postcolonial feminists whose work rearticulates the feminist in ways that make available the possibility of a multidimensional feminist. In terms of the history of feminist activism from 17th to 20th century Europe, Riley explains her own project: “It's not that a new slogan for feminism is being proposed here—of feminism without ‘women.’ Rather, the suggestion is that ‘women’ is a simultaneous foundation of and irritant to feminism, and

⁶⁸ Seyla Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 50.

that this is constitutionally so.”⁶⁹ I suggest that there is in the context of contemporary feminist theoretical literature a contradiction sharing the dynamics of the one that Riley discusses. But this contemporary literature is far more diverse and resourceful than even Riley’s work realized. Thus I take Riley’s contradiction to be a model⁷⁰ of the disagreement among theorists with which I began, but I am also interested in articulating a different relationship to the name women than can be found in Riley’s work. I have tried to replace in the development of this project the name women “as foundation” (as opposed to irritant to the feminist) with the idea that the name women might be other than asexual or aracial (which ultimately always reinforces privileged experiences of the name women.) I have tried to think of the name women as a help rather than hindrance to race, class, queer critiques. Still, it is key to my project that this is only one moment of the feminist. I argue that the former and the latter are an internal disagreement of the feminist.

This dissertation does not offer a way out of such disagreement, but rather argues for the value of actively maintaining both sides of the disagreement. On the contrary I want to suggest that there is currently no way out of this disagreement. In fact, disagreement is not the best word for my interest. Disagreement might imply that two equal partners are able to spar over agreed upon terms. Instead, I am interested in an aporia between one moment which is negative, articulated against a prior claim, and one moment which suggests the possibility of alterity, which cannot directly be articulated at all. In the next chapter this feminist aporia will be articulated against the important

⁶⁹ Riley, *"Am I That Name?" Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History.*, 17.

⁷⁰ I borrow from Adorno here. For Adorno, the models in the third section of the *Negative Dialectics* are not examples. These models—freedom, Hegelian world spirit, Auschwitz—are not separable “applications” of the theory that precedes them in the book. The models articulate the negative dialectical points made earlier in the text.

critique of dialectic of Adorno. This critique was articulated as a negative dialectics, a critique of dialectic gained only through careful study of the dialectic, the moments of its power as well as its naivety.

Feminist aporetics is something different. Feminist aporetics build on negative dialectics, opening up an aporia both moments of which are feminist. I insist that aporia is not a debilitating state even if it offers the theorist no position. I take the notion of aporia from a reading of Adorno for whom dialectics can offer powerful opposition despite the inability of the dialectic to constitute subjectivity. And yet Adorno was painfully aware that dialectics necessarily erase and misrepresent that which can only be articulated as dialectical. Throughout the dissertation I enact contradictions which are relatable to negative dialectic. The negative dialectic it will be explained refutes the philosophical triumph of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. Such triumph for Adorno is best characterized as coercion, and this point is one impetus of Adorno's work *Negative Dialectics*. The *Aufhebung* borrows much from medieval disputation which itself borrowed much from Platonic and Aristotelian dialectic.⁷¹ Therefore Adorno's rejection of the dialectic as an effort capable of positive, uncoerced results can be read as a notable departure not only from Hegelian dialectic but also from the philosophical tradition on

⁷¹ Ronald H. McKinney, "The Origins of Modern Dialectics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* April (1983). Socratic *elenchus* might have more in common with Adorno's negative dialectic. On elenchus as ironical refutation, see Richard Robinson, "Elenchus" in Gregory Vlastos, *The Philosophy of Socrates; a Collection of Critical Essays*, [1st ed., *Modern Studies in Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1971).: "Elenchus" in the wider sense means examining a person with regard to a statement he has made, by putting to him questions calling for further statements, in the hope that they will determine the meaning and the truth-value of his first statement. Most often the truth-value expected is falsehood; and so 'elenchus' in the narrower sense is a form of cross-examination or refutation," 78. For more on elenchus as the "deduction of a contradiction from the refutand alone, without any additional premise," see the work out of which the above is taken, Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, Second Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.

which it follows.⁷² It is in this sense that Adorno claims that *Negative Dialectics* “flouts tradition.”⁷³ “To the best of his ability the author means to put his cards on the table—

⁷²Adorno’s relationship to philosophy is not straightforward. See for example, “Why Still Philosophy” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models : Interventions and Catchwords, European Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Here Adorno suggests that he is not at all sure of the answer to this question, and then argues for a negative definition of philosophy as interrogation of truth as well as vehement denial of having “the Absolute at its command,” 7. Also consider the *Negative Dialectics* which famously begins, “Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it [that philosophy was/is obsolete] was *missed* [my emphasis.]” He goes on to say that it is only as criticism of itself that philosophy “lives on.” But what is the relationship between philosophy and that which lives on? And what is Adorno’s attitude toward that which lives on? On the one hand, “Disenchantment of the concept is the antidote of philosophy,” 13 and “To be worth another thought, philosophy must rid itself of ... naivete,” suggesting that with certain changes, philosophy as a project is not to be rejected and might in fact be worth another thought, 4. On the other hand, *Negative Dialectics* and famously “On Subject and Object,” are commonly read as rejecting philosophy in favor of interpretation of minutiae [*Kleinsten*]. To make matters worse, “It is as philosophy’s self-criticism that the dialectical motion stays *philosophical*,” [my emphasis] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 153. Thus it may be said that Adorno rejects philosophy in perhaps any form it has previously taken, but he also maintains the profound need for reflection on what thinking can’t wish away. This thinking both is and isn’t philosophy. It isn’t insofar as interpretation is of minutiae and does not condone either systematic thinking or identity thinking. It is insofar as it relates intimately, in fact as “self-criticism,” to these projects. This is in part due to Adorno’s belief that to forget one’s own intellectual lineage, a primary sign of the hubris of Enlightenment, would be a mistake. One must have knowledge of one’s intellectual lineage in order to avoid becoming all the more its prey. But this emphasis on intellectual lineage in Adorno is also due to the degree to which the context of Adorno’s political life was the philosophical discourse of the European academy. As Angela Davis explains, this was largely a result of Adorno’s feeling that the revolution had failed “because the theory itself was flawed, perhaps even fundamentally flawed. He therefore insisted that the only sure way to move along a revolutionary continuum was to effect, for the present, a retreat into theory. No revolutionary transformation was possible, he said, until we could figure out what went wrong in the theory,” Joy James, ed., *The Angela Y. Davis Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), 317. However, believing that no such “retreat into theory” is possible for those whose very lives depend upon it, Davis goes on to point out that interestingly “many of Horkheimer and Adorno’s ideas were mobilized in *challenging* this advocacy of theory as the only possible mode of practice. I was involved, in fact, in the production of a pirate edition of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which Adorno and Horkheimer were not yet willing to republish. We typed the text on stencils, mimeographed it, and sold it for the cost of its production [my emphasis].” Thus while Adorno remained skeptical, contra Marcuse and Lukacs, that political activism could be done responsibly on the basis of flawed theory, that the proper political context was theory (self-critical philosophy), his work could be and was used in spite of this. If Adorno means what he suggests in “The Actuality of Philosophy” that “being” will never be appropriate to thought, then it is not clear when political activity will ever be responsible in Adorno’s view. However, see Michael Sullivan and John T. Lysaker, “Between Impotence and Illusion: Adorno’s Art of Theory and Practice,” *New German Critique* 57 (Autumn 1992). As Sullivan and Lysaker argue, the question of the relationship between theory and practice “founds as a question” the work of the Frankfurt School (90). In fact this question, of “the very thought of what it would mean to make a positive contribution to political action,” intensifies in the very work often used to demonstrate Adorno’s political inefficacy. Instead, “Adorno’s aesthetic analyses carry out the program of ‘going through the subject’ in pursuit of a practice that might vindicate and concretize his intuition that the key to emancipation is the maintenance of the tension between subject and object” (119.)

⁷³ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, xix. This is however a controversial claim. The title of the work itself is contradictory as Adorno points out in this opening paragraph to the preface: “This book seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits [the achievement of something positive by determinate negation or ‘negation of negation’] without reducing its determinacy. The unfoldment of the paradoxical title is one of

which is by no means the same as playing the game.”⁷⁴ The negative dialectic instead of presenting a positive resolution to the resistance that subjectivity poses for identity, lays that resistance “on the table.” Whether or not Adorno is right that this does not necessarily constitute the concession of a bad hand, I am not ready to say. But I cannot read the ubiquitous contest over the name women in transnational feminist theories without wondering if this does not offer a way in to exactly the right response, a statement of a situation in which sublation would be coercion. For Adorno this is not a concession, but rather a refusal of the coercion that sublation inevitably enacts. This refusal presents the possibility of immanent interpretation that relies on a complicated relationship to dialectics. Instead what I perform here are feminist aporetics, distinguished from negative dialectics by their relationship to negation. The possibility of feminist subjectivity would not hang on the agendered, aracial, asexual critiqued subjectivity of negative dialectics. The decentered subject of Adornian critique has no body and has no commitment to particularities of race or gender or class or ability or sexuality. The possibility of feminist subjectivity is instead in negation, frequently mistaken for contradiction, but at any rate not yet anticipating alterity. Thus the question of feminist subjectivity in the terms of this project must shift its focus from that of negative dialectics.

In a manner similar to my understanding of aporia, Sarah Kofman famously points out that *poros* is not *odos*:

its aims.” The status of the “reduction of determinacy” is a vexed question in Adorno. After all, thought is “a piece of existence extending—however negatively—to that which is not. The utmost distance alone would be proximity [to utopia]; philosophy is the prism in which its color is caught,” Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 57. Thus despite its difference from the significance of utopian negation for Marcuse, for Adorno thought does extend to “that which is not,” but which is presumably better.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

... *odos*, a general term designating a path or a road of any kind. *Poros* refers only to a sea-route or a route down a river, to a passage opened up across a chaotic expanse which it transforms into an ordered, qualified space by introducing differentiated routes, making visible the various directions of space, by giving direction to an expanse which was initially devoid of all contours, of all landmarks.⁷⁵

If *poros* is “never traced in advance, ... can always be obliterated, ... must always be traced anew, in unprecedented fashion,”⁷⁶ then *aporia* is not a closed door or blocked way encountered along a sure path, but rather for Plato,

when the contradictions of the one and the many are applied at the level of ideas themselves, the *aporia* are true wonders. They are wonderfully stupefying, seem to be inextricable, and give rise to endless discussion.⁷⁷

This dissertation presents various feminist aporetics, many models of feminist aporetics.

I do not see a way out of *aporia* with respect to feminist subjectivity and the names woman/women/she/female that would not repeat time-honored exclusions of some of those whom feminism as a variegated movement presumes to represent. In fact this project would cast both moments of the *aporia* as feminist, and therefore suggest that “feminist” is not a consistent stance or position and cannot be made to be without significant loss. As suggested in the Kofman epigraph, to decide upon one meaning for feminist would constitute a gesture of betrayal.

The *aporia* that concerns me here is the sophisticated, the “rival brother”⁷⁸ of appropriately philosophical *aporia* if anything at all for Plato, in that reconciliation in a traditional sense is not its aim. I am instead interested in prolonging the aporetic. This aporetic is one in which fragmentation is not a blocked way but rather a suspension of decision and problematizing of the “given.” Adherence to the salience of the name women it has been suggested is the more practical or perhaps empirical mode of

⁷⁵ Benjamin, *Post-Structuralist Classics.*, 10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Benjamin, *Post-Structuralist Classics.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

interpretation. This is simply not the case if one theorizes from the policing (even the self-policing) of the salience of women or the female. In this view, women and the female are nonentities requiring often violent imposition and always active assertion. What would it be to pose the question of feminist subjectivity out of Anne Fausto-Sterling's work?⁷⁹ Here it is simply not clear what the appropriately empirical approach is. That it is not clear is precisely what brings forward my questions.

How does this disagreement over how to regard the name women relate to the interpretive question of how to hold together concerns about the threat posed by *rejection* of the project of defining modes of representation of the "feminine"⁸⁰ and concerns about the threat posed by *adherence* to the project of defining modes of representation of the "feminine"? On the one hand there is the concern that women as a discrete, collective subject position is untenable. If so there remains a question of how to address the needs and interests that remain visible and pressing only by lending credence and recognizing the salience of the gender binary in transnational public, private pursuits. The problematic normative theories and practices that presume the salience of the gender binary would seem to require theory which speaks in kind, which maintains women as a term of critique.

⁷⁹ Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender : Biological Theories About Women and Men*, Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body : Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*.

⁸⁰ Anglophone interpretation of the work of Irigaray has come under criticism for forgetting that there are no linguistic distinctions in the French language between women, female and that which is of women or of the female. "Feminine" is a frequent translation of "that which is of women or of the female" which introduces a confusion common among Anglophone readers of Irigaray in which the author is read as positing an essential femininity. Recent commentary in English on Irigaray, however, suggests that Irigaray's work maintains the question of whether or not it is possible to theorize that which is of women or of the female. Maria Cimitile and Elaine P. Miller, *Returning to Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy, Politics, and the Question of Unity*, *Suny Series in Gender Theory* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).

On the other hand, frequently in texts that express this understanding of an imaginary of women there is recognition that this imaginary is groundless, resisting a stable definition of women, the female, the feminine. If women as a discrete, collective subject position is untenable then the gender binary and thus the discrete group women cannot remain a framework for critique insofar as they are complicit with those problematic normative theories and practices to which they intend to speak. However, frequently in texts that state that the latter is the correct response to the rejection of women as a discrete subjectivity, she, female, butch or femme⁸¹ remain gestures to the impossibility of assimilation to gender-blind and/or traditional masculinist normativity.⁸²

I want to bring these competing worries together, as they are generally considered at some remove from one other, to consider how it is that the discrete group women and more recently an appeal to the female as unproblematic remains a sine qua non of feminist theory and philosophy⁸³ in such a ubiquitously and convincingly contested

⁸¹ Gayle Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries," in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, ed. Joan Nestle (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1992), 466-467.

⁸² Biddy Martin's reads Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* as giving "sexuality the capacity to collapse conventional gender definitions and distinctions," rather than arguing that heteronormative definitions of gender are inadequate. The result for Martin is a set of concerns regarding how to articulate the feminist implications of queer theory in Sedgwick's work. Martin: "From the perspectives of those of us who have experienced the pain of being cast as queer in the most negative possible terms, or whose sense of self involves rebelliousness against the normalizing constraints of conventional femininity, the punishments that accrue to femininity itself have, perhaps, become less visible than the punitive consequences of failing to conform, and our defenses against the vulnerabilities and degradations associated with femininity have become stronger," 105. This use of femininity seems to me to be searching for a way of articulating the "punitive consequences" for women's bodies, those which do and especially those which do not conform. This tension, however, is precisely what makes it difficult to use words such as femininity to articulate one's position. Martin's work negotiates this tension with a sophistication that I admire but that I cannot yet adequately describe for these reasons. I return to these concerns in Chapter Three. Biddy Martin, "Sexualities Without Genders and Other Queer Utopias," *Diacritics* 24.2-3 (1994): 104-121.

⁸³ I take this line from a book by an author to whom my work is deeply indebted: Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of Women in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1988. She argues that the name women has always been "a simultaneous foundation of and irritant to feminism, and that this is continuously so," 17. However, I am raising similar concerns in a different arena. In that work, Riley is concerned with the ways that the name "woman" is negotiated always against an

manner. In other words, this dissertation provides a reading of the significance of both the instability of and reliance on women and female (reflecting the remainders of the Anglophone sex/gender distinction) as well as the significance of circular debates over how to regard them. The undecideability of these debates expresses the irreducible contradiction at the heart of feminist theoretical literatures. This climate of productive disagreement begs simultaneously the following questions that implicate any philosophy of gender: What is the significance of a discrete subjectivity for feminist theories and philosophies? Is it appropriate to answer in one voice such a question? In light of widespread disagreement, is it possible to have an incoherent theory of feminist subjectivity? What could such a theory look like?

Whether or not this situation of aporia must or must not, should or should not, maintain is a question outside the scope of this project. In other words, I leave it to others to attempt or reject projects which resolve the feminist aporetic. Instead, I want to call attention to the conflict between two moments of the feminist, even if the writers of those theories do not themselves articulate their theories as aporetic. These moments constitute a situation in which no current answers seem appropriate, even and especially to those who would for political, ethical, epistemological reasons inhabit one position (that in which the name women does and must remain viable and/or given static content) or the other (that in which the name women does not and must not remain viable and cannot be given static content.)

What is— “Feminist”?

ideal/typical purportedly agendered human. I am interested in the name woman as negotiated between subjectivity and the preemption of subjectivity.

Norma Alarcón, in an essay on the influential *This Bridge Called My Back*⁸⁴ has put the dilemma this way with respect to speaking of women as the monolithic other of monolithic men:

Needless to say, the requirement of gender consciousness only in relationship to man leaves us in the dark about a good many things, including interracial and intercultural relations. It may be that the only purpose this type of differential has is as a political strategy. It does not help us envision a world beyond binary restrictions, nor does it help us to reconfigure feminist theory to include the “native female.” It does, however, help us grasp the paradox that within this cultural context one cannot be a feminist without becoming a gendered subject of knowledge, which makes it very difficult to transcend gender at all and to imagine relations between women.⁸⁵

For Alarcón, it is the apparent political necessity that feminist theory be authored by a one-dimensional woman, a flatly gendered subject of knowledge that interprets the feminist in such a way that does not allow her to articulate what Toni Morrison has called “the kind of books I want to read.”⁸⁶ Alarcón is particularly bothered by two outcomes. First, the feminist theorist who takes race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability/disability to be mutually constitutive aspects of gender must according to this interpretation of the feminist regard these dimensions of gender as removable. Contrary to the notion that this removability could actually be meaningful, no content of the name women survives the rendering invisible of norms of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability/disability that is not actually already privileged with respect to these categories. In other words, to give credence to the removability of all dimensions other than gender within a feminist theory would be to deny the urgency of critiques informed by readings of race, class, ability and

⁸⁴ Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back : Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 2nd ed. (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).

⁸⁵ Norma Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism” in *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras* (Aunt Lute Books, 1990.)

⁸⁶ Quoted in Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens: Womanist Prose*, (New York: Harcourt, 1983), 7.

sexuality in relationships among women.⁸⁷ Intersectionality is a mode of interpretation that takes race, class, sexuality, ability, geography to be mutually informative. I argue that intersectionality is a multi-dialectical approach that allows one to speak about the interrelationship of these aspects of the social, but in so doing it builds upon genealogies in which these aspects of the social are always separable prior to intersectional analysis. As we will see in the third chapter, *Claiming Antigone*: Butler, Zack, Irigaray, Naomi Zack develops a relational theory of the group “women” precisely because of the shortcomings of intersectionality;⁸⁸ for Zack, intersectionality only exacerbates the compartmentalization of “the feminist,” that which is feminist, and makes the feminisms of women of color irrelevant to those of white women in the North American academy, makes the feminisms of globally Southern women irrelevant to those of the global North. Intersectionality thus recreates the very marginalizations to which it was meant to respond. The multi-dialectical approach of intersectionality does not enable the theorist to imagine the group “women” differently. For Alarcón the dialectic of man/woman “leaves us in the dark about a good many things”; for Zack, intersectionality does not fix the situation but introduces new problems. Interestingly, as I will argue, Zack thinks the feminist in terms of the Adornian negative (see Chapters Two and Three), which is a dialectical interpretation of the feminist. In contrast, Alarcón argues that dialectical interpretations of man/woman, presumably even if they are intersectional preempt alternative modes for thinking the feminist.

⁸⁷ Naomi Zack will point to precisely this undermining of the name women in the context of discussion of relationships among women as at least hypocritical. Naomi Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 8.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-8.

And thus, secondly, Alarcón calls attention to the necessity for thinking a world beyond a dialectics of women-men or female-male. To speak in feminist theoretical terms which take the notions of women, men, male, female for granted is for Alarcón not yet to “transcend gender.” It is not at all clear what this can mean, but Alarcón makes it clear that to speak in feminist theoretical terms which take these notions for granted is at interpretive odds with the aspects of oneself which call gendered expectations fundamentally into question. For Alarcón, the paradox that one must become a gendered subject of knowledge in order to question gender and to imagine relations “between women”⁸⁹ suggests that it is only as a short-term political strategy that asserting “women” over against “men” is viable. However, this political strategy as Alarcón views it only creates new political problems of exclusion. Is the feminist intellectual gesture in light of this paradox then a thorough undermining of the name women?

In their introduction to *Feminism as Critique*, Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell articulate this predicament as follows:

Underlying the idea that there is an essential connection between feminist theory and the unique experience of women as women, is the seemingly unproblematic assumption that this experience can be identified and found to yield conclusions generalizable on the basis of gender. Third World women have challenged precisely the assumption that there is a generalizable, identifiable and collectively shared experience of womanhood. To be Black and to be a woman, is to be a Black woman, a woman whose identity is constituted differently from that of white women.⁹⁰ The challenge of Third World feminists brings to the fore the complex nature of gender identification, as well as highlighting the dilemma of feminine/feminist identity. This dilemma is expressed by the question: how can feminist theory base itself upon the uniqueness of the female experience without reifying thereby one single

⁸⁹ Again, this way of putting it brings forward the tension in which I am interested: all gendered subjects of knowledge must be placed under the demand that they be women (with the race, class, gender, sexuality, ability norms that this implies) in order to be included as those implicated in the phrase “between women.” One has to be one among women in order to play the game; this is an inadequate view of the feminist on its own. But to argue the contrary while augmenting feminism introduces the very paradox that Alarcón describes.

⁹⁰ This is the precisely the point that Zack disputes as I discuss in Chapter Three.

definition of femaleness as the paradigmatic one—*without succumbing, that is, to an essentialist discourse on gender* [my emphasis]?⁹¹

As the editors go on to state, *Feminism as Critique* documents this dilemma, rather than attempting to resolve it, with authors who contrast in their approach to the dilemma. In this volume, the dilemma crystallizes around disagreement on the status of psychoanalysis and Foucauldian theory:

Against the reification of the bipolar categories of gender identity—male and female—Cornell, [Adam] Thurshwell and [Judith] Butler argue for a critique of binary logic, for the proliferation of difference and for the constitution of identity via the recognition and letting be of true difference. Feminist psychoanalytic theorists like Dinnerstein, Chodorow and Balbus would not so much disagree with this call for difference as maintain that aspects of female socialization in our cultures contain traces of such memories and practices as would dispose women to realize and respect such difference more readily than their male counterparts.⁹²

Also,

Whereas Fraser and Young join Cornell, Thurshwell and Butler in their critiques of the identitary logic of binary oppositions, Benhabib and Markus, like Balbus, see in present forms of gender constitution utopian traces of a future mode of otherness.

Thus theorists in this volume are not united either in making gestures amounting to an undermining of the name women or female or in making gestures amounting to a contemplation of the name women or female. That the conversation is carried out in the context of discussion of the critical theoretical feminist perspective only makes the dilemma more acute. In light of this dispute, in what sense can one speak of the feminist? As a mere adjectival, overarching name? Clearly not, as these writers have very different interpretations of the feminist. They are engaged not so much in feminist theory as if what that phrase means were decided in advance, but instead they are engaged in thinking

⁹¹ Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 13.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 15.

the feminist—in articulating various interpretations of the feminist. In this sense this volume may be read as asking the question of the feminist fundamentally. After this volume, what is it to be feminist or to speak as feminist?

Janet Halley’s recent publication, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break From Feminism*,⁹³ responds vividly in discussion of feminist political activism in the U.S. Halley suggests as a way of breaking out of Alarcón’s paradox that political projects of the left, even those which have in the past identified with feminism, “take a break from feminism.” In short, Halley gives compelling reasons why some feminists might want to abandon feminism. This recommendation is in fact due to the predominance of one-dimensionally gender-centered framework of what Halley calls “governance feminism.”⁹⁴ But even as “a break” this recommendation suggests that feminism on the whole is marked by extreme confusion. It would be very difficult to imagine the proponents of any other movement for the movement recommending even the temporary disavowal of their own tenets without raising eyebrows. Halley makes her claim by building on the already widespread understanding that feminism is not a monolithic pursuit:

Feminism is not a universal advocacy project for all sexual interests that . . . intellectuals and advocates have constructed, inhabited, defended and advanced. In the United States over the last twenty years, we have seen a range of political and theoretical incursions, all indicatively “left” of center, and all adding significantly different analyses and agendas. These projects—gay-identity thought and politics, sex-positive feminism, anti-racist, postcolonial, and socialist feminisms that are willing to diverge

⁹³ Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break From Feminism*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006.)

⁹⁴ Catherine A. MacKinnon is Halley’s primary target. Those whom Halley names “hybrid feminists,” who show a “willingness to be *indifferent* to the foundational binarism, m/f, of feminism [original emphasis]” avoid such criticism. Gayatri Spivak and The Combahee River Collective are examples, 91ff. While I am sympathetic with Halley’s frustration with feminism that covers over its raced, gendered, heteronormative, classed presumptions with a supposedly one-dimensional notion of women, I argue in Chapter Six that Spivak’s use of essentialism is not indifferent to the foundational binarism male/female. Instead she expresses an ambivalent view that maintains the name women while simultaneously looking for its constitutive instability.

from feminist priorities, postmodernizing feminism, queer theory with and without feminism—have been competing with various feminisms—some of them compete with feminism tout court—for intellectual authority and political fealty among left... people.

Because of the degree to which feminisms diverge, Halley recommends “taking a break from feminism,” insofar as feminism advocates solely on the part of women who are the subordinates of men.⁹⁵ Halley locates disagreement among feminisms in how they relate to what she calls “governance feminism.”⁹⁶ “By positing themselves as experts on women, sexuality, motherhood, and so on, feminists walk the halls of power.”

Governance Feminism is a feminism successfully heard in the arena of representational politics whose agenda is set by issues related to reproduction. Halley identifies

Governance Feminism with feminism that takes white, heterosexual, Western/Northern women as its center. Halley overstates the degree to which feminists in this position “walk the halls of power.” (For example, she claims, “In the United States, the only left-of-center locales where male masculinity is worshiped anymore are gay and male.”⁹⁷)

But Halley’s point does not rest on the amount of political influence wielded by Governance Feminism. Feminism has always been contested territory, within which norms of race, class, sexuality, geography, ability/disability have not been made visible without struggle. For Halley however taking the claim seriously means today recognizing that it is quite possible that the best *feminist* stance in the public arena of representational politics is *not feminist*.

⁹⁵ Halley, 17-20.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

In fact, Halley's book is not on her own description a consistent work of feminist theory; she describes herself in fact as "only rarely and intermittently feminist."⁹⁸ She published the journal article that would become part of *Split Decisions* under the name "Ian Halley," ostensibly to make the point that it is not "as a woman" that she writes this article. My interest, however, is in Halley's concern to express an apparent incompatibility of queer theory and feminist aims.⁹⁹ She seeks to debunk the notion that queer theory must be considered feminist theory, when feminist theory relies on a distinction between male and female.¹⁰⁰ What is interesting is that Halley engages in this debunking by implicitly taking seriously a claim that some feminist theorists share with queer theorists, namely that no stable content can be given to the name women.¹⁰¹ However, where Halley locates a strong discontinuity between queer theory and feminist theory in how these relate to Governance Feminism, I am interested in recognizing the already present body of explicitly feminist literature that questions fundamentally the salience of the name women. Thus while various literatures that I would not want exhaustively to collapse into feminist theory do bring critiques of feminist theory, this project opens space for recognition that feminist theorists themselves—postcolonial,¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁹ On incompatibility of queer and feminist theories, see Suzanne Danuta Walters, "From Here to Queer: Radical Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Lesbian Menace (Or, Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Fag?)" *Signs* Vol. 21, No.4, *Feminist Theory and Practice* (Summer 1996), 830-869.

¹⁰⁰ This is for Halley one of three necessary and sufficient characteristics of feminism. The other two are 2) taking f or the female to be the "disadvantaged or subordinated element" and 3) opposing the subordination of female (18-19.)

¹⁰¹ For discussion of the relationship between queer and feminist theories, see also *Feminism Meets Queer Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1997.)

¹⁰² T. Minh-Ha Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other : Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)., Gayatri Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," in *Displacement: Derrida and After*, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Tani E. Barlow, "Not Really a Properly Intellectual Response: An Interview with Gayatri Spivak," *Positions* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2004), Spivak and Grosz, "Criticism, Feminism and the

queer,¹⁰³ critical race,¹⁰⁴ deconstructivist¹⁰⁵—qua feminist theorists¹⁰⁶ make these critiques. It is in this sense that the aporia expressed here is “within” feminist theory, not external to it. In the terms of this project then, both moments of the aporia are feminist gestures.

Of course not everyone wants to both affirm and deny the viability of the name women. But regardless of how a particular theorist seeks to address this impasse, feminist theories seem torn between these two positions. In other words, despite the dispute among different approaches in which I am interested, even feminists committed to what is called “feminist theory” find themselves torn between these two competing positions.

Institution.”, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Donna Landry, and Gerald M. MacLean, *The Spivak Reader : Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁰³ Kathleen M. Blee, *Feminism and Antiracism : International Struggles for Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw : On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), Lynne Huffer, ““There Is No Gomorrah”: Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (2001), Ellen Rooney, *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor, *Feminism Meets Queer Theory, Books from Differences* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997). Also Sam Feder, Julie Hollar, and Women Make Movies (Firm), *Boy I Am* (New York: Women Make Movies, 2007), videorecording., a documentary which follows three FtMs who are already on hormone treatment through subsequent surgery. The documentary places the need (due to societal pressure to conform to standards for either male or female) for transgendered persons to consider surgery, to weigh the complex options without judgment, and for recognition of this struggle in the context of the history of feminism. The documentary does so without covering over distinct history of the transgender and transsexual movements and broader LGBT movements. In fact, the documentary offers this struggle as in part a *feminist* one, involving reconsideration of the notion that biology equals destiny (read: Beauvoir) and the notion that women ought not to have to conform to gender-binarized standards for women’s bodies. The documentary frames the stories in this way while also discussing the threat of disappearance of female masculinity and butch performativity with the availability of surgeries and hormone treatments. Includes interviews with Judith “Jack” Halberstam, especially on question of relationship between feminist, queer and transgender activists as well as the question raised and left open by the documentary as to the long term values of surgical conformity to gender binary or (difficult, often life-threatening) resistance in the form of female masculinity or butch performativity.

¹⁰⁴ Rooney, *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, Flora Veit-Wild and Dirk Naguschewski, *Body, Sexuality, and Gender, Matatu ; No. 29-30* (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2005). Andrea Blee, “Between the covers: feminist, antiracist, and queer: performance art in Australia” in Blee, *Feminism and Antiracism : International Struggles for Justice*.

¹⁰⁵ Penelope Deutscher, *Yielding Gender : Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Again I do not want to conflate any of these literatures with or cover them over as simply feminist literatures. But it is a primary theme of this work to preempt the notion that by theorizing the queer a work cannot be feminist. This seems to me a huge mistake, and one that is made when one must take for granted only one interpretation of the name women in order to be theorizing the feminist or that which is feminist.

Witness the confusion over what “women’s studies” means and how to remedy what Wendy Brown has called the “political insidiousness of the institutional divide between ‘ethnic studies’ and ‘women’s studies,’ as well as a similarly disturbing division between queer and feminist theories.¹⁰⁷ In recent years substantive disagreements over the status of the name women have occupied among others Nancy Fraser,¹⁰⁸ Seyla Benhabib,¹⁰⁹ Judith Butler,¹¹⁰ Iris Marion Young,¹¹¹ Linda Martín Alcoff,¹¹² Naomi Zack,¹¹³ Luce Irigaray,¹¹⁴ Monique Wittig.¹¹⁵

If misunderstood this project threatens to reinscribe a related disagreement between advocates of what Judith Squires has called in the context of feminist political theory the strategies of “reversal,” in which women and women’s activities should be “recognized

¹⁰⁷ Wendy Brown, “Chapter 7: The Impossibility of Women’s Studies” in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005), 116-135.

¹⁰⁸ In December 1990 Richard Rorty presented “Feminism and Pragmatism,” and Nancy Fraser presented “From Irony to Prophecy to Politics: A Response to Richard Rorty” as the University of Michigan’s Tanner Lecture Symposium.¹⁰⁸ These lectures, when taken together, present the dilemma of the subject of feminist theory and philosophy concerning the name women that my project addresses. They do so in the context of deliberation over the notion that “pragmatist philosophy might be useful to feminist politics.” Fraser characterizes their exchange as articulating differences “within pragmatism.”¹⁰⁸ Is this exchange simply more evidence of the diffuse way in which pragmatism is referenced within feminist theory and philosophy? Does their disagreement point to any latent content for the term left unidentified currently in the literature? I leave this as an open question at this point. My interest is in locating their cumulative account of the ambiguity of the name women in feminist philosophy.

¹⁰⁹ Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender*.

¹¹⁰ Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*.

¹¹¹ Iris Marion Young, “Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Julien S. Murphy (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹¹² Linda Martín Alcoff, “Against Post-Ethnic Futures,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2004), Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Identities: A Reader* (Malden: Blackwell, 2002).

¹¹³ Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*.

¹¹⁴ Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹¹⁵ Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

and revalorized,” and “displacement” or what is often also called destabilization, “a commitment to deconstruct rather than to interpret gender practices.”¹¹⁶ Another way of understanding this disagreement is to say that for some, where the philosophy of gender is concerned, reversal as a moral and political project in its de facto reliance on white, heterosexist, bourgeois feminism is no longer tenable. In other words, the gesture of reversal which is for many the founding gesture of feminist theory, is for others antithetical to diverse feminist theories and philosophies which call into question the terms of representation that make such a “reversal” possible. In terms of reversal theories, the rejection of the name women repeats the very erasure and devaluation of women that feminist theory is meant to remedy. For the reversal theorist, the ‘point of view of’ women demands further contemplation, not less and certainly not erasure or denial. Instead feminist theory must be about calling into question the investment of any feminist strategy in the raced, gendered, heterosexist dichotomies to which feminist theory is meant to be responding. I am not interested in reinscribing or further polarizing participants in this debate. I am instead interested in suggesting a retroactive troubling of that debate by addressing the pervasive ambivalence regarding the name women and the degree to which the feminist stands in need of interpretation. It is a by-product of my argument that the reversal-destabilization debate is an internally generative one.

In this chapter, I have discussed a number of scholarly sites at which the name women and the meaning of the feminist call for interpretation due to the dynamic ways these names are used. And I have begun to suggest that these articulations of the feminist suggest disagreement over the status of feminist subjectivity. For the rest of the

¹¹⁶ Judith Squires, *Gender in Political Theory* (Malden: Polity Press), 1999, 78-79.

dissertation, my interest will be in these questions in particular as they relate to the post-Hegelian tradition. In the next chapter, I will argue that this disagreement has deep roots in status of the dialectic for location of the feminist. I turn to the work of Adorno whose work is complexly related to the dialectic in a manner similar to feminist theories and philosophies. Adorno's negative dialectic allows me to articulate the question of feminist subjectivity, even though that subjectivity cannot yet be found in Adorno's work.

I proceed by offering a reading of a tension in Adorno's work, one which is overlooked in post-structuralist, postmodernist and Habermasian readings of Adorno.¹¹⁷ This tension is that between what Adorno articulates as the promise and danger of the expression of subjectivity. Adorno suggests that when the subject must be expressed as an object for public consumption but in doing so always remain "incommensurable with the subjects it reduces to the same denominator,"¹¹⁸ that expression can become the enemy of the supposedly constitutive subjectivity it sought to express. But this expression also secures the social appearance of subjectivity making critique possible.¹¹⁹ As we will

¹¹⁷ Peter U. Hohendahl, "Introduction: Adorno Criticism Today," *New German Critique* 56 Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno (Spring-Summer 1992).

¹¹⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Shortly after beginning this project, I read Renée Heberle's Introduction to *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2006.) Here Heberle briefly suggests, "Critically examining the troubled and troubling status of 'woman is among the many projects of feminism and contributes to its vitality as a field of inquiry and politics. And the contingent status of 'women' drives the restless, conflictual quality of feminism in theory and in practice. ... Much of Adorno's thinking predicts some of these basic conundrums of feminist theorizing," 2. My appropriation of Adorno aims to articulate some of the ways that Adorno's work may be made to speak to the significance of the instability of women and the relationship of this instability to the question of how to regard women within feminist theory, philosophy, politics. Due to the brevity of this remark in Heberle, I can only tentatively say that I do not read Adorno as she does as understanding concepts to come "diffusely apart as critical attention is paid to the terms of its existence and its particularity." Instead, I read Adorno as giving attention to the salience and apparent self-insulation of concepts in accordance with which society (dis)functions as well as the salience of the negative and nonidentical because of which the Concept alone is verbally salient. Subjection for Adorno must be understood in relation to both the costs of the dialectic and its promise. For appropriations of Adorno for feminist theory, see *Adorno, Culture and Feminism*, Maggie O'Neill, ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 1999.) Also, Andrew Hewitt, "A Feminist Dialectic of the Enlightenment: Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited," *New German Critique* 56 Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno

see this immanent critique of subjectivity does not itself provide the resources for posing the question of feminist subjectivity. It would seem that my own situation as a theorist is even more precarious than Adorno's formulation allows. The question of feminist subjectivity might be stated as the question of whether or not feminist subjectivity ought (for feminist concerns) or ought not (for feminist concerns) to be regarded as an oxymoron. Adorno's negative dialectics will serve as the possibility for posing this question, even if his interpretation of negative dialectics does not articulate the problems that this raises for thinking the feminist.

Chapter Two

Negativity and the Nonidentical: Negative Dialectics and Feminist Aporetics

In hesitating between the ‘no’ and the ‘yes, sometimes, perhaps,’ Adorno was heir to both. He took account of what the concept, even the dialectic, could not conceptualize in the singular event, and he did everything he could to take on the responsibility of this double legacy.

Jacques Derrida¹²⁰

What would it mean to think the negative dialectic as a *she* who is “other than” or is barred from posing as the complex Adornian subject¹²¹? What would it mean to pose the question of feminist subjectivity through *negative* dialectic?¹²² Of course the very reclamation of negativity/contradiction and nonidentity as that which eludes the concept plays a role in what Adorno expresses to be his own contradictory subjectivity under the aspect of identity. And so, as we will see, this articulation is itself a resource for posing the question of feminist subjectivity. What this means is the focus of the present chapter. However, when Adorno immanently critiques the identity of subject and object and the reliance of this identity on that which it casts as contradiction, it might be said that the

¹²⁰ Jacques Derrida, “Fichus: Frankfurt Address,” in *Paper Machine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 166.

¹²¹ Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 282. And yet it is misleading to speak of an Adornian subject, given that Adorno goes to such lengths to complicate the notion of the discrete subject, to question its limits, to understand not only *negativity* within the subject but also the nonidentical or that which eludes the dialectic.

¹²² What the “negative” of *Negative Dialectics* means is a matter of widely divergent interpretation. This chapter is not meant to arbitrate directly those disagreements. Instead I ask these questions as an interjection of my own reading both sympathetic and interrogative. For an introduction to the diversity of approaches to Adorno studies, see Chapter One, “Approaches to Adorno: A Tentative Typology” in Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno, Modern German Culture and Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

nuanced subject being written is not one with which Antigone, who inhabits for Hegel the position of contradiction, can identify. Thus in this chapter I not only ask about the resources in *Negative Dialectics* for thinking or formulating the question of feminist subjectivity, but ultimately, whether or not an Adornian critique of subjectivity can yet pose the question of feminist subjectivity. What might it mean not to have recourse to such a contradictable identity? What might it mean to interrogate sublation and yet be forced to “locate” oneself, differently, in both negativity and the nonidentical or in the tension between them? What might the “double legacy” mean for the question of feminist subjectivity? In the terms of this project this tension is that between on the one hand Adornian negativity of the concept of the (masculine) subject which either Woman or some other revision might represent and on the other hand the Adornian “insolubly nonidentical”¹²³ which undermines the dialectical discipline. Much has been postulated in terms of thinking the *dialectic* in the feminine, to invoke Luce Irigaray.¹²⁴ Thus, even

¹²³ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 160.

¹²⁴ See for example, Cynthia Willett, “Hegel, Antigone, and the Possibility of a Woman's Dialectic,” in *Modern Engendering: Critical Feminist Readings in Modern Western Philosophy*, ed. Bat-Ami Bar On, *Suny Series, Feminist Philosophy* (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994). Cynthia Willett, “Hegel, Antigone, and the Possibility of Ecstatic Dialogue,” *Philosophy and Literature* 14, no. 2 (1990). See also Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel, Re-Reading the Canon* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996). especially essays by Benhabib, Mills and Schor who asks “Is the detail [as negativity] feminine?” 120. As opposed to Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, *Woman, Nature, and Psyche* (New Haven: Yale university press, 1987). Mills briefly addresses Adorno’s critique of Hegel: “Adorno’s critique of Hegel keeps dialectical thought open to the negativity that motivates it and in doing so allows for the emergence of Antigone as the particular, the representation of difference, beyond the domination of a logic of identity,” 85. Thus a reading of only negation within dialectical thinking provides feminist import. Mills takes for granted a discrete female subject; she does not ask the further question of what this “representation of difference” means. Irigaray’s interpretations of Antigone to be discussed in the next chapter might be read as attempts to think the dialectic “as Antigone”; for Irigaray, this moment of the dialectic has yet to be properly thought. Thus she proposes what she will come to call a “dual dialectic” or “duality of subjectivities” in which the feminine represented by Antigone is not reducible to the absolute subject. See for example, “You Who Will Never Be Mine” in Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You : Sketch for a Felicity within History* (New York: Routledge, 1996)., 103-108. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*., 223-224. Footnote #79 in Chapter Three gives further pertinent references. For discussion of Butler, Mills and Irigaray on *Antigone*, see Kimberly Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK Malden, MA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Pub. ;

though it was between Hegel and Schlegel that Antigone was disputed to be eternal ironist or radical challenge to such categorization,¹²⁵ respectively, in this chapter and the next I pose the question in Adornian terms. What might it mean to think the *negative* dialectic as Antigone?¹²⁶

In the chapters that follow, I articulate a response that has no center; I argue that because of the complexity of issues discussed in Chapter 1, a response which would be

Blackwell Pub., 2003). Especially Chapter Four: Rethinking the Second Sex. Hutchings argues that each of these negotiates a Hegelian legacy, but she fails to articulate their distinct appraisals of the name women and the question of feminist subjectivity. In other words, for Hutchings, Butler and Irigaray disagree about the significance of Antigone in post-Hegelian feminist philosophy, but this disagreement does not divide them with respect to the very terms at issue—woman, women, gender.

¹²⁵ Seyla Benhabib points out that for Schlegel, “As opposed to the crudeness of male-female relations in Homer, Sophocles... is the poet who conceives his male and female characters according to the same design and the same ideal. It is Antigone who combines the male and female personality into an androgynous ideal.” See Benhabib, “On Hegel, Women and Irony” in Mills, *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*, 39. As we will see in the next chapter, Schlegel’s reading of Antigone has an affinity with that of Butler; however, for Butler, Antigone’s claim does not so much represent androgeny as a challenge to the familial structures that make androgeny coherent as “androgeny.”

¹²⁶ Patricia Jagentowicz Mills reads Frankfurt School critical theory, of whom Marcuse is exemplary in her work, for an interpretation of the relationship between domination of nature and domination of woman. Mills, *Woman, Nature, and Psyche*. While I am indebted to Mill’s reading of Adorno’s critique of Hegel, as well as her excellent account of Hegel’s misreading of *Antigone*, this work does not yet ask about the implications for the name woman of differences among women and for differences of relationship to the names woman/women/she/female. For a critique of the figure of Woman in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, see Hewitt, “A Feminist Dialectic of the Enlightenment: Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited.” Hewitt argues that Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis consciously instrumentalizes woman in working within a masculine discourse in order to demonstrate the lack of closure of traditional philosophical logic. Women function as the “representatives of the possibility of exclusion understood as an escape from the all-inclusive system of power. In other words, the initial—and damning—exclusion of women from the philosophical project is reworked as a potential exemption from the totality both of power as ontologized domination and of reason as a system of closure,” 147. Hewitt’s response articulates in abstract form some of what I am concerned with here: in universalization of woman, one loses sight of the alterity that such a designation denies and in insisting on the meaninglessness of the feminine, one loses sight of a resistance to masculine signifying discourse. This abstract problem, however, does not obviously yet relate to the vast diversity of those on whom the Concept woman is imposed, denying the implications of this imposition in its surgical as well as symbolic modes. The hypostatization of woman is a primary assumption of Hewitt in articulating these concerns. Still, Hewitt’s articulation of the problems of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* for a “woman reader” are germane to my questions here: “The critic is obliged to read woman not as a possibility of a real opening up of the boundaries of the work, but as a figure whose utopian possibilities are entirely bound to the presuppositions of the discourse in question,” 151. That Hewitt refers to negativity as “utopian” would be a trace of the commitment to (purportedly non-raced, non-classed, non-sexually “oriented,” etc.) woman as predetermined object in his work that I have sought to avoid. In my view, Hewitt’s somewhat despairing opinion in the end that in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* the “the repressed can be liberated only as the repressed” does not hold for *Negative Dialectics*; in the latter, the concept/contradiction offers resistance to the concept, even as the value of dialectic is gesture beyond itself, beyond the heterogeneous, attesting to nonidentity, 169.

up to the challenge of this question will explore its aporia, will extend its complexity rather than deflate it. But to what is this complexity due? *Why* should aporia be maintained? I approach this question by reading Antigone as a figure which locates aporia. Why do I approach this question through the figure of Antigone?¹²⁷ Why not Ismene? I do so because I am interested in a tension that emerges in post-Hegelian feminist philosophies which dispute Hegel's interpretation of Woman, which is a reading of *Antigone*. For Hegel, Antigone emblemizes Woman, who presides over family life differentiated from community life, the clash of which facilitates the vanishing of the "ethical shape of Spirit" and the emergence of its subsequent form.¹²⁸ But it is Womankind who "changes by intrigue the universal end of government into a private end" and "perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament for the Family."¹²⁹ Thus even though she has an important role in the greater glory of the Concept, Woman is the "internal enemy—womankind in general. Womankind [*Weiblichkeit*]¹³⁰—the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community." Womankind as defender of divine law is one negation which ultimately clears the ground for the further development of Spirit.¹³¹ Like Adorno, post-Hegelian feminist philosophers have reinterpreted this view of negation. But I argue that these reinterpretations of the negative do not cohere. In a manner elucidated by my reading of Adorno and of the limitations of

¹²⁷ I return to this important question in the following chapter.

¹²⁸ Hegel, Miller, and Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit.*, 289.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹³⁰ Hegel, Miller, and Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19. "But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. This power is identical with what we earlier called the Subject."

his work for feminist interpretations of the negative, feminist philosophers disagree dramatically over what a feminist reading of the negative might look like. I offer the feminist aporetic as a reading of the negative which poses the question of feminist subjectivity; feminist aporetics articulate how Antigone might appear in negative dialectics, as both an interruption and a gesturing beyond the Hegelian dialectic.

Drucilla Cornell and Adam Thurshwell come close to asking a form of my question of what it might mean to think the negative dialectic as Antigone. Not in reading Antigone but rather in interpreting the feminine as negativity, they ask, “‘who is She, the Other of phallogocentric discourse’ ? They then appeal to various readings of negativity and the subject of feminist theory—in Kristeva, in Irigaray, and in Adorno. However, they explore only the resources of the nonidentical in Adorno. They point out that when Adorno responds to Hegel’s formulation that “the true is the whole”¹³² with the enigmatic claim that instead “the whole is the false,”¹³³ this response might be appropriated: “As the ‘*pas tout*’, the “not-all” that eludes capture, she exposes the ‘truth’ that the ‘whole is the false.’”¹³⁴ This rejection is expressed in what Adorno refers to as the paradoxical title of his later work *Negative Dialectics*¹³⁵ in which he subjects dialectical thinking to critical revision.¹³⁶ Adorno rejects the sublative moment in Hegelian dialectic, but this

¹³² “Das Wahre ist das Ganze,” Ibid., 11.

¹³³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia : Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 1978), 50. First published by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main in German in 1951.

¹³⁴ Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender.*, 148.

¹³⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*. First published in German by Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1966.

¹³⁶ The extent to which Adorno departs from dialectical thinking remains under dispute. For example, Bernstein takes the statement with which I begin—that the whole is the false—to “indicate the pervasive nature of the presence of Hegel in his thought.” While this is no doubt true, Bernstein takes this pervasiveness to be apparent as an adherence to Hegelian dialectic which is appropriated by Adorno rather than significantly modified. See “Negative Dialectic as Fate: Adorno and Hegel” in Tom Huhn, *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).. Fredric Jameson’s *Late Marxism: Adorno, or the Persistence of the Dialectic* presents Adorno’s work as a dialectical Marxism (Hegelianism turned on its head as Marx himself understood his work) for the 1990’s, Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism : Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London ; New York: Verso,

elimination transforms the dialectic into what he calls a negative dialectic, which is not to say the contradiction of the dialectic. The moment of sublation which achieves speculative philosophy,¹³⁷ Adorno argues, ignores aspects of subjectivity which are nonidentical to the object or coherent “I” which would provide for the consistency and coherence of the (masculine) subject. Subjectivity is of course not itself present as an object; it is instead constituted by objects and the concepts that they mediate. This holistic notion of the subject, demanded for recognition in the Hegelian sense, becomes false for Adorno precisely in the moment of sublation which reconfirms the coherence of historically formed concepts. Adorno suggests however that a *negative* dialectics, by indefinitely postponing the positive speculative moment in the Hegelian dialectic, allows for the possibility of appreciating the import of negation [*Negation*], that not all can be thought in terms of the dialectic of identity (of subject and object) and contradiction (of coherent subjectivity by the object). That which falls entirely outside of this dialectic can only be gestured to by “nonidentity” [*Nichidentität*]. Hegel read negation merely as a

1990). Peter Osborne in particular argued that Jameson’s search for a “dialectic model for the 1990s” has him overestimate Adorno’s dialecticalism, Peter Osborne, “A Marxism for the Postmodern?: Jameson’s Adorno,” *New German Critique* 56 Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno (Spring-Summer 1992). However, according to John Pizer, Jameson’s book is contrary to numerous criticisms, a refutation of rather than a support for writers who “transform Adorno into a late ‘Young Hegelian,’” John Pizer, “Jameson’s Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Utopian,” *New German Critique* 58 (Winter 1993). See also Shane Phelan, “Interpretation and Domination: Adorno and the Habermas-Lyotard Debate,” *Polity* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1993). On the other hand, numerous works suggest a rejection of the dialectic in Adorno similar to that found in post-structuralism. See for example, Rainer Nagele, “The Scene of the Other: Theodor W. Adorno’s Negative Dialectic in the Context of Poststructuralism,” *boundary 2* 11, no. 1/2, Engagements: Postmodernism, Marxism, Politics (Autumn 1982-Winter 1983), Sabine Wilke, “Adorno and Derrida as Readers of Husserl: Some Reflections on the Historical Context of Modernism and Postmodernism,” *boundary 2* 16, no. 2/3 (Spring 1989).. Martin Jay agrees with both camps, but finds Lyotard’s assessment of the negative dialectic’s “non-deconstructionist nostalgia for lost totality” worth mentioning. Martin Jay, “Adorno in America,” *New German Critique* 31, West German Culture and Politics (Winter 1984), Jean-Francois Lyotard, “Adorno as Devil,” *Telos* 19 (Spring 1974). Also Max Pensky, *The Actuality of Adorno : Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern, Suny Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). For Adorno’s influence on Lyotard’s notion of micrology, see “Discussions, or Phrasing ‘after Auschwitz’ in Andrew Benjamin, ed., *The Lyotard Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell 1989).. For an overview of these issues see Hohendahl, “Introduction: Adorno Criticism Today.”

¹³⁷ Hegel, Miller, and Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit.*, 22.

moment of the rational process of dialectic, leading to absolute knowing, and for Adorno he was wrong to do so. However, it is only through the dialectic of concept-negation (in which concept and negation are appreciated as mutually constituting) that that which it erases might be anticipated. The *negative* dialectic is thus paradoxical¹³⁸ in that it is only in maintaining the dialectic between identity and contradiction that that which is *not* of the dialectic, that which is only best gestured to as the nonidentical or alterity can be appreciated. As for Hegel, the particulars that resist identification between subjectivity and the objectivity against which subjectivity develops are never separable from the universals that make them intelligible as particulars. Relatedly, that which appears given is never given. But the attempt to reconcile the universal and particular, to identify or consolidate the subjective with a determined objective— these Hegelian touchstones in Adorno’s view are inevitably unsuccessful. And due to this inevitable lack of success, the supposed “moving on” of sublation is in its very gesture violent. Still, the concept says something about the contexts of ubiquitous violence. For Adorno, “Regarding the concept utopian possibility, dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it: neither a system nor a contradiction.” In fact such identification, positive negation (in the Hegelian sense) and equation will always admit of forced reconciliation. Negative dialectics aims to avoid the covering over of that failure; it aims to attest to the inherent coercion of reconciliation under Hegel’s understanding.

Thus, in connecting the negativity of which Adorno writes with the question of feminist subjectivity, Cornell and Thurschwell begin to pose the question of the implications of Adornian negativity for the feminist. However, where Cornell and Thurschwell conclude, “Adorno’s critique is incomplete. His endless negative dialectic of

¹³⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*., xix.

object and subject raises... the possibility of its ‘outside’—an ‘outside’ that permeates the categories of identity—thought as well as those of its other,” I instead build on this ambiguity of Adorno’s negative dialectical treatment.¹³⁹ Elsewhere Cornell explains that in her view Adorno’s critique is incomplete because it remains within a Lacanian problematic in which the negative is strictly inarticulable, or articulable only in heteronomous terms;¹⁴⁰ Adorno “remains an immanent critic of Hegelianism”¹⁴¹ in which the dialectic is left intact, and it is the “force of the negative” which is the ethical import of Adorno’s work. And yet, for Adorno, negative dialectics “is no longer reconcilable with Hegel.... It is suspicious of all identity. Its logic is one of disintegration.”¹⁴² Any identity of an object with the concept constituting the subject “is untruth. With this untruth, the subjective pre-formation of the phenomenon moves in front of the nonidentical in the phenomenon, in front of the *individuum ineffabile*.” And so alternatively, I read Adorno not as strictly remaining within the confines of the dialectic, but as expressing basic disbelief in the structural stability of the dialectical relationship Concept/contradiction. The “force of the negative” emerges only through a destabilization of this dialectical relationship, and yet the nonidentical is only articulable through the complexity of this dialectical relationship. Adorno expresses this disbelief in an effort to gesture beyond the dialectic, which is thus a resource for resistance to its own domination. In fact, contradiction gestures beyond what it contradicts: “A contradiction in reality, it is a contradiction against reality.”¹⁴³ This is one sense of the “negative”; the dialectic in Adorno is both “at fault for that which one thinks,” and yet capable of being

¹³⁹ Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender.*, 160.

¹⁴⁰ Drucilla Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit* (New York: Routledge, 1992)., 13ff.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁴² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 145.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 145.

“thought” not positively, but as limited, as unstable, as inadequate. The negative is not capable of being thought of from without, but this is because the thinking of negativity must keep in view the social, psychoanalytical, material salience of the concept even as it keeps in view its limits and inadequacies, not as inadequacies per se but inadequacy *as a function of the concept*. Thus in this chapter I pursue this tension between *both gestures* of thinking the concept/contradiction and the nonidentical which is anticipated. This reading sets up my reason for turning to Antigone in the next chapter in order to articulate disagreement over the name woman/women/she/female as disagreement over how to regard the question of feminist subjectivity. In the following chapter I turn to readings of Antigone that similarly articulate a feminist negative dialectic, addressing the question of the feminist subjectivity with feminist aporetics.

Adorno has famously said, “wrong life cannot be lived rightly.”¹⁴⁴ J.M. Bernstein has argued that the pessimistic tenor of this quote should not be taken too seriously. To understand Adorno’s appreciation of the ethical and political predicament marked by ubiquitous “scientific rationality in intellectual life and ... bureaucratic rationalization... in the context of indefinite economic expansion” in late capitalism is to begin to understand Adorno. In fact, Bernstein argues that this ethical intensity is of chief importance for reading Adorno. Bernstein argues that although Adorno produced no explicitly ethical work, his work is best read as offering an ethical outlook. However, it might be said that Bernstein’s reading of Adorno is representative of those marked by a

¹⁴⁴ *Minima Moralia*, quoted in J.M. Bernstein *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2. Eva Geulen begins her essay “No Happiness Without Fetishism: Minima Moralia as Ars Amandi” with this quote Heberle, *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno*. Likewise Robert Pippin opens a chapter on Adorno with this quote in *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 98. As Pippin notes, “this standard translation already defangs a bit what Adorno is trying to say: that form of life can be ‘false.’” For discussion of this claim differently translated, see Hauke Brunkhorst, *Adorno and Critical Theory* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), 63-65.

“(political) distancing” which Peter Hohendahl has argued is consistent with Habermasian critical theory.¹⁴⁵ Bernstein in fact argues for an anachronistically Habermasian Adorno who “unswervingly affirmed the values of the Enlightenment, and believed that modernity suffered from a deficit rather than a surplus of reason and rationality.”¹⁴⁶ This influential reading however conflicts starkly with other interpretations of Adorno’s “critical theory of society”¹⁴⁷ which interprets the rationalistic, scientistic, liberal democratic Western, late capitalism¹⁴⁸ as both “intelligible and unintelligible,”¹⁴⁹ admitting and confounding or negating particular accounts of culture. Such interpretation requires calling into question the local grounds for making ethical claims, and thus Adorno would seem to be too suspicious of any such claim’s indebtedness, indeed his own indebtedness, to the very same means by which the social, in his terms, negates the possibility of a subject, who might speak against the grain of society. If society precedes the subject as much as the reverse, then there is a distinct danger that any ethical or moral claim that the subject might make might not be differentiable from repetition of the dangerous values of that society. As Cornell has

¹⁴⁵ Peter Hohendahl argues in 1992 that there are roughly four modes of reading Adorno: (1) a strategy of (political) distancing, which we find in the theory of the New Left but also, and ultimately more forceful, in the more recent work of Jurgen Habermas; (2) the poststructuralist rereading, which appropriates Adorno and frequently uses him against the rationalist position of Habermas and his disciples; (3) the postmodernist critique, which has developed in recent cultural studies theory; and (4) a return to the “authentic” Adorno, a strategy which challenges both the poststructuralist reception and the postmodernist critique. Hohendahl, “Introduction: Adorno Criticism Today.” 4-5. See also Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno*. Such widespread disagreement over how to read Adorno is no doubt due to the close historical proximity with which scholars encounter him, but I also wonder with Hohendahl (in an Adornian manner) whether such disagreement might not be due to interesting thematic tensions in Adorno’s writing.

¹⁴⁶ J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics, Modern European Philosophy* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 4.

¹⁴⁷ Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 44ff. Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984.)

¹⁴⁸ Robert Pippin has remarked, “The particular way of life that Adorno has in mind is notoriously broad: Western, Enlightenment-era or liberal democratic, capitalist, technologically and scientifically advanced mass-culture, consumer societies,” Pippin, 99.

¹⁴⁹ Introduction to *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, translated by Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Heinemann, 1976), 8 quoted in Jarvis, 45.

argued, “Adorno’s suspicion of the normalizing effect inherent in the generalization of one behavioral system of ‘rules’ led him away from the attempt to *determine* a morality” even as he develops an “ethical conception of the relationship with the Other” as well as that which is Other in oneself.¹⁵⁰ Thus, while I do not disagree with Bernstein’s argument that Adorno’s work is motivated by ethical concern, it would be wrong to emphasize this point over Adorno’s distinct concerns with the regulation inherent in for example Kantian moral theory¹⁵¹ as well as the danger of regulation inherent in injunctions toward a holistic or falsely reconciliatory ethical approach.

While the negation of the subject (in the apparent priority of society) would seem to preempt ethical reflection or at least to claim that no such reflection escapes the marketplace,¹⁵² this concern and the ethical rage of Adorno’s work are in fact inseparable. While no work which claims to represent that of Adorno could possibly go without mentioning the political milieu in which that writing was done, Bernstein’s excellent work on Adorno’s latent ethical theory downplays the political in Adorno. I am interested in stressing the fruitfulness of Adorno’s work for discussion of the entanglement of the ethical and the political¹⁵³ despite their radically different treatment in Anglophone readings of modernity.¹⁵⁴ I agree with Bernstein that the confounding or negating moments in Adorno’s immanent criticism of the social and political represent an

¹⁵⁰ Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit.*, 13.

¹⁵¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 139

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵³ I am thinking here especially of *Minima Moralia* and such sections as 66 “Melange” on the violence of the melting-pot image and 71 “Pseudomenos” on the lie.

¹⁵⁴ For example, while Rousseau insists in the opening pages of *On the Social Contract* that the ethical and political cannot be divorced, Rousseau is most often read as a political thinker, and not as a thinker with theoretical ethical import. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Donald A. Cress, *On the Social Contract ; Discourse on the Origin of Inequality ; Discourse on Political Economy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1983).

ethical response “to the claim of ...remainders.”¹⁵⁵ Adorno does require “us to confront the content of the solidarity to which we appeal.”¹⁵⁶ Indeed it is an ethical awareness which pursues the “*necessary* failure of each attempt to grasp the nonidentical conceptually [original emphasis].”¹⁵⁷ These “moral remainders”¹⁵⁸ are that which cannot be assimilated or explained in given¹⁵⁹ conceptual resources, “the concept.” Bernstein makes primary use of this notion of the remainder to highlight the fact that the contradictions that surface in the concept surface because of the way in which the concept itself is presumed to be structured. However, I worry that in placing emphasis on Adorno’s work as ethical, as in his understanding of negativity as the “ethical remainder,” Bernstein’s work despite its careful attention to Adorno’s political theory forwards in effect a de-politicized Adorno, who “pursues romantic ends (a quest for the renewal of ethical meaning) through hyper-cognitive means.”¹⁶⁰ My work here, however, relies on the extent to which Adorno addresses locatable moments of political and ethical neglect not with an eye for a renewal of meaning by means of what Bernstein refers to as the “complex concept” rather than the “simple concept,” but instead with an eye for the ways in which the immanent critique of the constitutive subject would count such a call

¹⁵⁵ Bernstein, 2. See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 5.

¹⁵⁶ Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit.*, 36.

¹⁵⁷ Joel Whitebook, “Weighty Objects: On Adorno’s Kant-Freud Interpretation” in Huhn, *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno.*, 55. However it should be stated that while Whitebook states rightly that “Adorno was vehemently anti-Hegelian,” he perhaps does not give enough explanation of Adorno’s rewriting of Hegelian negation. The “antithesis” to which Whitebook refers is for Adorno is not simply negative or contradictory as for Hegel. Adorno: “The nonidentical is not to be obtained directly, as something positive on its part, nor is it obtainable by a negation of the negative. This negation is not an affirmation itself, as it is to Hegel,” p. 158. S. 161.

¹⁵⁸ Bernstein, 343.

¹⁵⁹ Following Hegel, Adorno is vehemently critical of the notion of “Gegebenheit,” givenness. For while the given is “a term that denies all rational transparency and halts the advance of reflection” (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 237), the “given” does so in that it mistakes the rational for the deceptively uncontroversial; that which is mistaken as given is instead for Adorno that which inevitably resists uncontroversial interpretation.

¹⁶⁰ Bernstein, 4.

for “renewal” as more ethical and political failure. The negative dialectic does not proceed as “a new categorical imperative” which has reasons: “When we want to find reasons for it, this imperative is as refractory as the given one of Kant was once upon a time. Dealing discursively with it would be an outrage....”¹⁶¹ Thus, while Bernstein’s work continues to be a valuable resource, I have been interested in Adorno’s challenges to the possibility of a complex concept as well as the anger of *Negative Dialectics* toward even chastened holism in the thinking of despair.¹⁶²

As I have been saying, negative dialectics rewrites Hegelian dialectics. Adorno does not mean to enact a new dialectical chapter. The negative or nonidentical for Adorno is not the contradiction; it is that which eludes the concept/contradiction dialectic. Negative dialectics aims to interrupt dialectics indefinitely by use of resources offered by the dialectic itself when the return of the whole is not sought. But what does Adorno mean by distinguishing contradiction from the negative or nonidentical?

Contradiction, Adorno explains, appears so “for just as long as the structure of our consciousness obliges it to strive for unity: as long as its demand for totality will be its measure for whatever is not identical with it.”¹⁶³ Contradiction does suggest that there is trouble with the concept: “Total contradiction is nothing but the manifested untruth of total identification.”¹⁶⁴ However, what is read as contradiction under identity thinking, which Adorno calls at one point the “remainder,” must be articulated in the terms of the concept. The remainder or the negative attests to the nonidentical in that the negative resists mutually assimilating subjectivity and objectivity. The “consistent sense of

¹⁶¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 365.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 385.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

nonidentity”¹⁶⁵ is what makes the negative dialectics negative.¹⁶⁶ But where is this nonidentical? How can one be aware of the nonidentical, that which eludes the rational and the empirical alike?¹⁶⁷ Adorno suggests that the nonidentical is not itself articulable even as it is that which makes the concept articulable. The nonidentical is a condition of possibility of the appearance of the concept.¹⁶⁸ That which is inseparable yet unassimilable to the concept when heeded raises doubt as to the salience of the concept. I return to this theme below.

This doubt then is not an originary, founding sense; it is contingent, local and prone to the most violent failure. For Adorno even Hegelian “Dialectics is the consistent awareness of nonidentity. It [dialectics] does not begin by taking a standpoint. [Dialectics] drives thinking to its [dialectics] inevitable insufficiency, its [dialectic’s] fault [Schuld] in what one thinks.”¹⁶⁹ However, Adorno finds that Hegel missed the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶⁶ Contra Bernstein who argues, “What makes *this dialectic* negative is that it nowhere claims or even attempts to state the truth of an indigent item; rather it is riveted to the moment in which the object appears as “more” than what it covering concept has claimed it is,” 37 in “Negative Dialectic as Fate” in Huhn, *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*. This reading places emphasis on the identity with the concept which would remain in place, despite the “more” which the concept misses. For Bernstein, the nonidentical is this more. However, I would point out that the nonidentical actually calls the concept into question. The nonidentical is not added as more to the concept from which it is benignly different. In fact, attention to that which makes the concept articulable, but which is not itself articulable, under the concept, *affects* the concept; the nonidentical interrogates the concept, removing its stable ground.

¹⁶⁷ To make matters worse, as Eva Geulen puts it in a postmodernist and Lyotardian reading of the famous first lines of *Negative Dialectics*, “Philosophy’s afterlife is not a life after the end nor is it the uninterrupted resumption of a previous life. Since philosophy survived its own apocalypse it has become untimely—it comes, from now on, always too late, it will always be a philosophy *post festum*, a postmodern philosophy, as it were,” “Theodor Adorno on Tradition” in Pensky, *The Actuality of Adorno : Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern.*, 180.

¹⁶⁸ This is the meaning of the ‘critical’ of Adornian critical theory: as for Kant, critique was the interrogation of the conditions for the possibility of knowing. However, for Adorno, the capacities that made such interrogation possible in Kant must be called into question given the ‘disaster triumphant’ of the so-called Enlightenment. In light of such failure the critical aims not to rid thinking of the antinomies of metaphysics a la Kant, but rather to call into question the smooth running of the status quo. This is accomplished not via predictive dialectics which will open up revolutionary history, but rather by articulating local tensions that cannot be abolished through contemplation.

¹⁶⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 5. The German is “Dialektik ist das konsequente Bewusstsein von Nichtidentität. Sie bezieht nicht vorweg einen Standpunkt. Zu ihr treibt den Gedanken seine

implications of his own theory of dialectic: in the logic of disintegration or its later formulation negative dialectics,¹⁷⁰ nonidentity thinking is implied by the lack of structural sufficiency of the concept. The negation which elaborates the Hegelian concept, for Adorno is a “truth” not of the concept or perception but instead of the always-exceeding object.¹⁷¹ In this way, the object which the percipient¹⁷² tries to explain holistically will always exceed the concept by which she or he attempts to totalize it.

In rewriting negation in this way, Adorno rewrites reconciliation as well. It has been suggested that “The ethical impulse of Adorno’s thinking... is fundamentally oriented by remorse, the need to make restitution, to repair the damage done, to seek reconciliation, to make amends.”¹⁷³ Adorno is in fact skeptical of the very gesture of reconciliation and repair understood in these terms. Instead he suggests that reconciliation would not involve resolution at all:

Reconcilement would release the nonidentical, would rid it of coercion, including spiritualized coercion; it would open the road to the multiplicity of different things and strip dialectics of its power over them. Reconcilement would be the thought of the many, a thought that is anathema to reason, as no longer inimical.¹⁷⁴

unvermeidliche Insuffizienz, seine Schuld an dem, was er denkt,” *Negative Dialektik*, 17. Cf. Ashton’s translation of this passage: “Dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity. It does not begin by taking a standpoint. My thought is driven to it by its own inevitable insufficiency, by my guilt in what I am thinking,” 5. I am grateful to Alex Cooper for discussion of this passage. For a review of Ashton’s translation of *Negative Dialektik*, see Gillian Rose, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 70, no. 2, (June 1976.)

¹⁷⁰ For an account of the “logic of disintegration” in “Die Aktualität der Philosophie” and *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* out of which Adorno develops the “negative dialectics,” see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, (New York: The Free Press, 1977.)

¹⁷¹ As Adorno refers to one section, “Object kein Gegebenes,” the object is not a “given”; the object is never immediately known. In Adorno it both “stands against” and thus cannot be assimilated to the manifold of subjectivity, and yet “nothing in the world is composed – added up, so to speak—of factuality and concept.” Interpretive constellations in *Negative Dialectics* might be read as a response to this puzzle.

¹⁷² Hegel, Miller, and Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit.*, 70.

¹⁷³ Bernstein, 188.

¹⁷⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 6.

Reconciliation is then meant by Adorno in a special sense in which “the reconciled state is presented in the name of the plural and of the different”¹⁷⁵:

The reconciled condition would not be the philosophical imperialism of annexing the alien. Instead, its happiness would lie in the fact that the alien, in the proximity it is granted, remains what is distant and different, *beyond the heterogeneous* and beyond that which is one’s own [my emphasis].¹⁷⁶

This insistence on not reifying the different, on not casting it as a static “polar opposite of the same,” demonstrates an ethical tenor which is informed by a political theory of alterity. The political-ethical in Adorno can also be seen in the frustration with the actual reliance of identity thinking on that which cannot be made identical. “What tolerates nothing that is not like itself thwarts the reconciliation for that which it mistakes itself. The violence of equality-mongering reproduces the contradiction it eliminates,”¹⁷⁷ or would eliminate. In its guise as either the subsumption of “single objects under general concepts,” metaphysics, idealism, or instrumental reason, Adorno saw in denial of the nonidentical, including its casting as reified contradiction in the Hegelian dialectic, the threat of totalitarianism at the heart of thinking. Negative dialectics is “suspicious of all identity.”¹⁷⁸ Negative dialectics is thus also characterized by an ethical and political sense of the costs of the impulse to modify and control, the impulse to make what ostensibly does not match the concept sought and find in it after all the projected ideal state of the concept.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit.*, 16.

¹⁷⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 191. Quoted in Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender.*, 160. For “reconciliation as the art of disunion,” see also Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit.*, 16.

¹⁷⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 143. Quoted in Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender.*, 160.

¹⁷⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 145.

¹⁷⁹ Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia UP, 1978), 44-45.

But why have I turned to Adorno in the context of a discussion of the question of feminist subjectivity? What does the concept have to do with an interest in thinking as inherent the relationships among queer theories, postcolonial theories, critical race theories, feminist theories? Debates over the name woman/women/she/female continue to be regarded by feminists and nonfeminists alike in terms of the concept. However, we might say that woman/women/she/female is, in Adorno's work as an inheritance from Hegel, a negation of the concept, an objective (not given) moment that merely gives the lie to the totalizing concept. This as we will see is precisely what led Beauvoir to be concerned that Woman/women/she could never be a Subject of philosophical discourse;¹⁸⁰ that women must conform to a pre-given set of attributes which are devalued per se led Beauvoir not to denounce women or even the name women but to denounce the restrictions and false comforts of strictly gendered expectations, as well as the concomitant devaluation of anything associated with woman/women/she/female. This as we will see is precisely what leads Irigaray to ask who "she" can be when this she is always already conceived by a universal (masculine) subject under whose skies she is numerable. Interestingly, as I will discuss in the next chapter, Naomi Zack suggests that it is in virtue of a relationship to *a category* that the question of for whom feminism or feminist theory exists can be settled. In doing so, Zack's work inhabits the negative in order to dispense with the question of feminist subjectivity. However, feminist subjectivity is a question that resists resolution when one considers the apparent contradictions present even in Zack's nuanced consideration. Before turning to these

¹⁸⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Vintage Books ed. (New York, : Vintage Books, 1989)., 51-52: "It is among the psychoanalysts in particular that man is defined as a human being and woman as a female—whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male.; whereas I conceive her as hesitating between the role of *object*, *Other* which is offered her, and the assertion of her liberty."

insights, I turn to Adorno for an already critical reading of historical subjectivity *against which* the question of feminist subjectivity might be said to emerge. Certainly in Hegel but also in Adorno, this question has not begun to be asked. But in my view even those who attempt to dispense with the question, to answer it definitively miss the multiplicity of competing responses to the question.

In Adorno I find a thinking of apparent contradictions of the concept of the subject which does not subsume either negation or nonidentity under a larger account that privileges the notion or concept constituting the subject. Still, Adorno does not ask how Antigone might appear in the *negative* dialectic? If Antigone emblemized the negative as sublatale contradiction for Hegel, how might Adorno's interruption of the Hegelian dialectic resituate Antigone? If any such question is to be articulable, for Adorno, it must come from within the discourse at hand. Thinking the negative from without is not an option. In the opening lines of the Introduction to *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno introduces the need for negative dialectics precisely in that "philosophy offers no place from which theory as such might be concretely convicted of the anachronisms it is suspected of, now as before."¹⁸¹ If there can relatedly be no feminist philosophy or theory *as such*, then a question which my reading of Adorno suggests is the following: if the would-be subject of critique is (herself?) implicated in the concerns which that critique must address, what are the ethical and political implications of this theory of the subject? The often commented-upon, apparent defeatism of such questions does not concern me here. I am interested instead in posing the *question* of woman/women/she/female because it locates the question of feminist subjectivity. I raise such questions in a manner and for purposes

¹⁸¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 3.

similar to those of Adorno; in posing the *question* of the concept, Adorno keeps the concept/contradiction in play for purposes of resistance even as he attests to the nonidentical [*Nichtidentischen*] that which eludes the dialectic. This suggests an aporetic mode which disputes itself as “method”; it forwards the puzzle, the critiques that that offers—and not a finished response. As Adorno remarks in “The Essay as Form,”¹⁸² discontent with such inconclusiveness as found in the essay has “truth and untruth.” Truth, because the essay does come to no conclusion and parodies the presumption of conclusion; untruth, because such inconclusiveness is not arbitrary. The indefiniteness of the essay “resists the idea of a master-work that reflects the idea of creation and totality.” The essay’s totality “is that of non-totally; one that even as form does not assert the thesis of the identity of thought and thing, the thesis which in its own content the essay rejects.” Thus my project follows in this Adornian tone, hoping to understand the feminist in a manner “not less, but more than the process of defining,”¹⁸³ performing “an arena of intellectual experience, without simplifying it.”

And yet, crucially, my project would seem to be far more precarious than that of Adorno. This is precisely because the complicated Subject of dialectics has never been a position in which to imagine the possibilities of Antigone. Antigone is either the negative, which remains tied to that to which she gives the lie, or the nonidentical which can only be understood in terms of the dialectic and thus can never be understood in terms of its “own.” A reading of Gayatri Spivak, as we will see, will allow me later in the dissertation to give attention to the precariousness of trying to hold both interpretations at once. Here I want to articulate it as follows. Adorno himself uncomfortably occupying

¹⁸² Adorno and O'Connor, *The Adorno Reader*, 105.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 101.

the position of subject maintains tension between on the one hand the entrenched, developed subject constituted by the supposedly predetermined Concept and on the other hand its mediating contradictions. This tension keeps in view their mutual construction while also gesturing to the nonidentical which Adorno understands to be at the very heart of the supposed discrete Subject. The uncomfortable “position”¹⁸⁴ of Adornian subjectivity is, then, as the subject aporetically informed by the concept/negation and nonidentity, that which cannot be directly articulated. However, for example, the voices of Judith Butler, Naomi Zack and Luce Irigaray enter the conversation more properly speaking as (Woman/women/she/female) objects in that Adornian universe. Their would-be “seat” must remain an open question between elaborating on the contradiction (of the subject) or gesturing toward the nonidentical that the denial of the dialectic concept/contradiction can only suggest.

It will be important to keep in sight questions about the pleasures and dangers of both maintaining dialectical thinking and anticipating the nonidentical which eludes even the most well-intentioned dialectics. What does dialectical thinking enable? What does it foreclose? What does anticipating the nonidentical enable? What does it foreclose? For Adorno, the danger of dialectical thinking is the concept fetishization in which dialectics inevitably participates. Concept fetishization¹⁸⁵ motivates what has been called “the law

¹⁸⁴ Why “position” must be in quotation marks I explain below.

¹⁸⁵ Adorno builds on the notions of fetishism in Marx and Freud. For Marx commodity fetishism was invoked to describe the overvaluation of or quasi-religious emphasis on commodities – an irrationality at the heart of Enlightenment industrial expansion-- go to notes on Capital. Also see Nancy S. Love, “Epistemology and Exchange: Marx, Nietzsche and Critical Theory,” *New German Critique* 41 Special Issue on the Critiques of the Enlightenment, no. Spring-Summer 1987 (1987). For Freud fetishism was understood in terms of sexual overvaluation meant to defend against awareness of (sublimate) the woman’s, usually the mother’s, lack of a penis, as discussed in “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” in Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, and James Strachey, *A Case of Hysteria : Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953).

of the simple concept.”¹⁸⁶ The law of the simple concept is a widespread assumption that any received content of a concept exhausts the attributes of the presumed exemplars of that concept. In order to accomplish this, “identity thinking makes unlike things alike.”¹⁸⁷

However,

the name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy. Contradiction... indicates the untruth of identity, the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived.¹⁸⁸

But as discussed above where Hegelian dialectics “constituted the unsuccessful attempt to use philosophical concepts for coping with all that is heterogeneous to those concepts,” negative dialectics understands the nonidentical to elude positive definition. In fact, the remainder is labeled “heterogeneous” or antagonistic to the concept only according to the law of the simple concept which expects assimilation.

The position of Adornian subjectivity is already decentered. Adorno articulates this precariousness of negative dialectics by claiming that it is thoroughly negative, that it speaks from no standpoint and without the clear path of a method.¹⁸⁹ Dialectics, by way of reinterpreting contradictions, allows the social theorist to be alert to “the untruth of identity,” which is also, paradoxically, the “truth” of identity. Dialectics, contra Hegel, is

¹⁸⁶ Bernstein, 292. This notion is the site of disagreement between Bernstein on the one hand and Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Albrecht Wellmer on the other. For Nicholsen and Wellmer, Adorno’s critique of the simple concept is a “critique of conceptual knowing as such,” from which aesthetic knowing escapes. Bernstein, 266. For Nicholsen in particular, aesthetic knowing is “genuine subjective experience” which is “the correlate of the primacy of the object and the condition for nondiscursive knowledge of the object,” Nicholsen, *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno’s Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 4. My own reading of Adorno is indebted to that of Bernstein as it seems to me that “nondiscursive knowledge of the object” is foreclosed by the very notion of immanent critique and Adorno’s reasons for setting it as a task.

¹⁸⁷ Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, 46. Rose continues: “to believe that a concept really covers its object, when it does not, is to believe falsely that the object is the equal of the concept.”

¹⁸⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-6. See also Bernstein, 346. Cf. Introduction to *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.)

rather a vigilant, “consistent sense of nonidentity.” This sense is driven by an awareness of the painful deficiency, in fact the “untruth”¹⁹⁰ [*Unwahrheit*] of dialectics and the concept to which the theorist is tied. Adorno in fact refers to dialectics, not the individual thinker or dialectician, as at “fault” [*Schuld*]:

Before all social control, before all adjustment to conditions of dominion, the mere form of thoughts, the form of logical stringency, can be convicted of unfreedom. It can be shown that there is coercion both of what is being thought and of the thinker....¹⁹¹

Thus while negative dialectics attempts to interrupt this perfect dichotomy of concept and contradiction, it is still the case that “to think is to identify,”¹⁹² and it is due to this that thinking has its possibility in coercion¹⁹³—for example, to think the will (*der Wille*) is always already to think the will as a unity of motion, even though upon reflection the will moves in multiple competing directions.

This moment in the *Negative Dialectics* is perhaps responsible for the perplexed observation regarding the work that, “Adorno seems to mean that critical consciousness, including his own, is almost impossible.”¹⁹⁴ Adorno insists that the concept as both “the organon of thinking, and yet the wall between thinking and thought—negates that yearning,”¹⁹⁵ the yearning for more than coercion. In fact, this tension is deliberate in Adorno: thinking is symptom and cure. This is of course where a Habermasian reading of Adorno gains some traction. But it is not a reasonable thinking that makes available the possibility of yearning for other than coercion; it is only in thinking through the

¹⁹⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 5. *Negative Dialektik*, 17.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 5. “Denken heisst identifizieren,” *Negative Dialektik*, 17.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁹⁴ Gillian Rose, *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 70, no. 2, (June 1976), 599.

¹⁹⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 15. The German: “Organon des Denkens, und gleichwohl die Mauer zwischen diesem und dem zu Denkenden, negiert der Begriff jene Sehnsucht,” *Negative Dialektik*, 27.

“contradictions” of the concept that that which precisely cannot be thought on its own terms, negativity, can in Adorno’s view determinately emerge. Thus the yearning for other than coercion is itself a negative [*Negation*] that exceeds philosophical discourse. However, “philosophy can neither circumvent such negation [of the yearning for other than coercion] nor submit to it. It must strive, by way of the concept, to reach through [*hinauszugelangen uber*] the concept.”¹⁹⁶ For Adorno this is not only because the concept is the “organon of thinking”¹⁹⁷ but also because to wholly negate concepts would be to dehistoricize and depoliticize thinking, reinforcing problems one sought to address:

We must be so wary of the beaten tracks of philosophical reflection that our emphatic interest will seek refuge in ephemeral objects not yet overdetermined by intentions. Though chained to the questions of traditional philosophical problematic, we certainly must negate that problematic. A world that is objectively set for totality will not release the human consciousness, will ceaselessly fasten it to points it wants to get away from; but a thinking that blithely begins afresh, heedless of the historic form of its problems, will so much more become their prey.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Max Horkheimer had argued that a primary problematic tendency of modernity is to proceed as if it accomplished a temporal break with the past, and it is in part due to such a denial that enlightenment reverts to mythology. Similarly in *Negative Dialectics* denial of one’s ethical and political *conceptual* conditions only serves to reinforce those conditions. In fact Adorno faults “the hitherto dominant philosophy of modern age” with dehistoricization of thinking,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 15. “An ihr ist die Anstrengung, uber den Begriff durch den Begriff hinauszugelangen.” Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997) 27. Ashton’s translation renders this as “philosophy must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept,” 15. “Transcend” misplaces Adorno’s “hinauszugelangen uber”; “transcend” is too strong. I say this not only because of Adorno’s critique of Heidegger (105-107) but also because “to transcend” is not an obvious translation of “hinauszugelangen über. Negative Dialectics is not after transcendence insofar as “to think is to identify.” Thus a more productive translation might be to “reach through.”

¹⁹⁷ Adorno’s insistence that thinking must concern itself with particulars would seem to run counter to this somewhat acontextual claim about how thinking occurs. Of course Adorno is fully aware that particulars are always already read through universal significance. But this perhaps demonstrates the limits of thinking the particular “philosophically” which Adorno attempts to resist while still remaining engaged with philosophy as a historical practice.

effectively assigning the study of history itself to “a special, fact-gathering branch of science.”¹⁹⁸ The tendency in Descartes and Bacon is to equate the historic not with timelessness but instead with superstition. Thus they start over from scratch, or so they presume: “Knowledge as such, even in a form detached from substance, takes part in tradition as unconscious remembrance; there is no question we might simply ask, without knowing of past things that are preserved in the question and spur it.”¹⁹⁹

This Hegelian point is nevertheless the articulation of one who finds the Hegelian dialectic insufferable. Why should the concept/negation be tolerated if its social and cognitive salience is violent? Why not regard the concept/negation as wholly discredited? Why dignify its use with a response in kind? Adorno’s sympathetic response to these questions is to say that concepts are more than the tired baggage of a past that we can forget. To erase dialectical thinking entirely would be to lose the critical access to the role the concept/negative plays in the social, cognitive, psychoanalytic, material experiences that critique would attempt to address. Thus the concept/negative are means by which we might ask the *questions* that do speak to the puzzles that arise from paradoxical experience. The supposed, preformed object (persons included insofar as they are “objectified”) and the Concept/negation that purports to exhaust it are not only problematic as objects of thought; they are also “antagonistic in reality,” which is in the Hegelian sense “not necessarily developed, comprehended or comprehensible.”²⁰⁰ Inevitable resistance to the concept is in fact made visible only in terms of the concept. The concept as imperfect social, cognitive psychoanalytic, material principle is precisely

¹⁹⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 53.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁰⁰ Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel : A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.*, 282.

for this reason required for thinking (not merely thinking about) the inevitable resistances to these purported principles.

This attempt is the only possibility for “whatever legitimacy it [philosophy] still retains”:

The matters of true philosophical interest at this point in history are those in which Hegel, agreeing with tradition, expressed his disinterest. They are nonconceptuality, individuality, and particularity—things which ever since Plato used to be dismissed as transitory and insignificant, and which Hegel labeled “lazy Existenz.” Philosophy’s theme would consist of the qualities it downgrades as contingent, as *quantite negligeeable*. A matter of urgency to the concept would be what it fails to cover, what its abstractionist mechanism eliminates, what is not already a case of the concept.²⁰¹

That which the concept fails to cover is both a matter of urgency and not articulable “on its own terms.” Thus women, subaltern, transgender, Chicana, women of color—these terms by which vast subjectivities are intended are articulations that must take for granted the supposedly neutral subject who need not qualify himself in order to be understood.

These discursive patterns are “not... cogitative law, however. It [such law] is real.”²⁰² The law of the simple concept is “real” [*real*] in that the social itself, not only thinking by which the social is known, is a function of the concept. And yet the social is not objective; it demands circular interpretation. This “real” is also “untruth”²⁰³; “it is appearance as much as necessity.”²⁰⁴ Thus, for Adorno, the “truth” can be neither empirically nor rationally known because “both these forms of truth-stating have been taken over by instrumental rationality— because ‘truth’ itself is no longer true, there is a difficulty in revealing the ‘truth’ about culture.”²⁰⁵ What’s more, “Unquestionably, one

²⁰¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics.*, 8.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5. *Negative Dialektik*, 17.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰⁵ Introduction by Berstein in Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

who submits to the dialectical discipline has to pay dearly in the qualitative variety of experience.”²⁰⁶ But as the costs tied to regarding the “moral remainder” with contempt are unlimited, negative dialectics seek immanent critique of such cost in emphasizing the moment of play in philosophy:

As a corrective to the total rule of method, philosophy contains a playful element which the traditional view of it as a science would like to exorcise. For Hegel, too, this was a sensitive point; he rejects ‘types and distinctions determined by external chance and by play, not by reason.’ The un-naïve thinker knows how far he remains from the object of his thinking, and yet he must always talk as if he had it entirely. This brings him to the point of clowning. He must not deny his clownish traits, least of all since they alone can give him hope for what is denied him [sic].²⁰⁷

Where Hegelian dialectics eventually moves on by means of contradiction to a further development of the concept, negative dialectics problematizes both sides of this equation so that the concept is seen to be inevitably incomplete and the contradiction is seen to be contradiction or negation only because of the terms of the concept. In such play, the negative and the nonidentical, those which inconsistently challenge the salience of the subject, emerge.

Negative dialectics is in this sense expressed not only as “cogency” but also clowning (*das Clownerie*.) Emphasis on play which has always been a moment in philosophy is a rejection of the theory/method distinction.²⁰⁸ The word *Clownerie* is not intended to suggest lightness or frivolousness, even though “philosophy... is not all that serious.”²⁰⁹ On the contrary, the “clownish traits” of the negative dialectician are that which “can give him hope for what is denied him.” This clowning negatively fuels “hope for that which is denied” in a social milieu which is a function of misplaced trust in the

²⁰⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*., 6.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰⁸ As Susan Buck-Morss points out, Adorno follows Hegel in this rejection, Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute*., 64.

²⁰⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*., 14.

concept. Clowning or play expresses the tension of the Preface to the *Negative Dialectics*—“to use the strength of the subject to break through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity.”²¹⁰

As suggested above, the significance of what in Hegelian dialectics was a contradiction is instead for Adorno the irreducibly nonidentical, in fact *not* a contradiction. The nonidentical is only the contradiction of the concept “under the aspect of identity.” For Adorno, Hegel misunderstands this implication of Hegel’s own dialectics:

The nonidentical [*Nichtidentische*] is not to be obtained directly, as something positive on its part, nor is it obtainable by a negation of the negative. This negation is not an affirmation itself, as it is to Hegel. The positive which, to his mind, is due to result from the negation has more than its name in common with the positivity he fought in his youth. To equate the negation of negation with positivity is the quintessence of identification; it is the formal principle in its purest form. What thus wins out in the inmost core of dialectics is the anti-dialectical principle: that traditional logic which *more arithmetico*, takes minus times minus for a plus.²¹¹

Adorno’s questioning of the concept then is an attempt to remove the “anti-dialectical principle,” sublation, from dialectical thinking, and paradoxically thereby to make dialectical thinking both more dialectical and to gesture beyond dialectic. This interruption would both release negation from its reading as contradiction and release the nonidentical from its strict reading through dialectics. Thus *negative* dialectics alters the significance of the limits of the concept. “To negate a negation does not bring about its reversal; it proves, rather, that the negation was not negative enough.” Adorno goes on to call this “the decisive break with Hegel.” Hegel drastically misread the salience of contradiction: “To use identity as a palliative for dialectical contradiction [as did Hegel], for the expression of the *insolubly nonidentical* [*unauflöslich Nichtidentischen*], is to

²¹⁰ Ibid., xx.

²¹¹ Ibid., 158.

ignore what the contradiction means.”²¹² The nonidentical is thus not that which forms either a positive or a negative negation of the concept. Instead the negative and the promise of the nonidentical call the concept radically into question.

This absent mode, however, means for Adorno that the nonidentical cannot be positively articulated or named. If it were, then this would only again suggest that the “negation was not negative enough.” The “insolubly nonidentical” is thus an alterity that resists reification, qualification, naming. Negative dialectics under such constraints operates by immanent critique which does not judge “from above”²¹³ but rather attempts to interpret tensions from within. “Totality is to be opposed by convicting it of nonidentity with itself—of the nonidentity it denies, according to its own concept. Negative dialectics is thus tied to the supreme categories of identitarian philosophy as its point of departure.”²¹⁴ Negative dialectics proceeds as immanent critique from these categories, neither in denial nor positive negation of them. Instead negative dialectics enacts constellations²¹⁵ which “circle the concept ... hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers.”²¹⁶ The constellation does so in providing models as the *sine qua non* of immanent critique. The enactment of the constellation is an enactment of immanent critique.²¹⁷ It has been suggested that Adorno borrows from

²¹² Ibid., 160.

²¹³ Ibid., xx.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 147.

²¹⁵ Adorno attributes Walter Benjamin with first proposing constellation in “Origin of German Tragic Drama,” “which takes the very concept of truth for constellation,” ND 164. As Benjamin puts it, “Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars,” Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), 34. See also Nagele, “The Scene of the Other: Theodor W. Adorno’s Negative Dialectic in the Context of Poststructuralism.”

²¹⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 163.

²¹⁷ This is commented upon in by Lyotard in “Discussions, or Phrasing, ‘after Auschwitz’” Benjamin, ed., *The Lyotard Reader*, 362.

Benjamin's suggestion that "Ideas relate to things as stellar constellations relate to stars."²¹⁸ However, for Adorno, the impossibility of totalizing knowledge of objects prevents a clean analogy between stars (in stellar constellation) and objects (in Adornian constellation.) The Adornian constellation is not a positive account of the object that might allow for an equation of subject and object. Instead the object inevitably eludes any one interpretation, making an ever-moving constellation of interpretations of dialectics the goal of sociological study.

Negative dialectics thus maintains the tension between on the one hand keeping the dialectic in play for the purposes of interpreting concept/contradictions, interrogating social appearances of negation and on the other hand attesting to the nonidentical which evades the dialectic. For Adorno this means the dialectic is both hope and disappointment:²¹⁹

Necessity compels philosophy to operate with concepts, but this necessity must not be turned into the virtue of their priority—no more than, conversely, criticism of that virtue can be turned into a summary verdict against philosophy.²²⁰

Certainly immanent critique aims to denounce the violence done by widespread operation of the concept, but immanent critique with the same energy aims to denounce any disengagement from these operations of the concept. As suggested in the image above, immanent critique enacts constellations in the hope of "unlocking" the concept as if it were a safe-deposit box. This image is certainly in tension with the circling image of the constellation which never comes to rest on a particular interpretation. Does the

²¹⁸ Nagele, "The Scene of the Other: Theodor W. Adorno's Negative Dialectic in the Context of Poststructuralism," 60.

²¹⁹ Max Pensky, "Editor's Introduction: Adorno's Actuality" in Pensky, *The Actuality of Adorno : Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern.*, 13.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

constellation unlock or does the constellation continue to circle? Here is a tension in Adorno which I read as thematic. The negative dialectic is both, and this is the sense I suggest in which Adorno refers to his title as paradoxical.

And so we can say that the “aporetic dialectic of subjectivity and reification”²²¹ of the negative dialectic suggests a way of articulating the dilemma discussed in the first chapter. Woman/women/she/female serves as a negation of the masculine subject interrogated by the negative dialectic; however, it is also the case that woman/women/she is not the only import of the dialectic for feminist purposes. The nonidentical on which negation woman/women/she/female relies is also important however discontinuous. These moments might allow for articulation of an irreducible nonidentical structuring the appearance of these names woman/women/she/female. Negative dialectics might gesture to the negativity (in that which is not masculine Subject) or the nonidentical (that which is neither the concept nor its negation.) Thus the negative dialectic suggests a way of holding in tension *both* an articulation of resistance to the concept of the subject and the nonidentical that this resistance cannot articulate.

This tension maintained in negative dialectics between interrogating the concept/contradiction for the appreciation of negativity as well as that which cannot actually be articulated is not only the enactment of immanent critique. It is also the uncomfortable status of Adornian subjectivity.²²² This subjectivity, however, cannot offer

²²¹ Hauke Brunkhorst, “Irreconcilable Modernity: Adorno’s Aesthetic Experimentalism and the Transgression Theorem,” in Pensky, *The Actuality of Adorno : Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern.*, 50.

²²² For Bernstein, the tension is an indictment of the subject and concept posited by Kantian idealism: “For Adorno, it is the idealist semantic thesis that best explains the inner unity of idealism and rationalized modernity and equally explains why, finally, only transforming idealism’s construction of conceptual unity can provide emancipation for the self. Hence, tracking the self-defeating character of autonomous

guidance for the question of feminist subjectivity. For Adorno, the notion or concept of the subject in the Western philosophical tradition is paradoxically and reciprocally dependent upon its objecthood:

both meanings [of subject and object] have reciprocal need of each other: one can hardly be comprehended without the other. No concept of the subject can have the element of individual humanity... separated from it in thought; without any reference to it [the element of individual humanity], subject would lose all significance. Conversely, the particular human individual, as soon as one reflects upon it under the guise of the universality of its concept, which does not signify merely some particular being *hic et nunc*, is already transformed into a universal....²²³

Because the subject must rely on a “rigidly applied concept, capturing something objective,”²²⁴ the subject itself appears as an object, which is in fact socially subjectively-constituted. But this contingency, however unstable, is nevertheless a means by which thinking of the subject is possible, despite the fact that “the less identity can be assumed between subject and object, the more contradictory are the demands made upon the cognitive subject, upon its unfettered strength and candid self-reflection.” In fact, Adorno claims that subject and object “are patently equivocal.”²²⁵ Subject and object as concepts are mutually reliant. And here Adorno assesses the relationship between subject in object in terms of their significance for giving an account of himself. Subject needs object, the “element of individual humanity,” and the very idea of this object “the particular human individual” invokes the universal human or species “simply in order to be

subjectivity is diagnostic for what must become an immanent critique of the rationalized concept,” *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, 212-213.

²²³ Theodor Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” translated by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt in Brian O’Connor. *The Adorno Reader*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, 137- 151. This translation also appeared in Arato, Andrew and Eike Gebhardt, editors. *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978. 497-511. Also translated by Henry W. Pickford in Adorno, Theodor. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia UP, 2005), 245-258, 245.

²²⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “On Subject and Object,” in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 246.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 246.

meaningful.”²²⁶ The attention to this reciprocity is immanent critique of the interrelatedness of subject and object. In fact, the notion of a unified subject relies on the guise of an object, and the object (here the individual “human”) in order to be understood as such relies on the guise of a universal, static subject.

Adorno makes a similar point when he suggests that “if mankind is to get rid of coercion to which the form of identification really subjects it, it must attain identity with its concept at the same time.”²²⁷ This claim is made in the context of the particular interests which guide “the bartering process” by which social identities are established in the cultural and material production process.²²⁸ Here I want to point out why the complex subject of negative dialectics cannot address the question of feminist subjectivity. The names woman/women/she/female must be approximated as negations in order to resist the masculine subject against which they are understood. These names remain negations the horizon of the Adornian subject. The question of feminist subjectivity can be approached either through negativity, a radical dialectical moment, or the nonidentical, which calls dialectics into question. This is not the case for the Adornian subject; for that subject, the tension is between the untrue universal subject or nonidentity. Adorno finds promise in the barter principle because it this untrue subject that does hold promise in heading off “recidivism.” The barter principle is that by which

nonidentical individuals and performances become commensurable and identical. The spread of the principle imposes on the whole world an obligation to become identical, to become total. But if we denied the principle abstractly—if we proclaimed, to the greater glory of the irreducibly qualitative, that parity should not longer be the ideal rule—we would be creating excuses for recidivism into ancient injustice.

²²⁶ Ibid..

²²⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*., 146.

²²⁸ Ibid. 10, 146.

“The glory of the irreducibly qualitative” or that which is only best gestured to as nonidentity, then cannot be the sole claim of a negative dialectics. And yet the salience of that which is established by barter, for Adorno the human, is both “ideology and promise.”²²⁹

If no man had part of his labor withheld from him any more, rational identity would be a fact, and society would have transcended the identifying mode of thinking. This comes close enough to Hegel. The dividing line from him [Hegel] is scarcely drawn by individual distinctions. It is drawn by our intent: whether in our consciousness, theoretically and in the resulting practice, we maintain that identity is the ultimate, that it is the absolute, that we want to reinforce it—or whether we feel that identity is the universal coercive mechanism which we, too, finally *need* to free ourselves from universal coercion, just as freedom can come to be real only through coercive civilization, not by way of any ‘Back to nature.’

In this statement Adorno expresses the tension between understanding identity (of subject and object) as a means for manipulating coercion and understanding identity (of subject and object) itself as a coercive mechanism. To give up immanent critique which in some senses keeps identity in play would also be to relinquish it as a means for resistance; however this view is in tension with appreciation of the ways in which identity itself is coercive.

This tension between thinking dialectically while also, impossibly, thinking against the legality of dialectics can also be read in the following passage.

As thinking, dialectical logic respects that which is to be thought—the object—even where the object does not heed the rules of thinking. The analysis of the object is tangential to the rules of thinking. Thought need not be content with its own legality; without abandoning it, *we can think against our thought*, and if it were possible to define dialectics, this would be a definition worth suggesting. The thinker’s equipment need not remain ingrown in his thinking; it goes far enough to let him recognize the very totality of its logical claim as a delusion. The seemingly unbearable thesis that subjectivity presupposes facts while objectivity presupposes the subject—this thesis is unbearable only to one so deluded, to one who hypostatizes the relation of cause and effect, the subjective principle to which the experience of the object fails to bow [emphasis mine].²³⁰

²²⁹ Ibid., 146.

²³⁰ Ibid., 141.

While articulating trenchant critique of Hegelian dialectics, negative dialectics retains the sense of “thinking against our thought,” not scrapping concepts and negating history only to become again its prey. Rather exploring and critiquing presumed concepts and negativities in the effort to understand their social implications as well as their inevitable inconsistencies and erasures. In so doing, negative dialectics remains interested in “what would lie in the beyond [which] makes its appearance only in the materials and categories within.”²³¹ It is for precisely this reason that Adorno abjures “peephole metaphysics,” in which a prior subject “locked up in its own self by that metaphysics” peers out “as through the crenels of a parapet” upon Being: “there is no peeping out.”²³² Instead, “Whatever experience the word ‘Being’ may carry can only be expressed in configurations of entities, not by allergies to entity; otherwise the philosophical substance becomes the poor result of a process of subtraction, not unlike the one-time Cartesian certainty of the subject, the thinking substance.”²³³ So negative dialectics remains tied to concepts in the effort to “think against thought”—with double emphasis on think and against. The challenge which negative dialectics proposes is for thought to think its legality without growing content with this legality, to prevent that necessary “equipment” from becoming “ingrown in his thinking.”²³⁴

Adorno admits the paradoxicality of this challenge. This paradoxicality was exactly what Hegelian dialectics sought to avoid. In Adorno’s view, later thinkers of the dialectic have done better to think the dialectic without either forcing an ultimate subsequent unity or erasing inconsistencies that only negative dialectical thinking can appreciate. Adorno

²³¹ Ibid., 140.

²³² Ibid., 139-140.

²³³ Ibid., 140.

²³⁴ Ibid., 141.

argues that it is not coincidental that the decaying of dialectics has been expressed as paradox from Kierkegaard on; paradox or aporia is the postponement of the Hegelian sublation, a sublation that would collapse inconsistency and rewrite recalcitrance as mere contradiction.

And yet such inconsistencies within the Adornian subject still cannot be blithely celebrated as diversity. It is inconsistency under the auspices of the concept that prefigures the uncomfortable non-position of Adornian subjectivity. It is under these conditions that Adorno understands the subject to be the foe of the insolubly nonidentical which that concept seeks to express as unified. The Adornian subject is strangely its own foe then insofar as that concept of the subject preempts appreciation of alterity within. That the subject is the subject's foe "is both true and untrue: true because it forms that 'ether' which Hegel calls spirit; untrue, because its reason is no reason yet, because its universality is the product of particular interests."²³⁵ The Notion or Concept of the universal subject in Hegel is the product of particular interests; it is not in fact universal or separable from that which contradicts it. Its contradictions (the eternal irony of the community, the mark of gender, the mark of race, the mark of disability) constitute its universal appearance. And the forgetting of this mutual constitution sown into the concept prevents the appearance of alterity as well as negativity which is articulable and yet forgotten in sublation.

With this statement, Adorno notes the political and ethical salience of the subject as unified appearance as well as the hypocrisy of German idealism in applauding this as an accomplishment: "What remains of idealism is that society, the objective determinant

²³⁵ Ibid., 10.

of the mind, is as much an epitome of subjects as it is their negation.”²³⁶ The development of the concept does not totalizingly get hold of either society or individuals of which it incoherently consists; and yet it is this development of the concept of the (masculine) Subject by which societal dynamics are articulable—and resistance to them, in the form of contradiction, is articulable. The negation of subjects is in the nevertheless considerable reach of the concept; it is the means by which cognition proceeds and misses the alterity in the subject. Thus, again, this cognition inevitably fails to appreciate what it cannot assimilate to the concept of the subject. The Adornian subject is then caught between noticing the ubiquity of negation in terms of which resistance might be registered and denying this negation any articulable meaning at all.

And yet— Adornian Subjectivity as Feminist Theory?

This Adornian subject is the ambiguous reflection of a societal reality that relies on the formation of concepts in spite of negativity; society is after all “as much an epitome of subjects as it is their negation,”²³⁷ the erasure of the ability to think negativity at all. The Adornian subject is as much a culmination of the concept as it is the inevitable recalcitrance of that subject to objectification. The articulation of what Adorno expressed to be his own contradictory subjectivity when considered under the aspect of identity is then in Adorno held in tension with the (masculine) subject of transcendental philosophy of which society is both epitome and negation in Adorno’s view. But to understand the Adornian subject as in part the *epitome* of the social is to maintain the position which is not itself a discrete object. The Adornian (masculine) subject is only an object when “negated by” the social or when the social predetermines the object status of the subject.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

As epitome of the social, however, this subject is constituted by the objects composing that social whose concepts and contradictions are held in tension, not by the objects themselves (surely not because these objects would be subjectivities) but by the Adornian subject whose tangibility is constituted by this tension.

Not so for the would-be feminist subject. For Irigaray, “she” is always an object, which for Irigaray itself serves as a mirror which allows the masculine subject to view its own pure reflection. We might say that Hegel’s Antigone in Irigaray’s treatment, as “living mirror,” as inert and yet vital as the blood with which she is associated, provides for the development of the Adornian subject. The Adornian subject is articulable because of the contradiction that Adorno recognizes as internal to the subject, and yet this Adornian subject is the one that Hegel contrasts with its eternal irony, Antigone. Negative dialectics is of course aware of this indebtedness—but it is an indebtedness to something or someone else, someone other than the position of the complex Adornian subject. Maintaining the tension between the articulable subject and (his) shadows allows for what Adorno hopes is a determinant emergence of negativity and the nonidentical. This moves one to ask: where and who is “she” in all this? If she has *all along* been shadow (of him), what thinking of the *negative* dialectic might be possible that could pose the question of a feminist subject? What are the possibilities for the remembering of a “she” given *both* the resistance of the discourse concept/contradiction/negativity and the nonidentical proposed by Adorno’s treatment? What might it mean to help oneself to the resources of the negativity of negative dialectics as well as the insight that the negative dialectics anticipates radical alterity? What might it mean to think the negative dialectic *as Antigone*?

Adornian negativity, in its specific articulation of this Adornian (presumed masculine) subject, can only on my reading suggest a theory *against which* the question of feminist subjectivity becomes acute. Thus it is not the negative dialectics but rather a feminist aporetic which articulates “the feminist” of post-Hegelian feminist theory and philosophy. Still, where is the feminist moment? Who can *she* possibly be? As we will see in the following chapter, for Judith Butler, the very notion of a discrete subject of feminist theory, and the woman or women such a would-be subject presumes, threatens regulation of alterity. Such regulation of alterity is entailed by theorizing subjectivity. In this view, the very idea of a “feminine alterity” is suspect; what can “feminine” mean if poses a radical challenge to norms of identity? In this view, it is oxymoronic that alterity must be somehow feminine. Can the feminine be extricated from its present uses and devaluations? However, for Luce Irigaray and to some extent for Naomi Zack, the possibility of a feminist subject will require a thinking of the subject *as feminine*, a thinking of woman/women/she that might rescue this moment of the dialectic (Antigone) from sublation, the “moving on” of the Hegelian dialectic in which Antigone bolsters the universal Subject. It will require precisely that alterity be considered as a feminine which is irreducible to the masculine subject it previously bolstered. Who is right about this? In my view, both capture an important aspect of the aporetic feminist as well as of the question of feminist subjectivity.

Thus the resources for a study of subjectivity and the feminist in Adorno are twofold: first, the aporia of Adornian dialectical thinking (as thinking against thought) and second, the specific articulation of the Adornian subject *against which* the question of feminist subjectivity becomes acute. As regards the aporia of masculine subjectivity, it is

the immanent critique of identity which keeps that identity economy in play for the purposes of critical resistance to it, calling attention to the folly of discrete subjectivity, and which is yet a means to the decoupling of subject and object, the society which negates the possibility of irreducible nonidentity. The promise and the danger of the barter principle²³⁸ are thus both forwarded as moments, neither of which can be forgotten in immanent critique. Here is where Cornell and Thurshwell's readings of Adorno are pertinent.²³⁹ For Cornell and Thurshwell, Adorno does not reify alterity but instead leaves as an open question of the nonidentity of subject and object. Cornell and Thurshwell emphasize the lack of resolution in Adorno's account of the subject with respect to identity and nonidentity. While he is, as has been repeatedly discussed, skeptical of identity as a gesture, he is also deeply concerned to demonstrate the promise which a total rejection of identity would erase. As Cornell and Thurschwel put it in the *Feminism as Critique* volume discussed above: "As Adorno understood well, the attempt to tell the truth of nonidentity is instantly ensnared by what it would deny, the positivity of Truth."²⁴⁰ Still it is not clear in their account how this ensnaring happens, and so the reader is left with the more prominent reading of Adorno as postmodern thinker of the deconstruction of identity. The reader is left with the nonidentical, that which eludes the dialectic, as the only Adornian resource of value for thinking the feminist. But Adorno's work articulates a tension that this reading threatens to smooth over. In Cornell and Thurshwell's account, it is Adorno's avoidance of treating negativity "as another failed attempt to 'identify' difference as the polar opposite of the same" which allows for a reading of the feminine. For Cornell and Thurshwell, the feminine as negativity in

²³⁸ Ibid., 146.

²³⁹ Benhabib and Cornell, *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender*.

²⁴⁰ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*., 160.

Adorno's sense (although this connection is not made by Adorno), unlike in the case of either Kristeva²⁴¹ or Marcuse,²⁴² does not fall into the trap of reifying a feminine negative. I am agreeing with Cornell and Thurschwell that this moment of Adornian negativity is a resource for thinking the question of feminist subjectivity. However, I would emphasize that this view must be understood as one moment in the tension between the constellative critique of concept/contradiction in whose terms the appreciation of negativity might be made and the nonidentity

it denies.... Negative dialectics is thus tied to the supreme categories of identitarian philosophy as its point of departure. Thus, too, it remains false according to identitarian logic: [identitarian logic] remains the thing against which [negative dialectics] is conceived. It must correct itself in its critical course.²⁴³

For Adorno, negative dialectics accepts the concepts of identitarian philosophy as its “first”²⁴⁴ from which negative dialectics departs. Negative dialectics does so in order to deny immanently the “conclusive structure claimed by traditional philosophy”²⁴⁵ rather than to make itself a new version of that conclusiveness, to make itself “first” as well as last. “Wherever a doctrine of some absolute ‘first’ is taught there will be talk of something inferior to it, of something absolutely heterogeneous to it, as its logical correlate. *Prima philosophia* and dualism go together.”²⁴⁶ Thus negative dialectics poses

²⁴¹ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gara, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), Julia Kristeva, “Women's Time,” in *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, ed. N. Keohane, M. Rosaldo, and B. Gelpi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982). Julia Kristeva, “Woman Can Never Be Defined,” in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon (New York: Schocken, 1981). Julia Kristeva, “Oscillation between Power and Denial,” in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon (New York: Schocken, 1981), Julia Kristeva, “Psychoanalysis and the Polis,” in *The Politics of Interpretation*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

²⁴² Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960).

²⁴³ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 147.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 147, 136.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

the open question of the negative—in its misreading as contradiction as well as in its anticipation of the nonidentical which eludes dialectical thinking altogether.

Antigone and Negative Dialectic

But as we have seen, a second resource of Adornian negativity is its specific articulation of this Adornian (presumed masculine) subject *against which* the question of feminist subjectivity becomes acute. For Adorno, articulations of subjectivity will always be partial, but in that partiality they may wield power. In Chapter One, we encountered Kim Q. Hall's concerns that any theory of the name women/she/female will be assimilable to an objectifying discourse, that the feminist discourse of *The Vagina Monologues* can itself be objectifying; but she also articulates the need for conversations which elaborate new relationships between, in my terms, the feminist and the name women/she/female. In other words, Hall's theoretical conundrum was that any articulation of a purportedly feminist subjectivity will not be partial but will instead be myopic. It must have a body, and that body must be an interpretation that excludes important other interpretations. It must have a gender, race, ethnicity, class—otherwise such a response to the question of feminist subjectivity will be inadequate to the task of developing a feminist subjectivity that does not erase some (or a majority) whom it professes to represent. Negative dialectics reread dialectical thinking with an eye for its revision of the subject; but I am interested in a rereading of dialectical thinking with an eye for its revision of the negation of that subject. It is this negation to which Antigone corresponds in the *Phenomenology*. Antigone does not appear in the *Negative Dialectics*. So in the next chapter I ask where Antigone might be found. In this sense, not negative dialectics, but a feminist aporetic can address the question of feminist subjectivity. Even

if Adornian subjectivity does not itself pose the question of feminist subjectivity, it is possible to ask where *Antigone might be* figurable in the negative dialectic.

The question of feminist subjectivity includes *both* the question of how one might think the feminist differently— than as a function of so many dialectics (raced, classed, gendered negations) in the universe of the Adornian subject *and* the question of how one might not lose site of the social and political contexts of erasure of any feminist moment at all. Thus the question of feminist subjectivity includes also the following: what are the pleasures and dangers of a project of constructing that would-be subject as a contradiction within the terms of dialectic (in the manner of Irigaray and Zack)? What are the pleasures and dangers of thinking the nonidentical which obviate a discrete feminist subject, which actually eludes the dialectic, which loses track of the possibility of the articulably “feminine” (in the manner of Butler)? In the following chapter I explore these questions. To think the negative dialectic as *Antigone* will not be to make a decision in advance as to whether this negativity is best read as negativity/contradiction or the nonidentical.

Is the feminist gesture reappropriation of negativity or anticipation of nonidentity which cannot be named outright? Butler, Zack and Irigaray each attempts interpretation of *Antigone*, and such interpretations have divergent implications for the relevance of woman/women/she/female for the question of feminist subjectivity. These writers explicitly decide on a feminist reinterpretation of *Antigone* —and I argue that their interpretive decisions when read together enact an irreducible feminist aporetic. Their disagreement is of course not only over *Antigone*, but over the very names used to articulate such interpretations—woman/women/she/female. The relationship between

these names and the feminist is discontinuous within each of their works. However, I begin by articulating the dispute as if it were solely between them precisely because Zack and Butler explicitly and Irigaray implicitly understand their views to contest other modes of the feminist. In fact, as we will see, this dispute is internal to their articulations of the feminist, and I can only suggest internal to other interpretations of the feminist.

Chapter Three Claiming Antigone: Butler, Zack, Irigaray

For millennia, now, we have stood sentinel: hoping to see her—to catch her in the act, to say plainly and clearly what Antigone is about. Yet no vigilance could be adequate to the task. History offers a long succession of separate, disconnected experiences of Antigone—impossible to gather together into a single completed shape.²⁴⁷

Carol Jacobs

Contemporary feminist ethical, social and political theory and philosophy repeatedly pose the question of how to regard the name women, which locates the question of feminist subjectivity. Is the feminist a gesture toward a potential subject or subject yet unknown? Or is the feminist instead the uncodifiable preemption of subjectivity? The confusion enacted by these questions performs aporia haunting feminist theoretical literatures. In the previous chapter I argued that it is not the negative dialectics but rather a feminist aporetic which articulates “the feminist” of post-Hegelian feminist theory and philosophy.

In this chapter, I interpret the disagreement among three readings of the figure of Antigone in Sophocles’ play as a disagreement over how to approach the question of feminist subjectivity. I understand that question in this project to be whether to theorize or construct a would-be subject of feminist theory or whether to refuse to construct such a discrete subject. I construct a conversation among these interpretations of *Antigone* in terms of the following question: is the figure of Antigone suggestive of a subjectivity yet unknown or of irreducible alterity preempting that very subject?

²⁴⁷ Carol Jacobs, “Dusting Antigone,” *MLN* 111, no. 5, Comparative Literature Issue (1996), 889.

I select these three writers because their interpretations serve as foils for each other. I discuss them in order to articulate the tension which invokes the question of feminist subjectivity. I also select these thinkers because in their works, especially in the case of Judith Butler and Naomi Zack, one finds a relatively definitive response to the name women and the question of feminist subjectivity, compared to Beauvoir, Sedgwick and Spivak whose responses are more pronouncedly indefinite. These writers have turned to *Antigone* precisely because Hegel's interpretation of the play marked the location of Woman for generations of Hegelian and post-Hegelian readers to follow. As Kimberly Hutchings has pointed out, Butler and Irigaray illustrate "alternative trajectories of [post-Beauvoirian] feminist philosophy"²⁴⁸ through their readings of *Antigone* which demonstrate alternative feminist critiques of Hegelian philosophy. However, Hutchings fails to locate the disagreement between Butler and Irigaray in precisely the names which Hutchings assumes throughout her reading—woman, women, feminist, alterity. In the following, my interest is precisely in the profound disagreement among Butler, Zack and Irigaray not merely over interpretation of the play, but more importantly in the implications of that disagreement for the very terms used to engage in such discourse. It is very far from clear what the feminist reading of that location marked by Hegel might be. Might that feminist reading be plural? Because the mutual aversion of the following readings puts in question the very terms by which they proceed, I argue that these interpretations of the Hegelian negative have profound implications for the meaning of the feminist.

²⁴⁸ Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, 81.

But why do *I* write about *Antigone*? I turn to *Antigone* first of all because recently the play has become a way of displacing former readings of woman/women/ she/female.²⁴⁹ Why is *Antigone* and not *Ismene* the location of that revision?²⁵⁰ *Ismene* is ignored in Hegel's reading of the play; also *Ismene* is the "more traditional woman, a woman representing conventional womanhood, created in human rather than heroic proportions, choosing an honorable death over the continuation of an ignoble life."²⁵¹ What of *Antigone*'s disputes with her sister *Ismene*, what of her subsequent rejection of *Ismene*'s support? Why is the woman of interest for feminists and nonfeminists alike the figure who chooses to "fight against men"²⁵²? What might the reading of the play as a conflict between sisters look like? Such a reading has yet to be done. Thus, I turn to *Antigone* in part because nonfeminists and feminists alike have before me to the detriment of possibilities for reading the relationship between these figures. In this respect, I turn to *Antigone* because, despite the numerous readings of the play that do exist, there is no consensus on its import for thinking the feminist. Not in an effort, following Hegel, to witness Spirit's "tarrying with the negative" and subsequent moving on.²⁵³ Not in an effort, following Lacan, to ask about the significance of ethical conflict.²⁵⁴ But rather I turn with interest to *Antigone* because it seems painfully clear that this is a tale of conflict in which a daughter of ambiguous origin plays, contra Hegel,

²⁴⁹ Cecilia Sjöholm, *The Antigone Complex: Ethics and the Invention of Feminine Desire*, ed. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, *Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

²⁵⁰ Mills, *Woman, Nature, and Psyche*, 30. Mills points out that Hegel does not mention *Ismene* at all, and yet it is *Ismene* who in the end chooses to do what is right while being grounded in the "familial devotion between sisters, not the sister-brother relationship" which is so importantly devoid of desire for Hegel.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30 and see footnote 56 on the same page.

²⁵² Sophocles, *Antigone, the Women of Trachis, Philoctetes and Oedipus at Colonus*, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, vol. 21 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 11.

²⁵³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 19.

²⁵⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1992).

contra Lacan, contra early Irigaray, an active role which profoundly impacts even the status of Creon in the end. She is the “ultimate defender of the good, as one sees from the fate meted out to Creon.”²⁵⁵ No one in the play is left untouched by Antigone’s demand that the arrogant Creon reconsider. And yet, what is the significance of this demand? Clearly there are many questions about the play ignored and obscured by Hegel’s reading. Then what is Antigone’s status within the play? What does her insistence that Polynices be buried by herself *mean*? Why is Antigone heard by everyone *except* Creon? What is the role of the chorus? What of Antigone’s success in committing suicide before Creon is able to get to her? What of Antigone’s willingness to die? Why is Ismene regarded with such scorn by Antigone? Why does Creon regard Ismene so differently from Antigone?²⁵⁶

I pose the question of feminist subjectivity through Antigone precisely because there is so little agreement on such questions. It is germane to my themes that each one of the following interpretations resists a reified interpretation of Antigone. I am interested in the tensions between these texts no less than the tensions *within* them. Thus I refer to these readings with a special interest in the degree to which their distinction is impossible. The impossibility of this distinction is seen as the ambiguity of the name women and the question of feminist subjectivity that this ambiguity locates prevent any one of the following positions from ultimately satisfying *its own* proponent. This impossibility of any distinct, non-aporetic response to the question of feminist subjectivity is crucial. Thus after first considering the reasons for these writers’ expression of one view or another in order to articulate my questions, I will attempt to

²⁵⁵ Mills, *Woman, Nature, and Psyche.*, 28.

²⁵⁶ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman.*, 217-218.

articulate the contradictions regarding Antigone within each view. In so doing, this cloud of consternation regarding Antigone performs some crucial expressions of the *question* of feminist subjectivity.²⁵⁷ I begin by discussing the conflict as if it were between Judith Butler and Naomi Zack, then I describe some of the moments in which their work resists the foregoing discussion. Finally, I turn to the work of Luce Irigaray in order to further complicate the conversation.

Interpretation of woman/women/she/female may be a site of contemporary confusion. But why speak of “she” as a site of deep ambiguity? Why cast such ubiquitous terms in this unconstructive light? To rephrase the question at issue: why is it that the denial of or reference to women as a potential subjectivity is a site of such widespread contestation? Butler and Zack each accuses the other of colluding with norms of violent consequence. But if there appears to be no harmless position to take with respect to this question, then what are the deeper questions that remain to be asked? Not only at moments when the status of women “as a concept”²⁵⁸ is under dispute, but every time the name is uttered or erased, its invocation covers over deep disagreement, far-reaching alliances and rejections. Why such trenchant contemporary disagreement? To simply say that there is no agreement on the matter would be tautology; to continue to argue as if there ought to be ultimate and complete agreement would be to deny feminist theory and philosophy the complexities and nuances owed to such profound and wide-reaching questions.

²⁵⁷ This is to keep the name women as an open question, rather than to refuse, embrace or define. In writing of the “name” women, as discussed in Chapter One, I follow Riley, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History*.

²⁵⁸ I deeply regret that I do not have a way of referring to women that does not impose homogeneity. But this concern is thematic, and discussed most directly in Chapters One and Two. See introduction.

Allow me preliminarily to put the tension in which I am interested in stark terms. Naomi Zack's work in *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality* is interested in the promise of the universal which would provide an imaginary to fill a key political void. Luce Irigaray's early work expresses similar concerns: "woman has not yet taken (a) place."²⁵⁹ For Zack and Irigaray, there is no discrete subject of which woman is emblematic, and this *remains* a cultural task. For Judith Butler, the notion of the (masculine) subject is always already constructed according to norms and against some other whose particularity is preempted precisely by the scrambling of the (masculine) subject to maintain salience. Any theory of the subject will require such norms and will preempt a valuing of the particular which challenges normativity. For Zack and Irigaray, for this very reason, a subject "in the feminine" must continue to be cultivated. In this view, Butler's challenge to a theory of a subject "of women" bolsters the current vacuity ensured by the masculine subject. Such catering to the discourse of the (same) subject prevents a reevaluation of women's traditional roles and work and the possibility of the claiming of institutional positions of power by women. For Butler, the emphasis is on the particular ways in which qualities, moments, or persons rendered unintelligible by the insistence on the salience of the potential subject of women exceeds and challenges the possibility for such a discrete subject. Their disparate readings of *Antigone* demonstrate this collision.

It should be pointed out that Butler, Zack and Irigaray come to their disparate readings of the figure of Antigone with vastly different approaches to feminist criticism as well as different interpretations of the Hegelian negative. To understand Butler's

²⁵⁹ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*. For discussion of the meaning of the title, see Irigaray, "The Other: Woman" in Irigaray, *I Love to You : Sketch for a Felicity within History*.

reading acquaintance with her notion of performativity²⁶⁰ of gendered acts is crucial. Butler introduces gender as “performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence” as a way of giving meaning to what had already been understood as the construction rather than the naturalness or normality of sex and gender. For Butler, while gender had been understood as interpretation of preformed sex, it is instead the case that sex itself is an interpretation which cannot be differentiated from a gender which comes after preformed sex. The regulatory practices of gender coherence assume such coherence as the origin of gendered practices; but Butler inverts this to suggest that it is the repetitive acts of gender themselves which compel the belief that a sexed essential self emanates such acts. But no such sexed/gendered essential self exists; gendered acts are contemporaneous with the gender that they perform. This means that instead of there being a gendered essence “behind” gendered acts, those gendered acts enact what only appears to be a gendered essence. As Butler puts it, “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.”²⁶¹ This critique of essential identity is aimed at the identity “women” among others and the feminist theoretical literatures that take for granted the presupposition of women not simply as heterosexual female but

²⁶⁰ Butler gives at least three influences on which the performativity thesis follows. First, that it is an elaboration on Derrida’s critique of the force of structuralist law as discussed in the 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, and second that it is a phenomenological reading of bodily acts as discussed in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” *Theater Journal*, 1997. And third, it is an extension of Nietzsche’s claim, which “Nietzsche himself would not have anticipated or condoned” from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming: ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969). In Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005.

²⁶¹ Butler does not deny that there are psychic dimensions to such acts which escape the control of the doer projected by the deed. See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

also as existing as a naturalized group preceding its subordination. Butler suggests that it is not women as preformed group which then meets subordination but rather that insinuations on the grouping itself *perform* that grouping, reenacting the subordination that feminists seek to redress.²⁶²

Zack's project of inclusive feminism is perhaps best understood in the context of North American academic feminism which emerges within contemporary transnational feminism. Following extensive work in critical race theory,²⁶³ Naomi Zack turns to the implications for the project of a global feminism raised by globally Southern critiques of Northern, white feminism²⁶⁴:

Feminists generally, and I think justifiably, have concluded that it is not possible for First World feminists to speak for those in the Third World, for rich women to speak for poor, or white for nonwhite. Each distinct group or intersection of women who are advocating for themselves need to speak for themselves. Groups that have not yet found a voice or made their way to an effective

²⁶² It is important to note here that Butler's critique of the subject of feminist philosophy has already served to call into question the unity of that subject position by asking about the conditions which make its apparent visibility possible. "Indeed, to understand identity as a *practice*, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life," Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. My interest is in the ambiguous status in Butler's work of this rule-bound discourse as a source for narratives of subjectivity that do become sites of agency despite the simultaneous regulation that Butler has articulated. It is the tension between the taking up of and the imposition of the terms of rule-bound discourse that articulates for me a different sort of critique in which it is not the aims of a counterproductive subject that are in question but rather it is that the aims of the would-be subject are actually so dramatically at odds that no subject position is articulable.

²⁶³ Naomi Zack, *Bachelors of Science: Seventeenth Century Identity, Then and Now* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*, Naomi Zack, "Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy," in *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: The Big Questions*, ed. et al. Naomi Zack (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), Naomi Zack, "Philosophy and Racial Paradigms," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 33 (1999), Naomi Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Naomi Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), Naomi Zack, "Race and Philosophic Meaning," in *Race and Racism*, ed. Bernard Boxill (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), Naomi Zack, *Race/Sex: Their Sameness, Difference and Interplay* (New York: Routledge, 1997), Naomi Zack, "Thinking About Race," (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998), Naomi Zack, *Women of Color and Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), Naomi Zack, Laurie Shrage, and Crispin Sartwell, eds., *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: The Big Questions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

²⁶⁴ The question of how to refer to the so-called Third and First World is addressed by Chela Sandoval as requiring an adjustment of terms already in play. Sandoval uses the lowercase "third" world in order to speak about third world consciousness that interrupts first world contexts. "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World" in Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed, Theory out of Bounds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). footnote 1.

forum are in principle included by the formal, relational definition of women I have proposed—there are already places for them at the table, which will continue to be set until they show up. A less obvious issue than who may and can speak is whether it is possible for feminists to listen to one another and on that basis provide assistance. Needed is not some impossible common tongue but a common ear. A universal definition of women allows for that very modality because it is the common ground on which discourse among women across their myriad differences can occur.

For Zack, maintaining the open space for those who identify and are identified as women globally is necessary for a transnational feminism in which constant speaking-for is not the norm. Zack does not find that this term necessarily smuggles in assumptions about the race, ethnicity, geography or sexuality of the speaker; rather, to deny the space that the term women creates would be to deny global feminist pursuits. It would be in fact a new speaking-for.

Luce Irigaray comes to these concerns through readings in both psychoanalytic and philosophical discourse. Her work attempts to figure women as both absent and distorted in psychoanalytic discourse and absent in philosophical discourse. To think this, what Irigaray calls “the forgetting of her,”²⁶⁵ Irigaray’s early work gestures to the *void* that woman represents. This chapter draws from this early work. The question is what or who could *she* be? Where, in a discourse which preempts irreducible alterity in its very gesture to woman who is everywhere articulated against a supposed neutral subjectivity, could a view otherwise than “his” be? In this account, the figure of Antigone functions as “*the living mirror*, the source reflecting the growing autonomy of the self-same.”²⁶⁶ This *speculum*²⁶⁷ or mirror ensures the “*thought* of the reality or objectivity of the world.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Luce Irigaray, *Key Writings* (New York: Continuum, 2004), vii. This phrasing is a rewriting of Heidegger’s interest in the forgetting of Being in Western philosophical discourse.

²⁶⁶ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 221.

²⁶⁷ Irigaray later explains that the *speculum* of the title “denotes a gynecological instrument, though at an earlier period in our culture this term was used to denote the most faithful expression of reality possible. *Speculum mundi*, for example, was not an uncommon title and was what I had in mind. It signifies mirror of the world—not so much the reflection of the world in a mirror as the thought of the reality or objectivity of the world through discourse,” Irigaray, *I Love to You : Sketch for a Felicity within History*, 60.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

For Irigaray, there is no way of referring to a discrete entity woman or women precisely because this name functions as vacuity only to reinforce psychoanalytic and philosophical discourses. Irigaray points to the French language convention of the use of the masculine plural, even in the case of groups including women. As Irigaray puts it, “*il + elle = ils.*”²⁶⁹ This linguistic example is emblematic of the larger cultural vacuum that led Freud to ask “what does woman want?” For Irigaray this vacuity misunderstood in Freud both reinforces the *thought* of the objectivity of the masculine signifying economy and preempts an irreducible alterity which must be for Irigaray gendered “in the feminine.” This gendering would not be “in the feminine” in any traditional sense, but in the psychoanalytically-delineated²⁷⁰ and yet still unknown sense which resists neutral assimilation. The question for Irigaray is “Who would this *other woman* be given that no female generic yet exists...[emphasis mine]?”²⁷¹ For Irigaray, Butler’s insistence that feminist subjectivity not be decided in advance only threatens to reinforce a discourse in which no anti-assimilable, still unknown feminine is prevented from taking place. And this silencing of the possibility of a feminist subject would presume to be called for by precisely those whose voices depend on the valuing of such a possibility. For Irigaray, Butler’s anticipation of alterity presupposes a valuing of the negative on her own terms which has not yet happened. *How* might such a feminist subject be authored? *From where* might her resources come? Such questions have only just begun to be asked. Thus Irigaray insists on thinking “woman” in the hope of a still unrealized “culture of two

²⁶⁹ Luce Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference : For a Peaceful Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 42-43.

²⁷⁰ Under the entry “Masculinity/Femininity” (pertinent) in the excellent *Language of Psychoanalysis*, the distinction has three interrelated meanings: biological, sociological (both real and symbolic) and psychosexual.

²⁷¹ Irigaray, *I Love to You : Sketch for a Felicity within History.*, 60.

sexes,” a rethinking of dialectics which interprets the Hegelian negative as otherwise than mere contradiction. Instead of the contradiction that mediates the One, the same, the possibility of a “dual dialectic” (see below) projects a feminist subjectivity that rewrites the Hegelian negative in radical dialectical terms.

But to see the distinctness of these approaches which nevertheless demonstrate affinity for each other within, I turn to their readings of the figure of Antigone. Butler’s *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* is a rereading of the tragedy of *Antigone* with an eye for the ways in which the figure of Antigone, as opposed to the ways in which she has been interpreted by Hegel and Lacan, troubles notions of kinship which she has repeatedly been made to represent. These former readings present Antigone as a figure who voices an opposition to the laws of the public realm from the juxtaposed private, unwritten realm of kinship. The understandings of Antigone as representation of kinship in Hegel and Lacan differ, but both take kinship to be “the sphere that conditions the possibility of politics without ever entering into it.”²⁷² For Hegel, Antigone and Creon represent two incompatible realms, state and kinship, as well as incompatibly considered stances. On this account, Antigone’s defiance is inexcusable because of the consciousness with which she opposes the law of the public sphere. Antigone admits her guilt, but in a manner that exacerbates her fault and contra Hegel emphasizes her consciousness in performing disobedience: “She not only did it, but she had the nerve to *say* she did it.”²⁷³ This defiant act is radically unique in motivation.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 2.

²⁷³ See also, Lisa Walsh, “Her Mother Her Self: The Ethics of the Antigone Family Romance,” *Hypatia* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1999), 112.

²⁷⁴ Cynthia Willett points out that Antigone first insists on the universal ethical significance of the burial of Polynices, and only when Antigone realizes that she is to be buried alive does she in ecstatic manner which cannot be purged from the dialectic insist on the irreplaceable-ness of her brother. The possibility of death

The law for the sake of which Antigone defies Creon has only one application: Polynices, her irreplaceable brother,²⁷⁵ his inimitable betrayal and death, ought not to be made a commutable enemy of the state. Likewise, her own “alternative law” according to which she acts is singular. In its radical singularity for Antigone, her unwritten, unwriteable law is a challenge to the generalizable state law of Creon. Antigone’s act is inexcusable then because she consciously defies the sphere of the state in acting on behalf of a nonrecognizable law of her own, and she does so in full consciousness of the legitimate law which this nongeneralizable law opposes.

Creon on the other hand is compelled by the legitimacy of a universal, generalizable law in the public realm. Butler argues that here Hegel takes up the point of view of Creon, and shares in Creon’s frustration with Antigone’s defiance: “The ethical consciousness must, on account of this actuality and on account of its deed, acknowledge its opposite as its own actuality, [and] must acknowledge its guilt.”²⁷⁶ But Antigone is beyond guilt; Hegel shifts to discussion of “the everlasting irony of the community,”²⁷⁷ womanhood, abruptly assimilating Antigone to this category, *Weiblichkeit*. This sudden shift erases the *sui generis* challenge of Antigone to the political realm, not as

“breaks down the artificiality of the earlier appeal to abstract duty. However, the tragic force of the play “owes nothing to her ‘bare particularity’” but instead is owing to Antigone’s sense of duty which stems from “instincts that intertwine the eros of mother wife, sister.” Antigone’s desire as woman in these guises represents an unsublatable moment which in fact orients the dramatic action of the play. While Hegelian “dialectic demands the purging of desire from ethical intention, ethical duty originates at least partly in such desire,” 278. Antigone’s desire, as unsublatable moment, represents in fact an alternative dialectic, in which “the point is not to include woman in man’s dialectic but to refigure a woman’s dialectic,” 281. Willett, “Hegel, Antigone, and the Possibility of Ecstatic Dialogue.”, 274-80. See also Willett, “Hegel, Antigone, and the Possibility of a Woman’s Dialectic.”

²⁷⁵ As many have pointed out, Antigone bemoans the loss of Polynices particularly as he is irreplaceable. As her parents are both dead, there is no hope that she can have another brother after the loss of this one. She says that the death of Polynices is more lamentable for this reason than if Antigone were to lose a husband or child, who might be replaced. See lines 871-880. Sophocles, *Antigone*, ed. John Harrison and Judith Affleck, trans. David Franklin and John Harrison (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁷⁶ Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship between Life and Death.*, 34.

²⁷⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit.*, section 475, 288.

womanhood but as *Antigone*. He not only ignores numerous references within the play to Antigone as a woman, to her inability to do as a woman ought to do, but also relegates her to a homogenous universal to which she is ill-fit. Weiblichkeit represents the threat of particularization for the political realm governed by universality.

For Lacan, on the other hand, Antigone does not represent an external particularizing sphere preceding the public but rather Antigone's opposition to Creon is "a conflict internal to and constitutive of the operation of ... ethical desire."²⁷⁸ In Lacan's terms, Antigone refuses to allow her allegiance to her brother to be taken as communicable within the chain of signification. This refusal represents a desire for return to the prelinguistic, a return to the absence of rule of the symbolic. This desire for a return to the prelinguistic is associated for Lacan with a return to death, the appearance of the death drive itself. This death drive counters the symbolic in its adherence to an unwritten, divine legality which is not yet the symbolic. This unwritten legality is a "recourse to the gods," which is "precisely to seek recourse beyond human life, to seek recourse to death and to instate that death within life."²⁷⁹ Despite the fact as Butler notes that it is the curse of her father Oedipus, "the father's words ... by which Lacan earlier *defines* the symbolic," it is Antigone who is said to instate death within life, to perform a self-banishment from the realm of the symbolic.

In troubling both the Hegelian and Lacanian idealized notions of kinship, Antigone's defiance of and threat to Creon becomes not an opposition of kinship to the state as a blurring of the line between kinship and state. The power of Antigone's defiance is in "*the social deformation of both idealized kinship and political sovereignty*

²⁷⁸ Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death.*, 47.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

that emerges as a consequence of her act [original emphasis].²⁸⁰” The social deformation for which Antigone speaks is her promiscuously passionate and therefore suggestively incestuous relationship with Polynices,²⁸¹ the brother in the name of whose proper burial Antigone defies Creon as well as the incestuous desire that was the occasion of her birth. Attention to Antigone’s familial relationship as incestuous and therefore inappropriate is overlooked in earlier treatments. This neglect, for Butler, is of a piece with repeated attempts to sweep Antigone’s presumed perversion under the rug. In terms of the incest of Antigone’s family as well as Antigone’s “manly” challenge to Creon, Antigone’s claim remains unthinkable in the context of the kinship structures assumed by Hegel and Lacan.

Thus for both Hegel and Lacan, Antigone’s inability to conform to the laws of the public realm and of the symbolic respectively, represents an unwillingness to submit herself to the conditions for communal life. Antigone’s death is for this reason unquestionably tragic and even more deliberately sought than her suicide in the play would have it. Her inability to conform to the laws of the public realm and of the symbolic respectively, already represents an unwillingness to submit to the conditions for communal life, a sort of life-as-suicide in keeping with the death drive she represents. This unwillingness renders her *deservedly* unthinkable in its terms and thus without a possible future. In different ways then, for both Hegel and Lacan, Antigone represents an ending both tragic and *self-inflicted*.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 6.

²⁸¹ Mills discusses George Steiner’s claim that Hegel’s interpretation of the brother-sister relationship “went beyond the dark impulses of the id” (20.) This relationship should not be read as incest because “nineteenth century man searched for the psychic/spiritual twin or ‘soulmate’ and the sister came to represent the perfected Other as self.” Mills, *Woman, Nature, and Psyche.*, 20-21. Of course this is Butler’s point: Hegel writes desire out of the brother-sister relationship, desire that is nevertheless present.

Butler rewrites this ending instead as Antigone's claim for justice in her unwillingness to submit herself and her inappropriate love for her brother to terms of livability which negate them both. Antigone on Butler's reading represents a troubling of the Hegelian and Lacanian idealized versions of kinship. Antigone emerges in Butler's work as one who has "already departed from kinship... daughter of an incestuous bond, herself devoted to an impossible, death-bent incestuous love of her brother... her language most closely approximates Creon's."²⁸² These interactions suggest that Antigone is far from simply opposed to or prior to the state. As such Antigone is a critical perspective fundamentally influencing the state. Such influence makes available the question of the creation of terms of livability which might allow Antigone to be figured as other than a threat to community.

The challenge to idealized kinship for which Antigone speaks is found in both her waxing and waning status as woman and as man in the play and the anachronistic violation of the incest taboo by the family of Oedipus. When Antigone cares for her banished father Oedipus, her refers to as a "man" (*aner*).²⁸³ Likewise, Antigone's fierce loyalty to her brother makes her manly. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, both Ismene and Antigone are referred to as sons, "not women," when they attend to their father; also in that play Antigone takes the place of her blind father by leading him. This leads Butler to remark that by the end of the sequence of events of the two plays, Antigone has taken on the role of nearly every man in her family.²⁸⁴ That Antigone is frequently referred to as a man, in her defiance and in her devotion, not only raises questions about Hegel's clean assimilation of Antigone to womanhood (*Weiblichkeit*). But also it renders Antigone

²⁸² Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death.*, 6.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

questionable in the similar assimilation to the “category FMP” (“designated female from birth or biological mothers or primary sexual choice of men”²⁸⁵) in which Zack places her, which I discuss below.

For Butler, Antigone’s promiscuously passionate and incestuous relationship with Polynices, the brother in the name of whose proper burial Antigone defies Creon is also a site for contestation of kinship on Butler’s reading. Antigone’s desire for Polynices stands in opposition to the very incest taboo that initiates the kinship structure for which Antigone has been taken as iconic representation. But this is not the extent of Antigone’s incoherent position within traditional kinship expectations:

Oedipus comes to know who his mother and father are but finds that his mother is also his wife. Antigone’s father is her brother, since they both share a mother in Jocasta, and her brothers are her nephews, sons of her brother-father Oedipus. The terms of kinship become irreversibly equivocal.²⁸⁶

Attention to Antigone’s familial relationship as incestuous and inappropriate is overlooked in earlier treatments. Hegel and Lacan markedly deny that incest characterizes Antigone’s inappropriately intense love for Polynices. Hegel argues that Antigone remains external to the state because the only kind of recognition she can enjoy is of and by her brother, and this relationship is not properly a site of recognition because it (ironically) *lacks* desire. Antigone does not love her brother, says Lacan; rather she loves his “pure Being.”²⁸⁷ Martha Nussbaum remarks that Antigone does not appear to be particularly attached to her brother.²⁸⁸ But Antigone’s story is doubtless one that would be meaningless without attention to the prohibited kinship relations that bring on Oedipus’ blindness, the particular expressions of Antigone’s refusal to leave the body of

²⁸⁵ Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*, 8.

²⁸⁶ Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 14, 48-49.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Polynices unburied and his loss unmourned. The neglect of this inappropriate passion of Antigone with Polynices, colludes with repeated attempts to sweep similarly perverse challenges to conventional kinship under the rug. In terms of the incest of Antigone's family, her claim remains unthinkable in the context of the kinship structures assumed by Hegel and Lacan.

Here Butler reverses the challenge of this incest taboo. Butler argues that "Antigone figures the limits of *intelligibility* exposed at the limits of kinship[emphasis mine]." ²⁸⁹ Antigone calls into question kinship's terms, rather than the reverse. At the limits of kinship understood as predictably structured and idealized, Antigone poses a challenge:

Antigone represents not kinship in its ideal form but its deformation and displacement, one that puts the reigning regimes of representation into crisis and raises the question of what the conditions of intelligibility could have been that would have made her life possible, indeed, what sustaining web of relations makes our lives possible, those of us who confound kinship in the rearticulation of its terms? ²⁹⁰

The figure of Antigone represents an "alternative legality," which is translated by Hegel once again into a maternal womankind that Antigone never becomes. ²⁹¹ In fact, Butler is interested in not only this assimilation of Antigone to womankind which at one and the same time perverts the universal, public sphere with its ironic individuality and is no match for that sphere. But also on the former point that Butler is interested in Antigone's potential as a sight for the defiance of assimilation. Antigone, as a formidable *resistance to statism*, is a "counterfigure to the trend championed by recent feminists to seek the backing and authority of the state to implement feminist policy aims." ²⁹² Butler goes on: "The legacy of Antigone's defiance appeared to be lost in the contemporary efforts to

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 37.

²⁹² Ibid., 1.

recast political opposition as legal complaint and to see the legitimacy of the state in the espousal of feminist claims.”²⁹³

It would seem that Naomi Zack’s *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women’s Commonality* is an example of Antigone which does not read her as “a principle of feminine defiance,” but which does claim Antigone in a way that is at odds with Butler’s reading. For Zack, Antigone represents a void that might otherwise challenge statism in its own terms. Antigone in this view is herself a figure with the potential to “recast political opposition as legal complaint and . . . see the legitimacy of the state in the espousal of feminist claims.” The figure of Antigone holds promise for an institutionalized feminist politics—rather than in defiance of statism and its terms. This feminist politics will require a salience for the name women which will allow for an articulation of global, already gendered needs, needs prefigured by the widespread power operations of dichotomous and dichotomizing gender. For Zack is it paramount that globally the majority of the world’s work is done by people designated by others and themselves as women, and further that this work is vastly disproportionately paid. Zack’s book is an attempt to articulate such distributive injustices²⁹⁴ and the needs they create and invoke. This redistribution requires discursive recourse to some unique relation among diverse women that will fill a political void left by the abandonment of an imaginary of women conceived as a delineable group. The void that Zack has in mind is precisely the sort of void haunting texts such as Butler’s. But unlike Irigaray, for whom this lack also troubles the discourse that it mirrors, Zack proposes to fill the void with a

²⁹³ Butler sites Irigaray’s reading of Antigone “as a principle of feminine defiance of statism and an example of anti-authoritarianism” as a reading along these lines. *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹⁴ In the tradition beginning at least with Aristotelian distributive injustice, wealth as well as honor are at stake. Zack has both in mind. The former in her call for monetary redistribution, and the latter in her call for reevaluation of “women’s work.”

definition of women that is in her view relational: women's commonality relies on their unique relation to what she calls category FMP (F for female, M for mothers, P for primary sexual choice of men). Zack introduces her category this way: "Women are those human beings who are related to the historical category of individuals who are designated female from birth or biological mothers or primary sexual choice of men." (The specification of "heterosexual men" is included later.²⁹⁵) One can be assigned or identify with this category. The components of the category are explicitly not feminist values or virtues. In this discussion of Zack I will pay particular attention to her treatment of "female designation from birth" according to the norms of a binary gender system. "Female designation" gets special attention in Zack's account because, as she puts it, "It is now socially intelligible that some female humans may not become the heterosexual choices of men or mothers." What is it that is revealed in this statement? Why does it not go without stating? Zack is not interested in creating an essential definition of women that precedes their historical existence, but rather in recognizing what FMP-designees or FMP-*identified* persons have in common. What they have in common is a relation to the FMP category conceived not as unchanging essence, but as what she calls a relational essence.

The group FMP defines and invokes the group women in order to fill actively the void left by the 1980's abandonment of the North American project of theorizing women's commonality: the "foundation of second wave feminism collapsed during the 1980's and feminists did not unite to rebuild it."²⁹⁶ Zack blames the downfall of that project not on the falsity of universalism per se, but instead on the false universal

²⁹⁵ Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*, 42.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

articulated by feminists through the 1980's which erased, for example, Sojourner Truth's criticisms of this universal. In 1988, Elizabeth Spelman read Sojourner Truth as locating herself as a woman in a different gender from the white women to whom she spoke. Zack reads Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech differently. She suggests that a more obvious reading, suggested by the question itself, is that the speech was not the articulation of a different gender. It was instead an assertion of the falsity of the universal women being popularly assumed. Sojourner Truth was not espousing a different gender, but claiming the name woman for herself regardless of the differences between women present. To put it differently, Zack reads Sojourner Truth as appropriating the operative subject of feminist theory for new purposes, not negating that subject. The emphasis in Zack's reading is on the ways in which Truth's challenge speaks to the subject in play as a critique, rather than as a rejection of feminist subjectivity, in Zack's terms, the group women.

This rereading of Truth's speech represents a desire to move "beyond intersectionality," to which Spelman's earlier reading gave rise. Intersectionality, far from recognizing difference within a diverse feminist community, in Zack's view has only served to splinter that community. Feminist theorists are no longer interested in their relationships to what they conceive to be differently gendered persons, persons with whom they do not have gender not to mention race, class or sexuality in common. In this way, intersectionality operates as a system of exclusion in a way which repeats the operations of the false universal that intersectionality sought to amend. Thus the "hasty generalization from insufficient experience is repeated in the feminist rejection of

universalism itself.²⁹⁷ For Zack, the response to the false universal which would further feminist aims is thus not intersectionality but rather a renewed interest in defining a universal which relates to a new subjectivity of feminism, a subjectivity whose boundaries are defined in relation to the universal FMP (female, mother, “primary sexual choice of [hetero] men”). I find this relational definition of feminist subjectivity as once again exclusionary; but I am intrigued by Zack’s own worries in that text over the significance of intersexuality for own projection of feminist subjectivity.

As a symptom of the intersectionality which would render individuals with interests in common wholly different, Zack finds it curious that feminists repeatedly refer to women, and yet refuse to engage in theorizing the significance of this ubiquitous term as a foundation for feminist pursuits:

In practice, and on a level outside feminist theory, everybody knows that it makes sense to refer to white and nonwhite, rich and poor, straight and gay, and First, Second, and Third World women as *women*, and that there is something about those thus referred to which exceeds merely being symbolized by the same word. Even in theory, everybody knows that the *signifier* has a *referent*, that “women” refers to women.

For Zack, identifying the referent offers a foundation that *exists* and this foundation creates space for discussion of global advocacy for women. It also makes available questions about why it is that women do not yet share equitably with men official governmental positions of power in any part of the world.

Female designation in this context is understood as both an imposition on bodies which often defy the binary male/female and as a site of agency for the female-designated subject as female. Again, Zack affirms the category as both an identifier of those who fit the category through association as well as through the imposition of FMP. But as noted above, Zack points out that reproduction and heterosexuality are not appropriate markers

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 10.

for who women are, regardless of whether or not these are taken to be feminist virtues. Thus Zack invokes the female not as an unproblematic category, but as a prior marker that women can appeal to for commonality. The implicit claim is that if “women” is not a delineable, stable Category, then perhaps “female” is.²⁹⁸ Thus the discussion of female designation in the text becomes a *sine qua non* of the FMP as a category. However, far from reading sex as pre-interpretive, Zack implicitly finds the female highly problematic itself as a category on which to found a relational essence of women, even as she remains interested in forwarding such an essence-which-is-not-one. This lack of clarity of the male/female distinction attested to by a full chapter in the text is covered over by the apparent clarity of category FMP.

Zack questions this appeal to the female as problematic even as she must rely on female designation, rather than the female as natural, for a delineable if problematic framework for the arena of the “constructed identity” in which she is interested.²⁹⁹ Still, Zack herself admits that female designation is risky ground on which to found even a relational category. As she begins her discussion of female designation:

The idea that women are female human beings, and that their femaleness is given as a fact about them, obscures the process of identity formation in a woman-man or man-woman system. No child would be capable of inventing or creating its identity as a man or a woman on its own, or even capable of typing itself as male or female, from its earliest days. Female identity starts out as a primary item of the social equipment of infant care, external to the child and imposed on her as instruction and management of mind, body and behavior. Human infants are designated male or female at birth, and individual identities as men or women develop after that designation in a dual-gender system.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ The sex/gender distinction was first introduced by Gayle Rubin in her famous “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex” Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex. .” The two most influential strikes on taking this distinction to be clear have been Alison Jagger’s treatment of sex as subject to discursive restructuring and Judith Butler’s treatment of sex as itself an interpretation from which gender cannot be distinguished. Alison Jagger, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1983. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter : On the Discursive Limits of “Sex.”* New York, NY: Routledge, 1993.

²⁹⁹ Again, women in this text is neither a substance nor an essence. It is rather “constructed identity,” and “the relation of being a woman is sufficient [not necessary] for social existence in a dual woman-man (or man-woman) system.” Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

For Zack, the female is far from unproblematic as a foundation for even a “relational” understanding of which agents are women. She goes on to describe the promise that the intersex movement currently holds for challenging binary male-female imposition. But Zack takes it as given that her audience does not inhabit an “androgynous culture”:

All of these cultural and techno-physiological innovations could result in a deep sexual and gender androgyny. In deeply androgynous cultures, it might be inappropriate and irresponsible to describe a child as male or female from birth. It is also possible that infants with ambiguous genitalia will at some point be openly designated as intersexuals [sic], without social stigma and in the absence of other radical social androgyny.³⁰¹

As her global audience does not inhabit such attitudes to androgyny, the implication is that it is not now “inappropriate or irresponsible to describe a child as male or female from birth.” And thus Zack goes on in the primary interest of taking female designation to be a way of speaking to female specificity. Again, this female specificity is for Zack not intended as an approval of such designations, but rather is an attempt to speak in terms of an albeit heterogeneous group which is affected in a common manner by such designations. In so doing, this reading must ignore resistance to the devaluation of androgyny opposing the regulation of the binary gender norm; it erases the salience of these occurrences by writing them out of the field to which Zack speaks. Thus while Zack is well aware of the ambiguities of female designation, the primary position of the project with respect to the name women precludes any salience for this awareness.

I suggest that Zack must rely on the female even as an admittedly problematic designation because to thematize the ultimate instability of the female as a category (as she does in isolated moments in this text) would remove the rug from under the notion of women as a relational essence. Women as the relational essence ensures feminist politics

³⁰¹ Ibid., 43.

for Zack, and female designation is in Zack's own treatment the *sine qua non* of this relational essence.

Near the end of this work, Zack opposes Butler's reading of the figure of Antigone as someone who must necessarily pose a challenge from a non-official position with respect to the state.

Important as these considerations are, Butler's proposed reconfiguration of Lacanian psychoanalytic cultural history succeeds neither in showing how the incest taboo precludes political rule by women nor in envisioning rule by women. The "new grounds for communicability and for life" would at best liberate and restore to full human status those who do not instantiate the heterosexual exogamous family. *This would be a huge social good in feminist terms*, but there is nothing in Butler's own analysis to suggest that it would change the political gender of the world [emphasis mine].³⁰²

Thus Zack is not wholly opposed to Butler's reading. But Zack is concerned with the void in Butler's text left by denying what she reads as Antigone's gendered difference on the verge of the political. On Zack's reading, Antigone emerges as a figure who could fill a political void left by the abandonment of an imaginary of women conceived as a delineable group. Zack's question is thus, why can Antigone not herself assume a position of power with state sanction like that of Creon— rather than eternally posing as an external threat to the state and its terms— *against* which she speaks? It is a powerful aspect of Butler's account, says Zack, that it suggests ways in which Antigone's voice is ultimately intelligible in the public sphere (to Haemon and to Ismene) and thus appropriates and troubles the mandates of the public sphere. But importantly Butler's account cannot offer any reason why it is that Antigone cannot herself assume the role of a representative of the state. Instead she must critique without herself holding official power of that state. Butler's Antigone for Zack is a hopelessly private agent:

³⁰² Ibid., 171.

It should go without saying: no matter how nonheterosexually normative and endogamous the psychoanalytic family may become on something like Butler's interpretation of Antigone's claim, that change will not in itself protect conscripts, exploited workers, or ecological niches.³⁰³

Butler's Antigone poses a challenge to issues which for Zack are removed from those issues to which Zack wants to speak: military conscription, economic exploitations. Thus Zack is interested in reading Antigone as a woman, having a relationship to the category FMP, who serves for this reason as a visible, articulable counter which would not be consistent with Creon's edicts if she were in a position of official power. If she were to embody that state as one of its own, rather than as a challenge always external to the state, an opposition within the state regardless of its terms, this would promise legal, enforceable change in the valuation of the labor which is done by persons who identify and are identified as women. In preempting such revaluation by effectively erasing the inflexibility of women as a political category, Butler's view threatens "violence and exploitation that *would be* eliminated as the aim of government" if revaluation of women as an "imagined but real group"³⁰⁴ in the political imaginary had not been abandoned.

These incompatible figures of Antigone project different horizons. Does Antigone pose a challenge to normative terms of livability with which she is wholly inconsistent? Or does fixing one's eye on the figure of Antigone gesture to the political void left by the abandonment of a discrete group of which Antigone is emblematic? Is there a reading of Antigone possible, contra Hegel and Lacan, in which Antigone embodies a meaningful challenge, perhaps a figure of power? For Butler, in the context of Zack's project the answer is no. For Zack, in the context of Butler's project the answer is, likewise, no. Is Antigone a form that challenges the name women as a term rendered iconic and thing-

³⁰³ Ibid., 172.

³⁰⁴ Zack, 162.

like by the state itself (as Butler has it)? Or is Antigone a compelling political figure in conspicuous form precisely as a woman, challenging the ubiquitously phallogentric political realm (as Zack has it)?

Zack's work leaves untouched the question of whether or not her project actually requires a discrete definition of women. Is such a *definition* necessary? Does such definition invoke the subordination it sought to redress? Presumably, to abandon this project of definition would be to further the erasure of women in the political realm. For Zack the devaluation of work done by women not because the work has no value but because it is *women who do that work* absolutely repeats the subordination that persons who identify and are identified as women undergo. Butler on the other hand argues that it is to define women, to assume that the subject of feminist philosophy materializes a certain expectation for women that repeats the subordination that persons who must identify and are identified (recall Hegel's assimilation of Antigone to Womanhood) as women undergo.

If there is a fear that, by no longer being able to take for granted the subject, its gender, its sex, or its materiality, feminism will founder, it might be wise to consider the political consequences of keeping in their place the very premises that have tried to secure our subordination from the start.³⁰⁵

Therefore, when considering these dominant themes of the readings of Antigone in Butler and Zack, the horizons appear incompatible.

It is tempting to think of these writers as embarking on their projects with entirely different persons in mind. Butler is perhaps interested in persons occupying positions constantly relegated to the margin of feminist theory; she is interested in the ways in which feminist theory has made an unquestionable icon of women, which at times

³⁰⁵ Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death.*, 54.

resembles the very icon that feminist theory questions, and thus the ways in which an insistence on this icon undermines feminist interest in destabilizing sex/gender norms. Zack is perhaps motivated by concerns which have been and continue to be at the forefront of feminist theory and activism; however, she is not content to let feminist theory avoid “getting its hands dirty” with global economic critique. To put it differently, Zack is interested in the degree to which Antigone *ought not to be a woman*,³⁰⁶ the undue dangers of inhabiting the roles and values placed upon those who embody women; Butler speaks to the ways in which Antigone must or *ought to be a woman*, must embody Womanhood in order not to in fact be deserving of various regulations. The thoroughgoing normativity of the name women is no minor point; it is in precisely this respect that neither proffered account can be read in an empirical mode. The term women functions in the conversation as a movable standard (also in its sense as banner, pennant, emblem.)

³⁰⁶ Two instances of feminist writers referring to the predicament of needing not to embody woman/women/she/female *and* needing to be woman/women/she/female can be found in Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex. .” 204. and Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self.*, 149-150. However, neither Rubin nor Alcoff asks about the implications of this curious contradiction for the question of feminist subjectivity. For Rubin, as I argue toward the end of the chapter on Sedgwick, the import of this contradiction is that feminism must be a multi-pronged and multi-goaled movement, and that sexuality is not reducible to the feminist. This can also be seen in the epigraph quoted on the first page of the introduction. Rubin’s work is consistently a resource for my view of the aporia of the feminist, but her work does not ask enough questions about why this contradiction emerges so readily and what might be the implications for interpretations of the feminist. Alcoff’s mention of this contradiction is a postscript to a reprint of an article published in 1988 entitled, “The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory” which addresses the essentialism debate of the time and pits cultural feminists against poststructuralist feminists. The “pressure women experience to be a woman and the pressure not to be one as endemic to our historical and cultural moment, not a mere theoretical impasse” (149-150) is a point made by Ann Snitow to Alcoff in the years between the 1988 publication and the reprint in *Visible Identities*. Alcoff relegates each moment of the aporia of the feminist to one or another school of thought, and argues that such a disagreement is a mere theoretical impasse between them that can be overcome by her articulation of “the concept and the position of women... [as] not ultimately undecidable or arbitrary.” Instead, she articulates a “concept” of women that “limits the construction of woman we can offer by defining subjectivity as positionality within a context.” Alcoff’s aim is to avoid the apparent confusion that elicits the response that “oppression is all in your head” (149.) But again this view avoids interpretation of the feminist—it assumes that the feminist has a particular relationship to the name women (which here is Alcoff’s own relationship to the name woman/women/she/female) and renders disagreement with that view insubstantial. This mode of dealing with disagreement aims only to provide an undivided front. But who does this serve? It seems to me that more complicated, not falsely uncomplicated, interpretations of the feminist expression greater appreciation for the multidimensional complexity of oppression and violence.

It is tempting to chalk this difference up to a difference between the persons whom Butler and Zack have in mind. However, to do so would be to miss their disagreement over, in fact their simultaneous claiming of the singular figure of Antigone. With their attentions fixed on this singular figure, Butler and Zack disagree. It is not exactly that they advocate different Antigones. It is rather that they read one Antigone quite differently, and these readings reveal the ambiguous status of the subjectivity for whom Antigone serves as emblem. They are focused on different aspects of her predicament, different challenges put upon her and raised by her. In so doing they suggest the specifics of acute irreconcilability between the need to explore the possibility of a feminist subjectivity which is not mere contradiction of man and the need to critique the very exclusions necessary for such a subjectivity to emerge. In giving a definition of the name woman/women/female/she, it is impossible to separate distinctly such “definitions” from the contradictions of man that make the name women salient. In this way, the feminist as engaged in articulation of names for woman/women/she/female continues also to engage the dialectic in which this negation has meaning. But questioning the very project of a new subjectivity or subjectivities does not enable one to exit the field of power either. Rather in surrendering the name women unilaterally, one abandons a necessary oppositional tool that does not allow for the disappearance of the feminine. In giving up the name women and the concomitant hope for subjectivity as feminist, one surrenders a dialectical stance that can have many names.

But I have also suggested above that neither Butler nor Zack is wholly content with these apparently mutually exclusive positions to which they relegate themselves in this discussion. Butler and Zack read the same figure but differently. This suggests that

there might be ways in which these readings converse. Let me stress that I am not interested in this mutual undermining alone. What I am interested in is the tensions within each of these views and the implications of those tensions. In what ways does the figure of Antigone share a commonly complex resonance in the work of Butler and the work of Zack despite the stark distinctions between their accounts discussed above?

Zack's attention to the highly problematic status of the female in cultures that do not value androgyny is sympathetic with Butler's interest in the ubiquitous inability of individuals to conform to gendered, sexed expectations. This initial discussion of the female is at odds, on Zack's own description, with the desire to identify any "relational essence" unique to women. The female/male distinction is one that frequently requires medical imposition³⁰⁷ and calls for a genealogy of the ways in which this distinction appears as a given. The need and desire to isolate the female as a unique mode is to preclude discussion of resistances to or inherent undermining the female as given. The desire to isolate the female is in fact to implicitly render such resistances unimportant or irrelevant in the desire to fill a political void abandoned in intersectionality theories. Zack's response to this will be that insofar as the female is taken as given, then advocacy of those persons affected will require taking this supposed given seriously as a social and historical genealogy. Indeed, in refusing the salience of the female/male distinction, and the salience of the female in particular in cultures for whom radical social androgyny is not the norm, in refusing to speak in these terms in a culture in which they are ubiquitously salient, feminist theory threatens to cooperate with their proliferation unwittingly. Zack asks,

³⁰⁷ Kessler, Suzanne J. *Lessons from the Intersexed*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998. Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed*. Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender : Biological Theories About Women and Men*, Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body : Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*.

Insofar as the incest taboo defines positions within the family, after the existence of culture (i.e., it defines women in some sense), does this mean that for women to have real political power,³⁰⁸ the incest taboo would have to be dislodged?³⁰⁹

For Zack this amounts to an impossible, complete recasting of decidedly private values. In fact the understanding of Butler's reading of Antigone as speaking to the private perhaps motivates her opposition. For "to change the private and social is not to change or abolish the state as we know it; private or social change may at best lead to change in the laws within the state."³¹⁰ If this is the case, then it must be in statist terms that change occurs, a pertinent term being the name women. Without that term, without some specific meaning for that name, without a relational definition that lends the term definition, the means for recasting communicability, for recasting the terms themselves are lost. One must make use of the term and in so doing render it livable.

And in fact Butler comes close to making this point:

Within feminism, it seems as if there is some political necessity to speak as and for *women*, and I would not contest that necessity. Surely, that is the way in which representational politics operates, and in this country, lobbying efforts are virtually impossible without recourse to identity politics. So we agree that demonstrations and legislative efforts and radical movements need to make claims in the name of women.³¹¹

Butler had made this point similarly in *Gender Trouble*:

I began with the speculative question of whether a feminist politics could do without a "subject" in the category of women. At stake is not whether it still makes sense, strategically or transitionally, to refer to women in order to make representational claims on their behalf. The feminist "we" is always and only a phantastimatic construction, one that has its purposes...³¹²

³⁰⁸ As is suggested by her reading of the potential for power in the figure of Antigone, Zack does not regard unofficial power as "real power." Power entails the capacity to be represented in statist terms.

³⁰⁹ It is this point that reveals the preoccupation of Zack's text with the status of incest in *Antigone's Claim*. It is clear from that book, however, that it is not incest per se that Butler advocates, but rather the challenge that incest represents for the grounds of communicability inaugurated for Lacan by the incest taboo in the public sphere. "Neither the return to familial normalcy nor the celebration of incestuous practice is here the aim. Her [Antigone's] predicament, though, does offer an allegory for the crisis of kinship: which social arrangements can be recognized as legitimate love, and which human losses can be explicitly grieved as real and consequential loss?" 24. Thus far from celebrating incest, Butler treats it as it is a fixation of psychoanalysis in a manner repeated in Zack's preoccupation with the status of incest in Butler's reading of Antigone.

³¹⁰ Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*, 172.

³¹¹ Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, 49.

³¹² Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 181.

In a cultural and political situation in which representational politics set the terms of debate always already prior to communication, to refuse to make claims in the name of women would be to give up the possibility of making communicable claims. The necessity is a function of the political milieu in which such claims are required for the communication of basic to interpretive needs. But livability is something altogether different for Butler. To say that one must of necessity make use of a term does not erase the regulation and exclusion of “some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent”.³¹³

But this necessity needs to be reconciled with another. The minute that the category of women is invoked as *describing* the constituency for which feminism speaks, an internal debate invariably begins over what the descriptive content of that term will be. There are those who claim that there is an ontological specificity to women as childbearers that forms the basis of a specific legal and political interest in representation, and then there are others who understand maternity to be a social relation that is, under current social circumstances, the specific and cross-cultural situation of women. And there are those who seek recourse to Gilligan and others to establish a feminine specificity that makes itself clear in women’s communities or ways of knowing. But every time that specificity is articulated, there is resistance and factionalization within the very constituency that is supposed to be *unified* by the articulation of its common element.³¹⁴

For Butler the necessity that one must at times use the term women and thus its the terms which are set by representational politics ought not to deny the compromises, contestations and resistances that such terms entail. Still, “this is not to say that the term ‘women’ ought not to be used, or that we ought to announce the death of the category.” But Butler insists that no fixed definition can be given to the uses of the term without such denials. This is because “any effort to give universal or specific content to the category of women, presuming that that guarantee of solidarity is required *in advance*, will necessarily produce factionalization,” and such factionalization has value in its facilitation of “release of the term into a future of multiple significations, to emancipate it

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange.*, 49.

from the maternal or racialist ontologies to which it has been restricted, and to give it play as a site where unanticipated meanings might come to bear.”³¹⁵ As an example of such factionalization, Butler recalls that the 1980’s “the feminist ‘we’ rightly came under attack by women of color who claimed that ‘we’ was invariably white, and that that ‘we’ that was meant to solidify... was the source of factionalization.”³¹⁶ This moment to which intersectionality responded was read by Zack not as calling into question universalization per se, but calling into question an inappropriate universal. But the new universal FMP that Zack suggests nevertheless preempts the agency provided by the proliferation of significations in Butler’s reading. “Paradoxically, it may be that only through releasing the category of women from a fixed referent that something like ‘agency’ becomes possible.” In other words, for Butler, not in asking about how else the feminine might be represented, but rather in challenging any fixing of representation at all, does agency become possible. Agency remains for Butler to be in the moment of resistance to universalism; for Zack the moment of resistance is in an exploration of the possibilities of universalism.

Thus for Butler the willingness to undermine supposedly fixed representations of women is a necessity that must be taken together with the demand that feminist political theory speak in terms of women. The ever-normative demands invoked by reference to women, demands which will inevitably reinscribe the very norms that such a definition sought to address, require constant questioning. This point is raised in the context of Butler’s questioning of the necessity for a presupposed subject for theories of politics. Must the social dimensions of the subject of feminist political theory be taken for

³¹⁵ Ibid., 50.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

granted? Butler's suggests that the subordination of women is constituted by, not redressed in, demands for the unique gender, sex, materiality of women. It is not a preexisting uniqueness of women that meets with subordination, but rather subordination itself is in play wherever demands for the unique enact and naturalize the unique. Subordination consists in the demand that those designated women adhere to preconceived notions of what women should be, and likewise those designated men adhere to preconceived notions of what men should be. It is precisely the gesture of predicting *in advance* to what the figure of feminist subjectivity should conform that is at issue for Butler. Butler insists that this does not preclude putting the name women to political use:

And here the question is not whether or not there ought to be reference to matter, just as the question never has been whether or not there ought to be speaking about women. This speaking will occur, and for feminist reasons it must; the category of women does not become useless through deconstruction, but becomes one whose uses are no longer reified as "referents" and that stand a chance of being opened up, indeed of coming to signify in ways that none of us can predict in advance.³¹⁷

I agree with Butler that the deconstruction of the name women must coexist with resistant uses of the name women. I turn to Irigaray below for further discussion of such "resistant uses." However, to cover over the tension between these two gestures misses key moments in the work of both Zack and Butler. Only Butler explicitly insists that there is no tension:

Surely, it must be possible both to use the term—to use it tactically even as one is, as it were, used and positioned by it—and also to subject the term to a critique that interrogates the exclusionary operations and differential power relations that construct and delimit feminist invocations of "women." This is, to paraphrase the citations from Spivak above ["deconstruction is... critique of something without which we cannot do anything.'], the critique of something useful, the critique of something we cannot do without. Indeed, I would argue that it is a critique without which

³¹⁷ Judith Butler, "Bodies That Matter" in Carolyn L. Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford, *Engaging with Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought, Gender and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

feminism loses its democratizing potential through refusing to engage—take stock of, and become transformed by—the exclusions that put it into play [emphasis mine].³¹⁸

Thus while the “democratizing potential” of feminism requires critique of the name women, in this essay in which she raises concerns about the figure of sexed materiality in Irigaray, Butler expresses this aim as something of an emphasis rather than an exclusive aim. However, I argue that the name women as a site for the theorization of a still unknown subject causes problems for the insistence that such an unknown subject cannot be decided in advance, cannot be made to live up to expectations that inevitably originate in present circumstances— to which that unknown subject was meant to address in the first place. This tension appears in the aside in the above quote in which Butler makes it clear that the use of the name women is always already “as one is... used and positioned *by*” the name women. From each of these disparate gestures an accusation of subordination arises, and yet each gesture seems to locate *the* feminist moment.

These gestures considered as irreducible suggest again that it is on the one hand the demand that *one ought to conform to presupposed definition of women* that Butler addresses, whereas for Zack subordination is in the imperative that in order to make a claim for justice, a person *ought not to be a woman*. These competing moments within subordination prevent claims to a coherent picture of whom or what heteronomy is. They disagree about that in which heteronomy consists. This does not prevent one from speaking to such subordinations, but on the contrary this disagreement attests to the complexity of the operations of power.

The reading of Antigone by Butler as well as the larger claims made in *Contingent Foundations* are difficult to read together with Butler’s above mentioned

³¹⁸ Ibid.

claims to the political necessity to speak as and for women. Interestingly, the political necessity to speak as and for women made in *Contingent Foundations* coincides with Zack's concern to fill the political void left by intersectionality. Likewise Zack's attention to the complexities of female designation coincides with Butler's concern to speak to the ways in which the female is underdetermined. Zack is sympathetic with the notion that to determine the female in fixed definition would fulfill a promise of regulation inherently suggested by invocations of women. It is the regulation inherently suggested by invocations of women that accounts for the factionalization that springs up whenever the subject of feminist political theory is supposed to spring from a singular foundation. Thus the ambiguous status of the name emerges not only between but also crucially within the work of both Butler and Zack.

The tension between these renderings of the figure of Antigone is no less acute when one considers the ambiguity of the figure of Antigone as one's own. It is not that theorists just can't seem to get together; it is not that someone is right and someone is wrong and feminist theorists are to blame for the circular discussions which end in disagreement. It is instead that the question of feminist subjectivity is invoked by the necessity that "she" speak. Unified expression is not possible because "she" is also resistant to the supposed unity that negativity connotes. One must not be as well as be an instantiation of woman/women/she/female. She is both a negation of the subject, the same, and she obviates such dialectical naming. "She" does both gestures, incompatibly. This "she" dissents in not being "he" or neutral in the text, but "she" also dissents in disputing the grounds of this distinction. The feminist, that which is feminist, cannot avoid this aporia.

Zack and Butler take their predominant claims to represent a mutual threat that they do not take to be contained within their own work. Allow me to quote a few passages at length which might demonstrate how it is that each understands the other to be in collusion with norms of violent consequence. Witness the following in Butler:

... “identity” as a point of departure can never hold as the solidifying ground of a feminist political movement. Identity categories are never merely descriptive, but always normative, and as such, exclusionary.

To establish a normative foundation for settling the question of what ought properly to be included in the description of women would be only and always to produce a new site of political contest. That foundation would settle nothing, but would of its own necessity founder on its own authoritarian ruse.³¹⁹

For Butler, women must remain undesignatable. In effect, if women designates, it designates a radical resistance to designatability that ensures safety in departures from regulation and concomitant violence. For Irigaray, this will only reinforce the void that women already uncomfortably inhabit. And it is precisely this void-subject dichotomy that Butler understands Antigone’s emblematic “radical kinship” to be in tension with the discourse of sexual difference that Zack borders on espousing and which Irigaray does espouse:

This perspective of radical kinship, which sought to extend legitimacy to a variety of kinship forms, and which, in fact, refused the reduction of kinship to family, came under criticism by some feminists in the aftermath of the 1960s “sexual revolution,” producing, I would suggest, a theoretical conservatism that is currently in tension with contemporary radical sexual politics. It is why, for instance, it would be difficult to find a fruitful engagement at the present time between the new Lacanian formalisms and the radical queer politics of, for example, Michael Warner and friends. The former insists on fundamental notions of sexual difference, which are based on rules that prohibit and regulate sexual exchange, rules we can break only to find ourselves ordered by them anew. The latter calls into question forms of sexual foundationalism that cast viable forms of queer sexual alliance as illegitimate or, indeed, impossible and unlivable. At its extreme, the radical sexual politics turns against psychoanalysis, or, rather, its implicit normativity, and the neoformalists turn against queer studies as a “tragically” utopian enterprise.³²⁰

Butler’s own work I would argue is an example of “fruitful engagement at the present time between” these sets of concerns, although her questions most often position “the

³¹⁹ Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, 51.

³²⁰ Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, 75.

queer” (in quotation marks precisely because the queer is that which cannot be represented as identical) as that which is void, unspeakable, still unknown. When Butler attempts to articulate the name women as unspeakable in this way she approaches one moment of the early Irigaray. However, passages such as the above make it clear that for Butler the name women that pursuing feminist subjectivity entails threatens regulation.

Witness again in Zack:

Important as these considerations are, Butler’s proposed reconfiguration of Lacanian psychoanalytic cultural history succeeds neither in showing how the incest taboo precludes political rule by women nor in envisioning rule by women. The “new grounds for communicability and for life” would at best liberate and restore to full human status those who do not instantiate the heterosexual exogamous family. This would be a huge social good in feminist terms, but there is nothing in Butler’s own analysis to suggest that it would change the political gender of the world.³²¹

Zack places a premium on changing the political gender of the world not because she is naïve to the possibility of abuse of power by women representing the state. Rather putting the aim this way refers to her interest in seeing a change in who claims state authority and thus an impact on the needs and values of those representing state authority.³²²

I now want to extend the side of the conversation on which I have placed Zack to include Irigaray’s reading of Antigone. Irigaray’s interpretation of the figure of Antigone in *Speculum de l’autre femme*³²³ demonstrates most affinity with Zack’s reading, but it also expands this reading while also showing some affinity for Butler’s predominant

³²¹ Zack’s interest is explicitly “matriarchal rule,” and insofar as this is not an explicit interest of Butler, Butler’s work is for Zack an example of the lack of “sufficiently radical” feminist political theory. This would suggest that interest in state-sanctioned modes of power are the only sufficiently radical ones. But this represents again the deep divide between Zack and Butler regarding the state: for Zack, it is only in terms of the state that power is wielded. For Butler it is only external to the state, in challenges to the norms of the state, that power is wielded. Zack, *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women’s Commonality*, 171.

³²² Changing the political gender of the world of course does not change the political race of the world, the political sexuality of the world, etc. And this is no small point. Zack’s singular interest in changing the political gender of the world does not address the sureness with which changing the political gender of the world will very likely not change for example the political race of the world. This is an excellent example of singular focus on gender translating into a white, heterosexual, classed, abled agenda.

³²³ I use the French title in light of the discussion “The Other: Woman” in Irigaray, *I Love to You : Sketch for a Felicity within History*. All references to *Speculum* are from Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*.

view. I focus on *Speculum de l'autre femme*, but I then briefly turn to other appearances of Antigone in Irigaray's work in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*,³²⁴ "The Female Gender"³²⁵ and *Thinking the Difference*.³²⁶

The figure of Antigone in Sophocles' play serves as the occasion to contemplate Woman, who "has no gaze, no discourse for her specific specularization that would allow her to identify with herself (as same)—to return into the self—or break free of the natural specular process that now holds her—to get out of the self."³²⁷ Here, Antigone, who is the particular woman in contemplation of whom Hegel articulates the moniker which serves as the title, "The Eternal Irony of the Community," can claim only "quasi-subjectivity that is supposedly hers" due to the function of that quasi-subjectivity in the development of history, the development of the subject, the same, the self. Her outlawed burial of Polynices is in fact "work in the service of another, of that male Other, [and it] ensures the ineffectiveness of any desire that is specifically hers."³²⁸ Thus while Antigone appears to lay claim to desire, this desire remains within the development of the subject, to which Antigone is (not quite) antagonistic.³²⁹ It is quite possible that her desire might be best expressed as mourning—of the mother's son.³³⁰ Her desire such as it is will at any rate be claimed for the development of history, and in fact "the final meaning of the obedience demanded of woman" requires this service of her desire to the universal will.

³²⁴ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

³²⁵ Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

³²⁶ Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference : For a Peaceful Revolution*.

³²⁷ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*., 224.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

This is the significance of the role of “guardian of the blood”³³¹ played by Antigone: as blood absent and yet present she nourishes the “universal consciousness of self.” Antigone and the blood she guards operate in the background of proper action. It is in the “form of bloodless shadows—of unconscious fantasies—that they maintain an underground subsistence.”³³² Inert as blood, Antigone serves to maintain action in which she is not a proper player. Antigone *maintains* such action; “she remains the very ground in which manifest mind secretly sets its roots and draws its strength.”³³³ Thus, though she functions without power in the conscious development of history, she is in some sense present as “that substance common to all, repressed, unconscious, and dumb, washed in the waters of oblivion.”³³⁴

And yet to write off the possibility of Antigone’s own desire would be to continue in the pattern which “*ensures the Erinnerung of the consciousness of self by forgetting herself.*”³³⁵ The forgetting of her stabilizes and ensures the development of the (same) subject. But in the context of the discussion of Antigone in “The Eternal Irony of the Community,” to imagine otherwise than the forgetting of her requires bearing witness to the traditional positioning of woman as “the place, the whole of the place in which she cannot take possession of herself as such.”³³⁶ This reading of Antigone is as the ready-to-hand yet vacuous name Woman whose contemplation remains ensnared in the economy or the horizon of the One, the subject, preempting the possibility of irreducible alterity. But this reading of Antigone also nourishes the hope of a subject (woman) that is still

³³¹ Ibid., 225.

³³² Ibid., 225.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., 227.

unknown insofar as it is as the vacuous name Woman that she remains unknown. In this moment, Antigone figures the limits of the One, the subject. The bare hope of a subject yet unknown is addressed in attempting to address Antigone, the previously unapparent. This opens up the possibility of a “culture of two subjects,” in which woman might be resignified and revalued.

And yet it is in turning attention to what was vacuous, to the ways in which it is counted as vacuous, that the reading of Antigone in *Speculum* nourishes a hope in tension with this, hope of a subjectivity that will not conform to such a ready-to-hand yet empty name Woman which serves as the condition of possibility for the very notion of the subject. Notably, it is in the same figure that such a hope is available. Antigone is, in the last lines of the section, suggested to be emblematic of “the forces of the world” which might “rise up and threaten to lay waste the community,”³³⁷ in a display of revolt. In this revolt, the forces

turn it upside down. Refusing to be that unconscious ground that nourishes nature, womanhood would then demand the right to pleasure, to *jouissance*, even to effective action, thus betraying her universal destiny.³³⁸

Furthermore, Antigone would “pervert” the respectability of the State by scorning the dried-up male who is no longer the youth “possessed by the *son*, the *brother*, the *young man*, for in them, much more than in the power of government, she recognizes a *master*, an *equal*, a *lover*.” But this revolt is followed by a repression of the same ilk as the collective repression of Western philosophical discourse. The community transforms this revolt which is “*separated from the universal goal pursued by the citizens*” into a way of making an even stronger statement in its own defense. It returns this revolt again to its

³³⁷ Ibid., 225.

³³⁸ Ibid., 226.

proper “right-side up” position, having no need to rearrange what has only been flipped. Thus, the figure of Antigone even in revolt, even as a potential subject, can only reconstitute the (male, the One) subject in whose name she was originally authored. A more radically conceived revolt appears necessary, for “No one single thing—no form, act, discourse, subject, masculine, feminine—can complete the development of woman’s desire.”³³⁹ Only in “phallosensical capitulations and capitalizations” can woman “be resolved.”³⁴⁰ A reaching beyond the current resistance to codification of the vacuum of woman, to a subjectivity which does not reformulate the same is necessary. Until such subjectivity emerges, “Woman is not to be related to any simple designatable, subject, or entity. Nor is the whole group (called) women.”³⁴¹

This inability to name what is hoped for—a subjectivity, not the same, not the subject—is a symptom of the discourse of the same. It is precisely because of the discourse of the same, because the subject is always already appropriated by the masculine, that no collective articulation of women is yet possible. But it is also, strangely, a rumbling of resistance to the masculine signifying economy which “is always vulnerable to the fission of its elementary particle, its unit of trade, by this more-or-less nothing that can upset market rates.”³⁴² As Carol Jacobs points out, “if the opening paragraphs of the essay seem to lament woman’s inability to take possession of herself, the essay goes on to offer the indefinability of woman as something of a celebration.”³⁴³ Thus woman is a volume without definite shape, with fluid contours instead of solid.³⁴⁴ If

³³⁹ Ibid., 229.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 229.

³⁴¹ Ibid., 230.

³⁴² Ibid., 237.

³⁴³ Jacobs, “Dusting Antigone.”, 897.

³⁴⁴ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman.*, 227-229. First French edition appears 1974.

this fluidity coincides with woman's not having "taken (a) place," it is also the case that this fluidity resists the vacuous definitions that would resolve or erase the question of woman. However, in *Speculum* the figure of Antigone remains trapped in development of the subject of which she herself can never be conscious.

In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray returns to the image of Antigone, "though I shall not identify with it."³⁴⁵ Antigone continues to be here "the antiwoman... a production of a culture that has been written by men alone."³⁴⁶ However, in this text Irigaray demonstrates a hope for the figure of Antigone unexpressed in the previous treatment. Here Antigone "has to be brought out of the night, out of the shadow, out of the rock, out of the total paralysis experienced by a social order that condemns itself even as it condemns her."³⁴⁷ In lines clearly in agreement with Zack's concerns, Creon is now specifically called into question: "this Creon has condemned society to a split in the order of reason that leaves nature without gods, without grace. Leaves the family with no future other than work for the state, procreation without joy, love without ethics."³⁴⁸ Antigone on the other hand, silenced by her attempts to bury Polynices is "locked up—paralyzed, on the edge of the city."³⁴⁹ In lines suggestive of Butler's concerns, Antigone is banished to the periphery because she is "neither master nor slave. And this upsets the order of the dialectic."³⁵⁰ She does nothing— except end her own life— which can be construed as "whole." And yet because she was also sentenced to die by Creon, "who would dare

³⁴⁵ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 118. First French edition appears 1984.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

condemn Antigone?” Antigone holds promise in that she “has nothing to lose. She makes no attempt on another’s life.” Irigaray warns,

In the end, every “war” machine turns against the one who made it. At least according to Hegel? At least according to a certain logic of conscience? Unless we can pass into another? Unless, at every opportunity, we ourselves take the negative upon ourselves. Which would amount to allowing the other his/her liberty, and sex. Which would assume that we accept losing ourselves by giving ourselves. Which would leave the decision about time to us. By giving us control over the debts we lay *on the future*.
Do we still have the time to face those debts?³⁵¹
Ethically, we have to give ourselves the time.³⁵¹

And yet it is not clear what these enigmatic comments recommend. As if reinforcing the confusion as to what might bring forward Antigone’s inert presence or how one might go about amending this legacy, again Antigone as invisible mirror constitutes the same in “The Female Gender,”³⁵² originally a lecture given November 14, 1985 for a conference at Erasmus University entitled, “The Other and Thinking about Difference.” As Luisa Muraro puts it, here “Irigaray resolved Antigone’s ambiguity.”³⁵³ There Antigone “already... is working in the service of the god of men and of their *pathos*.”³⁵⁴ She is hopelessly committed to a larger story, that of the state, to which she is oblivious. Antigone “already serves the state in that she tries to wipe away the blood shed by the state in its bid for power and human rights through *sacrifice*.”³⁵⁵ In doing so, Antigone does not “serve her own gender, her dialectic.”³⁵⁶ She continues to be the other of the same, to “perform only the dark side of that task, the side needed to establish the male order as it moves toward absolute affirmation.” Antigone may resist, but she “nonetheless submits” to a development which forgets her, “in order to wipe a stain away once more.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 120.

³⁵² Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*., 105-123. First French Edition 1987.

³⁵³ Muraro, 328 in Burke, Schor, and Whitford, *Engaging with Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*.

³⁵⁴ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*., 110.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 111.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

What stain? Fundamentally, the stain of her consciousness, of belonging to the female race, of having a maternal filiation.”³⁵⁷ Antigone is “annihilated” for this reason. It is both symptom and cause of forgetting her that Antigone “keeps faith with the lost roots of man.”³⁵⁸ In this treatment even more than in that of *Speculum*, Antigone remains a void whose content has not yet been articulated, much less valued. Where Zack will say that this “content” already corresponds to uncompensated labor within a global division of labor, Irigaray will insist that this disparate treatment is not due to a dichotomy of meaning, but rather a univocity of meaning in which an alternative has yet to be cultivated. What Irigaray in *Speculum* refers to as a “dual dialectic”³⁵⁹ and will call a “culture of two subjects” would consist in such a cultivation of two voices, irreducible to each other. Such a dialectic would like the Adornian negative dialectic not give way to sublation. However, unlike Adornian negative dialectic, Irigaray is interested in the

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman.*, 223-224. See also Irigaray’s addition of a third for a “triple dialectic, one for the male subject, one for the female subject, and one for their relationship as a couple or in a community” in Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference : For a Peaceful Revolution.*, 39. For critical discussion of this move to “the couple” see Luisa Muraro, “Female Genealogies,” Judith Butler “Bodies That Matter” in Burke, Schor, and Whitford, *Engaging with Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought.* See also Debra Bergoffen, “Irigaray’s Couples” in Cimitile and Miller, *Returning to Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy, Politics, and the Question of Unity.* For Bergoffen, posing the question of the couple (addressed as mother-daughter, placental and the heterosexual couples) in Irigaray offers a way of interpreting the “dual valences” of Irigaray’s work (170)—“her thinking carries both promissory and reactionary valences” (152.) However, this “dangerous ambiguity is part of the power of Irigaray’s thinking” (152.) On the one hand coupled intimacy is the potential site for the nourishing of desire and the unseating of the patriarchal one. On the other hand, Bergoffen worries with Willett that in insisting that this must be an exchange between two, a reactionary valence of Irigaray’s work appears. What about groups—the mother-daughter, the male-female, the placental relation might all be triads or more. Is Irigaray’s work opposed to larger groupings? While for Irigaray such groupings will always result in sublimation of the feminine, her work appears opposed to liberatory groupings that do not conform to the couple. Why *two*? Bergoffen ends with a question: “Will accepting the question of the sexual difference as the question of our age take us on a road not yet traveled or return us to familiar territories by an alternate route?” (172) However, unlike Willett, Bergoffen reads Irigaray’s notion of sexual difference as operating between couples otherwise than heterosexual: “Irigaray’s phrase sexual difference must be translated as the between that makes the two possible such that it leads us to think of this difference in heterosexual terms *while showing us that these terms are too restrictive*” [my emphasis] (162.) Traditional sexual differentiation does not establish the between; “so long as the principle of the between [mother and daughter, placental relation] is in play the sexual difference is at work” (163.) Still, the question of whether Irigaray is right to exclude from her ethics of sexual difference the triad or more is common to both Willett and Bergoffen.

dialectic per se, rather than any beyond of this dialectic. There is no possibility beyond sexual difference which would not envelope subjectivity in the feminine in a logic of the same. The figure of Antigone will offer the possibility for a new subject to complete the dual dialectic. However, in *Speculum*, Antigone remains a “the image of the female made to man’s measure.”³⁶⁰

In “*Civil Rights and Responsibilities for the Two Sexes*,”³⁶¹ a lecture originally given September, 10 1988 on “women’s civil responsibility,” Irigaray departs from these earlier readings of Antigone quite starkly. The example of Antigone is “always worth reflecting upon as a historical figure and as an identity or identification for many girls and women living today.”³⁶² Thus, far from vacuous, Antigone offers identity. In fact

in her own way, Antigone indicates a path for returning from the political dimension to objectivity. She asserts that the bombast of seductive, empty discourse, with the aim of obtaining power, sows disorder in the polis, offends the gods, upsets the very cosmic balances themselves.³⁶³

The ambiguous resistance that Antigone represented in *Speculum I*, which was banished in the treatment of Antigone in the “Female Gender,” is now more positively considered.

Antigone

reminds us that the earthly order is not a pure social power, that it must be founded upon the economy of the cosmic order, upon respect for the procreation of living beings, on attention to maternal ancestry, to its gods, its rights, its organization.

³⁶⁰ Muraro, 328 in Burke, Schor, and Whitford, *Engaging with Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*.

³⁶¹ Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference : For a Peaceful Revolution.*, 67-88. It is to this lecture that I suspect Luisa Muraro refers instead of the one she cites—which the editors of the *Engaging With Irigaray* volume footnote “does not discuss Antigone.” This essay, “Civil Rights and Responsibilities for the Two Sexes,” was presented at the 1988 UNITÀ Festival, which matches the information that Muraro gives; it is also a reading of Antigone that resembles the “turning point” that Muraro attributes to it.

³⁶² Ibid., 70.

³⁶³ Ibid.

She is a definitive “no to men’s power struggles, men’s conflicts over who will be king, the endless escalation over who will be superior, and at any cost.”³⁶⁴ This “truth about Antigone” suggests an alternative politics, the very sort for which Zack hopes. In fact, the figure of Antigone suggests that the following be observed:

- (1) The cosmic order must be observed, particularly sunlight and humanity’s earthly home.
- (2) Maternal ancestry must be respected, and subjecting it to wars between men over access to power cannot be accepted. Respecting maternal ancestry means taking care of the living bodies borne by the mother, burying them when they are dead, and not preferring the eldest son to the younger... nor a son to a daughter.
- (3) These tasks are part of the civil order... not then dissociated from women’s law
- (4) Burial rites are necessary to maintain order in the polis, to protect the earth and the heaven in which it is rooted.³⁶⁵

Antigone in this treatment has a political agenda. She upholds “basic laws,” and not out of “a love of death”³⁶⁶ contra Lacan. It is in this respect that at this time Irigaray might be said to propose, especially with the

transcendental sensible... a dialectic more dialectical than the Dialectic- a dialectic whereby thoroughly sexed subjects act as mediating movement between their respective masculine and feminine materialities and divinities.³⁶⁷

In *Speculum*, the “sensible transcendental” builds upon the Heideggerian contrast of his own ontical/ontological distinction with the Kantian empirical/transcendental distinction.³⁶⁸ Heidegger argues that in the end his own distinction, unlike the Kantian absolute distinction, cannot hold. Irigaray maintains Heidegger’s insistence on the inseparability of ontical and ontological and applies it to the Kantian distinction between the sensible and the transcendental. The sensible transcendental insists on the dialectical movement of sexed subjects.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 70.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 68-69.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 69.

³⁶⁷ Walsh, “Her Mother Her Self: The Ethics of the Antigone Family Romance.”, 118.

³⁶⁸ Joanna Hodge, “Irigaray Reading Heidegger,” in Burke, Schor, and Whitford, *Engaging with Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought.*, 203.

Thus Irigaray's dynamic treatment of Antigone focuses variously on her subsumption under the state and her resistance to the state in recognizable, articulable manner. This treatment augments that of Zack in its articulation of the way in which the figure of Antigone in her opposition to Creon at once constitutes dialectic visibly and invisibly. For Zack, it is in her status emblematic of women, not of inarticulable radical kinship that Antigone might oppose the state from within the state. Likewise, for Irigaray, such a dialectic to be properly powerful will require a culture of two subjects, a dual dialectic in which the position of women is not then subsumed under the development of the subject, the narrative of a unified state. Butler's treatment emphasizes the ways in which the radicality and individuality of the figure of Antigone interrupts the narrative of unified state; however, Antigone in exposing the limits of such narrative escapes the notice of those, not only Hegel and Lacan, but also Zack and Irigaray, who would subsume Antigone under a new universal. Adhering to such a dialectic, in Butler's view will only further silence those voices which cannot be assimilated to the new subject "women" enacted via erasures of race, class, sexuality, ability/disability as well as certain modes of gender.

Cynthia Willett argues that it is not the adherence to the subject in Irigaray that limits the potential of the image for an understanding of social bonds, so much as an adherence to the mythology of separation from the mother that constitutes this subject and its position in the "noumenal couple," "fabricated from the conventions that it claims to leave behind."³⁶⁹ Irigaray does in Willett's view do well to decouple through a notion

³⁶⁹ Cynthia Willett, *The Soul of Justice : Social Bonds and Racial Hubris* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 151. See also Chapter Two, "Tactile Sociality: Irigaray and Child Development Research" in Cynthia Willett, *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

of “amorous exchange”³⁷⁰ the meaning of separation from the mother and repression and castration, however this decoupling does not manage to question the ways in which the fleshy, “primordial encounter is embodied in webs of power.”³⁷¹ Irigaray rewrites the dialectic so that it is no longer the asymmetrical dialectic of both Plato and Hegel’s mythologies of origin.³⁷² Instead, Irigaray alters the dialectic by placing the sexual difference couple at the center of communal life. However, Willett is concerned that this “isolation of the couple from communal ties may be less a romantic dream than a consequence of the modern marketplace.”³⁷³ Irigaray’s rewriting of the dialectic offers a valuable corrective to the “narcissism of Marcuse’s new man” by articulating an alternative form of power (*la puissance*) overlooked by Marcuse.³⁷⁴ But this rewriting of the dialectic resembles that very narcissism in its erasure of same-sex couples,³⁷⁵ its obliviousness to communal and nonsexual intimate relationships. Such relationships are erased by Irigaray’s focus on the heterosexual couple. In fact, Willett worries, “The claim

³⁷⁰ Willett, *The Soul of Justice : Social Bonds and Racial Hubris.*, 134.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁷² Plato’s *Symposium* presents human desire as originating in the relation between “a resourceful father and a needy mother who have produced a son named Eros.” *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 151.

³⁷⁴ This treatment of Marcuse extends from the previous chapter, *Ibid.*, 101-122.

³⁷⁵ However, see Debra Bergoffen, “Irigaray’s Couples,” in *Returning to Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy, Politics and the Question of Unity*, ed. Maria Cimitile and Elaine P. Miller (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007). in which the same-sex couple, the mother-daughter couple, the placental couple are sites of Irigaray’s rewriting of the commonsense notion of sexual difference: “Irigaray’s phrase sexual difference must be translated as the between that makes the two possible such that it leads us to think of this difference in heterosexual terms while showing us that these terms are too restrictive,” (162.) In fact, “So long as the principle of the between is in play the sexual difference is at work. Whether the sexed identity of those engaged in the dialogue of the between is irrelevant, the same or distinct, however changes how the sexual difference works,” 163. Still, Bergoffen agrees that it is an important question whether the generosity of the exchange requires an exchange between *two*. New valuation of relationships among more than two seem to be preempted by Irigaray’s privileging of the two. Accordingly, Bergoffen ends on a key question: “Will accepting the question of the sexual difference as the question of our age take us on a road not yet traveled or return us to familiar territories by an alternate route?”, 172. For Bergoffen, these are questions required for probing the “dangerous ambiguity” of Irigaray’s phrase sexual difference. Cimitile and Miller, *Returning to Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy, Politics, and the Question of Unity*. The question of the couple in Irigaray is also addressed, without agreement among conversation participants in Pheng Cheah et al., “The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell,” *Diacritics* 28, no. 1 (1998).

that the couple is the minimal social unit reflects the diminished social life of postindustrial society” which regards heterosexual “lovers... entering into virginal space that is idyllic refuge from the outer world” with calculated respect. The question is how Irigaray’s “ethics of the flesh” can function “in a world defined through the politics of the skin.”³⁷⁶ In the end, Irigaray’s romantic couple “is less a counter-myth than a conventional fiction that allows us to forget for a moment the inevitability of relationships based on work and power.” In not addressing the raced, classed, gendered/sexed political factors constituting social bonds, Irigaray’s reformulated dialectic threatens to renew old hierarchies integral to feminist concern.

In this chapter I have attempted to locate the question of feminist subjectivity in debate over the salience of the figure of Antigone. Debate over the meaning of the name woman/women/she/female is only the tip of the iceberg in my view. The aporia that this consideration of various responses to the question of feminist subjectivity performs I have regarded here as aporia of the feminist, which is interpreted differently not only among but within the work of Butler, Zack and Irigaray. I have moved quickly among them—I suspect that a closer look into each with an eye for their reinterpretation of negation would divide them between and within to an even further extent. But crucially, within each are concerns which find affirmation in views espoused as opposite. I am interested in the significance of this perceived opposition as well as its genuine stubbornness.

But I am also trying here to develop a set of concerns around the question of what sort of feminist subjectivity or subjectivities (as one moment of the feminist) might yet be possible. It is not enough for me to say that the feminist does in part articulate the

³⁷⁶ Willett, *The Soul of Justice : Social Bonds and Racial Hubris.*, 151.

possibility of feminist subjectivity; such a claim has so often been in the name of a presumed one-dimensional woman/women/she/female who is in fact privileged with respect to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability/disability, geography. I cannot speak to all of these important dimensions of the social at once; why that is the case is integral to my concerns. Still it remains important to ask how to articulate the concern for elaboration of feminist subjectivity or subjectivities in a way that does not erase differences among those named women/she/female. Toward the end of the next chapter, I discuss the work of Drucilla Cornell, who attempts an amendment of her interpretation of Irigarayan theory of sexual difference that has these concerns in view. Patricia Huntington will question the success of such a rewriting.

I now drop this thread in order to turn at the start of the following chapter to the work of Simone de Beauvoir. Here I have been articulating the question of feminist subjectivity through several different writers at one time. In each of the following chapters I focus on one theorist in whose work the question of feminist subjectivity appears. No one of them offers an exemplary feminist aporetic; there can be no such exemplar in my view. Instead I turn to these texts because I regard them as important moments of feminist aporetic interpretation that keep both the dialectic and its excess in play. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in my view comes closest to appreciating this contribution of her own work. However, in Beauvoir as in Spivak, there is an unwillingness to simplify that which is ambiguous in feminist pursuits. It is precisely this unwillingness that leads me to argue that the feminist in Beauvoir, Sedgwick and Spivak is best read as aporetic, even if none of these explicitly articulates the feminist in this way.

Chapter Four

Erotic Freedom and Woman as Other: Two Themes in Beauvoir

In the previous chapter, I discussed the disagreement among three interpretations of *Antigone* as emblematic of a disagreement over the name women that evokes a feminist aporetic. I have been arguing that feminist aporetics pose the question of feminist subjectivity located by such disagreement. Feminist theorists disagree widely about whether the feminist consists in theorizing a dialectical subject-in-progress, of which women as a multi-dimensional negativity is evocative, or whether the feminist, that which is feminist, resists such projections in favor of an alterity or nonidentity preempted by dialectics. In this chapter and the two chapters that follow, I interpret the feminist in Beauvoir (Chapter Four), Sedgwick (Chapter Five) and Spivak (Chapter Six). I argue that in each the feminist is best read aporetically in posing the question of feminist subjectivity.³⁷⁷ I am interested in the mutual undermining of these interpretations of the feminist, enunciating the impossible situation of feminist criticism.

My questions in this chapter will be the following. How and why does Beauvoir's work extend in two directions? I understand these directions to be that of erotic freedom on the one hand and the interpretation of woman as other in relation to the masculine transcendent subject. These directions are often thought of as inadequate to each other, as evidenced particularly in my reading of Tina Chanter among others below. What is the relationship between these two directions and the feminist aporetic? If these two

³⁷⁷ For discussion of the question of subjectivity as ethical, see Huffer, "'There Is No Gomorrah': Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory."; also Kelly Oliver, *Family Values : Subjects between Nature and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997)., xviii.

directions are already widely discussed as in tension, then how might this tension relate to that which I have described to be due to feminist aporetics? I argue that the tension between these two directions, rather than the content of either of these gestures *per se* (erotic freedom or the interpretation of woman as other), is relevant to the aporia between contemplating a subjectivity yet-unknown and feminist critique of subjectivity. I argue that Beauvoir's work is already working out a feminist aporetic by moving in these two directions at one time. The feminist in Beauvoir is both an exploration of negation, in employing a feminist reading of the lord-bondsman dialectic, and of the nonidentical, insofar as the feminist must exceed such dialectical thinking and must address the means of achievement of subjectivity. Beauvoir makes use of both feminist possibilities. I argue that because this *is* the case, this two-fold direction of her work is frequently read as merely inconsistent. Thus this chapter is as much an interpretation of secondary literature on Beauvoir as it is an interpretation of Beauvoir's work itself. I discuss the discrepancies among different interpretations of where the feminist moment of Beauvoir's work resides, but I argue that these disagreements over what is and what isn't the proper feminist moment in Beauvoir's work underestimate her nuanced account of the feminist. Instead, I read Beauvoir as articulating a feminist aporetic, and in my view this reading offers an interpretation of disagreement over Beauvoir's "feminist" status. The feminist in Beauvoir is not consistent, and this prefigures such disagreement.

I proceed by discussing the work of Judith Butler and Tina Chanter, two accounts of these competing moments in Beauvoir alluded to above. However, in writing this chapter I am concerned not to further the degree to which gender is theorized one-dimensionally in *The Second Sex*. Thus, I end the chapter by reading a number of works

(Bergoffen, Cornell, Huntington) which might augment Beauvoirean gestures to suggest ways in which these open up a feminist aporetic which does not erase race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, ability/disability. I turn to the work of Drucilla Cornell who appropriates the work of Luce Irigaray (who according to Chanter can be read as elaborating on the woman as other Beauvoirean moment) in a way that, Cornell hopes, takes the philosophy of sexual difference beyond a one-dimensional focus on sex/gender. Huntington, as we will see, argues that this cannot be successful due to the inherent racism of the “dyadic symbolic structure” of the philosophy of sexual difference. I also discuss here the work of Cynthia Willett who likewise raises concerns about the limitations of the philosophy of sexual difference. In this chapter I merely raise these concerns—as a way of articulating the limitations of the dialectical name women. These concerns can be read as bolstering the concerns of Judith Butler that the name women ought not to adhere to a dialectics of the same. But they can also be read as making clear the challenges for interpretation of the feminist as otherwise than one-dimensional, a challenge which is already being addressed in black feminist studies, sexuality studies, subaltern studies. I turn to the work of Sedgwick and Spivak in the following chapters for interpretations of the feminist which reach beyond the one-dimensionality of the name women; however as we will see these appearances of the feminist must also be read aporetically. Feminist aporetics offer a reading of the question of feminist subjectivity, but I argue that they must also address the racism, heterosexism, classism, ability/disability critiques of the name women. The feminist in Sedgwick and Spivak approaches the aporetic; but it also does so in presenting the dialectical moment as multidimensional.

It might be argued that if sexual difference is frequently regarded by feminists otherwise privileged as unique radical negativity while other modes of difference such as race, ethnicity, sexuality are thought to be on a parallel, nonintersecting plane, then this is at least in part due to a legacy in which Beauvoir's theorization of Woman as Other operates. This is one reason why I would halt before offering Beauvoir's work as an exemplar of the feminist aporetic. There is no such exemplar. But I also hope to keep in view a resistance to the suspicion in some Beauvoir scholarship that insofar as there is no project in biological reproduction for example, there can be no transcendence as an existant for the female/woman.³⁷⁸ According to my reading of Beauvoir, this suspicion cannot be sustained, precisely because Beauvoir understands transcendence to be had in ambiguity, which relegation to the female/male preempts. Thus it is not a supposedly given sex/gender in particular that ties one to (ultimately impossible) immanence for Beauvoir; it is shirking especially gendered ambiguity that does so—of which both men and women are at risk. Even if this latter point is not yet fully articulated in Beauvoir, the tension between the interpretation of woman as other and the anticipation of erotic freedom invoke the texture of the feminist aporetic which makes feminist theory and philosophy capable of speaking to their complicated relationship to the name “women.” I do not want to push this likeness between tension in *The Second Sex* and aporia in contemporary feminist theory too far. Still, I find Beauvoir's work expansive, providing

³⁷⁸ The paragraph beginning “The woman who gave birth...” is much discussed for this reason. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 71. For a response to this suspicion, see footnote below on the problems with the Parshley translation as well as Chapter One of Lisa Guenther, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Tina Chanter, *Suny Series in Gender Theory* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), which argues that birth is an ambiguous situation offering a different existentialist ethic of the project rather than simply denying the efficacy of birth as a project. See also Gayatri Spivak's similar reassessment of the erotic freedom in *The Second Sex* on “The Mother” in “French Feminism Revisited: Ethics and Politics” in Butler, Judith and Joan W. Scott, editors, *Feminists Theorize the Political*. New York: Routledge, 1992., 58-63.

the theorist with what Penelope Deutscher calls the “largesse” of Beauvoir’s writing.³⁷⁹ As Céline T. Léon notes, Beauvoir raised many more and provocative questions than she answered.³⁸⁰ In fact, as will be the case for the writers in chapters that follow I mean to suggest that Beauvoir’s writing as well as subsequent scholarly attention to it are best read not as enclosed statements but as elaborations on the feminist aporetic. Thus in this chapter I ask whether these themes in Beauvoir are already dealing with the tension that I argue becomes differently acute in contemporary feminist theory.³⁸¹

Butler, Chanter and The Second Sex

Shared tensions within (rather than between) Judith Butler and Tina Chanter’s readings of *The Second Sex*³⁸² are expressive of other scholarly writing on Beauvoir which argues that the moments in her work that appropriate the Hegelian lord-bondsman dialectic and Sartrean existential freedom are inconsistent. The first moment, that which draws on the Hegelian lord-bondsman dialectic, understands Woman to occupy a position

³⁷⁹ Penelope Deutscher, “The Age of Sex and the Sex of Age” presented at philoSOPHIA conference, Decatur, Georgia on March 20, 2008.

³⁸⁰ “Beauvoir’s Woman: Eunuch or Male?” in Margaret A. Simons, *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir*, ed. Nancy Tuana, *Re-Reading the Canon* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

³⁸¹ For discussion of the apparent contradiction between the Hegelian lord/bondsman dialectic and Sartrean freedom, see Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray’s Rewriting of the Philosophers*, Andrea Nye, *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man* (London: Croom Helm, 1988). Debra Bergoffen argues that the contradiction abates when one attends to the “muted voice” of Beauvoir which reappropriates rather than misunderstands (as Chanter argues) the dialectic. I discuss this view below.

³⁸² Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. In this chapter I also rely on two key pieces which address the inadequacies of the abridged English version of the text: Margaret A. Simons, “The Silencing of Simone De Beauvoir: Guess What’s Missing in *the Second Sex*?” *Women’s Studies Newsletter* 6:5, no. 78 (1983). And more recently Toril Moi, *Feminist Theory & Simone De Beauvoir* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1989). English language readers of *The Second Sex* continue to wait until the rights to the text enter public domain so that the Parshley translation will no longer be necessary. Parshley was a scholar of sociology clearly not conversant with either Existentialism or Phenomenology and not sympathetic with questions exploring gender and or the situations of women. His translation and annotations are often overtly disrespectful. A translation of *The Second Sex* edited, annotated and indexed by a scholar(s) of Beauvoir is badly needed.

as wholly Other to the Subject position inhabited by Man.³⁸³ In this chapter I understand this gesture to be one which contemplates or explores the name women, albeit perhaps in a debasing light as Tina Chanter points out. This gesture in Beauvoir is only intermittently aware of the valuable resources brought by critiques of race and class. Chanter for one is interested in the possibility that the contemplation of Woman might be otherwise than debasing; it might instead allow for exploration of the resources of othering of women. To expound upon this possibility I turn below to Cornell and Huntington, two writers for whom contemplation of the name women is only adequate to its task of interrogating sexist oppression when it does not erase race, class, sexuality, ability/disability from such contemplation. As Cornell puts it:

a complex ethical and political field has to be opened up that would allow us to preserve feminism as an active movement, that would allow us... to see that our categories of traditional gender-understanding simply cannot grapple with the kinds of oppression and alliances that are mandated by a sense of "being a woman."³⁸⁴

The second moment in *The Second Sex* on which this chapter focuses is that which is generally regarded as the appropriation of Sartrean existential freedom.³⁸⁵ For Sartre, human freedom brings Husserlian world-constitution and Heideggerian transcendence together "with his own 'nihilation' to reveal the nature of imaging

³⁸³ The one-dimensionality of this way of articulating the situation hides the dimensions of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality that make such a one-dimensional statement articulable. For discussion of the ways in which Beauvoir was swiftly berated in her lifetime by "anti-feminists" in response to the French publication of *Le deuxième sexe* for purportedly speaking exclusively from the position of bourgeois white woman, see Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence: Simone De Beauvoir's the Second Sex*, [Rev. ed. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996). Also Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988).

³⁸⁴ Cheah et al., "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell.", 40.

³⁸⁵ Beauvoir, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty did not originally refer to themselves as existentialists. Sartre even denounced the name at a colloquium in the spring of 1945 at which Marcel classified them with this word. It was only much later that Beauvoir and Sartre gave up and began referring to themselves as "existentialists." In fact, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger among others refused to use the name 'existentialist' as they rejected "restricted systems of thought, or -isms," in Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence: Simone De Beauvoir's the Second Sex.*, 127. Cites Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance: The Autobiography of Simone De Beauvoir*, 1st Paragon House ed. (New York: Paragon House, 1992).

consciousness: man can imagine ‘because he is transcendently free’.”³⁸⁶ Such freedom does not consist in transcendence alone, but transcendence is at the heart of what it means to be a free being, one whose very being consists paradoxically of not statically “being.” This is the sense in which lack of being is existence for Beauvoir. Authenticity for Sartre is a way of describing the man who attempts to recognize that inevitable transcendence. This will require understanding man’s freedom as ontological. Human being is free; human being does not “have” freedom.³⁸⁷ This ontological sense of freedom makes it possible for man to engage in “more mundane (ontic)” acts of freedom. But this prior ontological freedom at the very heart of what it means to be human characterizes Sartrean freedom. For Beauvoir of *The Second Sex*, freedom maintains this ontological resonance. However, what might be designated ontic freedom becomes a primary mode of consideration. This is especially so in that the situation of women as “the absolute Other” as Lundgren-Gothlin points out remains an obstacle even when a particular woman refuses to accept her situation as definitive.³⁸⁸ As we will see, Debra Bergoffen finds that these moments in the text understand bodies to contest strictly dialectical gendered interpretation and acculturation, in fact to resist discrete names such as women.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism : The Test Case of Collective Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)., 5.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁸⁸ This is where debates over whether Beauvoir argues for women’s complicity with oppression gain traction. It might be argued that the person of “bad faith” in existentialist literature becomes the complicit woman in Beauvoir. For discussion of “women’s complicity” as it relates to the problematic notion of freedom with respect to sex/gender, see Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 68-73. However, as Lundgren-Gothlin points out Beauvoir is concerned to show the ways in which a woman repeatedly barred from asserting herself “as a subject” cannot be held accountable for the obstacles of her situation, Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence : Simone De Beauvoir's the Second Sex.*, 173.

³⁸⁹ Riley, “Am I That Name?” *Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History*. Following Riley, I am interested in both the instability and necessity of the name women. As she puts it: “It’s not that our identity is to be dissipated into airy indeterminacy, extinction; instead it is to be referred to the more substantial realms of discursive historical formation,” 5. I argue that this dual orientation of the project is subtly lost in Butler’s extension of the work in *Gender Trouble* in which the extinction or subversion of identity is intended in the project of a “feminist genealogy of the category of women,” 9: “Perhaps, paradoxically,

Butler appeals to both of the gestures in Beauvoir's work which this chapter considers, while developing more significantly one rather than the other. Early on in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler describes Beauvoir's use of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic as setting the stage for the early Irigaray's notion of the other's other. But, as we will see, later in the same work as well as elsewhere, Butler elaborates on Beauvoir's famous claim, "one is not born a woman, but rather one becomes [a woman.]"³⁹⁰ Butler will argue that this second moment may be read in a manner unanticipated by Beauvoir (contra Bergoffen). This elaboration develops what is generally read as Beauvoir's existentialism to suggest a historical precursor to the performativity thesis.

While in Butler's work there is an implicit articulation of tension in Beauvoir, Chanter on the other hand explicitly locates the tension between the moments of "quasi-Hegelian concept of the other" and "Sartrean absolute freedom" in *The Second Sex*.³⁹¹ Chanter argues that the quasi-Hegelian moment should have been given more attention by Beauvoir. In order to introduce Irigaray's work, Chanter offers Beauvoir as a common point of contact between Anglo-American feminist theory and Continental feminist theory traditions. In doing so, Chanter contrasts Beauvoir's downplaying of the master-slave dialectic with Irigaray's focus on the resources unplumbed for theorizing difference

'representation' will be shown to make sense for feminism only when the subject of 'women' is nowhere presumed." While I have learned much from Riley, that work focused on early modern European approaches in feminist activism to the name women in its relationship to the human. Riley maintains that feminist activists vacillate between arguments that equate women and human and arguments that contemplate women as unique. Here I am instead interested in the vacillation between arguments that don't necessarily equate women and human but which do refuse to contemplate women as salient name (in this framework 'human' might be just as undesirable), and arguments that do contemplate, extend, the name women.

³⁹⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*., 12, 141. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*., 267. Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*., 13.

³⁹¹ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers*., 49ff.

in the notion of the Other to which diverse women are relegated. Beauvoir, in comparison, does not adequately allow this notion of the Other to impact her notion of freedom. If Beauvoir had given the notion of women as Other more attention then her notion of freedom would have been impacted and chastened by it.

In order to augment the thin notion of existential freedom assumed by Tina Chanter's account, I next discuss the work of other scholars who complicate the notion of freedom in *The Second Sex* and the earlier *The Ethics of Ambiguity*³⁹² of Beauvoir;³⁹³ Debra Bergoffen in particular writes of the "erotic freedom" articulated by Beauvoir which coheres with Butler's reading of gendered becoming. Bergoffen suggests that the notion of freedom in Beauvoir must be read in the "context of the question, What are the communicative possibilities of the human situation?"³⁹⁴ Similarly, Michèle Le Doeuff understands Beauvoir's notion of freedom itself as profoundly situated, and thereby offers readings of the existential moment in Beauvoir which complement what Debra Bergoffen calls a feminist erotic ethic. I want to highlight that this ethic in Beauvoir has a complicated relationship to the name women. If these readings of Beauvoir do not demonstrate that she refuses the name women in this gesture, then I minimally want to suggest that Butler's reading together with these complications of the notion of freedom in Beauvoir gesture to such a feminist ethic. This ethic would be one which overreaches the discreteness of the name women and which does not take for granted its relationship to such discreteness. These readings of freedom in Beauvoir as an alternative to Chanter's

³⁹² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1948), Simone de Beauvoir, *Pour Une Morale De L'ambiguïté, Suivi De Pyrrhus Et Cinéas, Collection Idées ; V.21* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).

³⁹³ Debra B. Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*, ed. Jeffner Allen, *Suny Series, Feminist Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University Of New York Press, 1997), Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc*, Lundgren-Gothlin, *Sex and Existence : Simone De Beauvoir's the Second Sex*.

³⁹⁴ Simons, *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir.*, 180.

reading of Beauvoirean absolute freedom provide development of the existential moment in Beauvoir which I thus understand as related to the feminist critique of the constitutive subjectivity that the name women evokes.

Chanter's reading of Beauvoir calls for a resolution of these disparate themes in Beauvoir "if her contribution to feminist theory is to be appreciated."³⁹⁵ Alternatively in this chapter I ask what it might mean pace Chanter to read this tension as aporetic. Thus, the assessment of Beauvoir's contribution to feminist theory does not necessarily require a reconciliation of what Chanter calls Beauvoir's "dual legacy,"³⁹⁶ a reduction of tension which ends in a consistent project engaging women as Other, thinking erotic freedom strictly under the rubric of the name women.

Butler and the Becoming of "On"

In *Gender Trouble*, recall that in articulating the "circular ruins" of debate over the status of the feminist subject,³⁹⁷ Judith Butler offers a brief reading of *The Second Sex*. Butler does so in contrasting a reading of Beauvoir with Irigaray on the notion of the feminist subject. For Irigaray of *This Sex Which is Not One* the female sex is precisely unrepresentable within phallogocentric language. The female sex is "linguistic absence and opacity,"³⁹⁸ which is wholly precluded by the (masculine) subject as well as its negation. Elsewhere Butler refers to this the theme in Irigaray of "radical deauthorization" which nevertheless does not deter the deauthorized from reading "to expose the contingent authority of the text."³⁹⁹ Here any feminist "subject" remains an

³⁹⁵ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 48.

³⁹⁶ This dual legacy is quite different from the dual legacy of Adorno suggested by Derrida in the epigraph of Chapter Two.

³⁹⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.*, 11ff.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹⁹ Cheah et al., "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell."

open question because the Subject of discourse is constituted by exclusions of gender, race, sexuality. In this respect the female sex in Irigaray represents “also the subject that is not one,” a horizon of meaning which is multiple and scattered rather than articulable. In this sense the feminine can never be the mark of a subject in a masculine signifying economy, which includes the subject and its Other but which precludes the voices calling this dialectic into question.

Butler goes on to contrast this view with one that she argues prefigures it. There the Subject of historical, biological, psychoanalytic, economic, literary, philosophical discourse is articulated in contrast to the female sex as Other. As for Irigaray, the Other is the negative of the subject of discourse; however for Beauvoir women as the negative of men are positively constituted as Other. In this sense for Beauvoir, the notion of the Other provides expression however false or in bad faith for the woman who finds such expression. Here women are misrepresented rather than missing altogether within the dialectical framework.⁴⁰⁰ In fact on Butler’s reading Beauvoir suggests that, though the dialectic of Subject-Other has constituted the historical situations of women as Other, both moments of the dialectical framework of Subject-Other are orchestrated by the masculine Subject, who is conflated with the universal, the always already masculine whole. Butler suggests that it is this aspect in Beauvoir which prefigures the early Irigaray’s reading of gender asymmetry. However, for Beauvoir the Other provides a way of locating the situation of women as well as a way of contextualizing the status of mere

⁴⁰⁰ Butler points out that Beauvoir paradoxically suggests that men cannot settle the question of women because they are positioned simultaneously in the roles of judge and party to the case Ibid., 15. Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, xxxiii. Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 29. For Butler this suggests that Beauvoir does recognize that discourse preempts the possibility of a feminist subject in that both subject and Other are authored by an a-gendered subject. However, Beauvoir adds, “les femmes aussi,” suggesting that women are also in this dual position perhaps because subject and Other are nevertheless the horizons of discourse regardless of who is speaking.

contradiction imposed upon the female. This Other remains a mode of self-interpretation for women as particular, embodied, destined for immanence. Taking this Otherness on as self-interpretation by women is in bad faith; othering is situation, not mere facticité. Gender asymmetry on Beauvoir's view, then, is explained as the outcome of the botched reciprocity of the asymmetrical master-slave dialectic. This misrepresentation of women who might themselves be existential subjectivities thus both prefigures for Butler the view found in Irigaray and yet also serves as a foil for Irigaray. For Irigaray, the Hegelian dialectic itself is the orchestration of a masculinist signifying economy in which women are not yet 'lack' but rather wholly preempted by the totalizing operations of the Subject-Other dialectic.⁴⁰¹

Thus this first reading of Beauvoir in *Gender Trouble* focuses on the situation of women as marked, particular Other. However another interpretation in contest with the first is suggested by Butler's reading of Beauvoir's famous claim, "On ne naît pas femme: on le deviant."⁴⁰² Or, "One is not born woman, but rather becomes one."⁴⁰³ "Butler suggests that the claim that one is not born but rather becomes a woman implies "seemingly radical consequences, ones that she [Beauvoir] herself did not entertain."⁴⁰⁴ The ubiquity of the quotation of the becoming of a woman covers over a productive line of questions suggested by the structure of the sentence. Who is this One (on) who becomes? Does this one precede the gender that one becomes? Or is it the case that becoming produces the effect of a prior "one"? Butler points out that Beauvoir distances

⁴⁰¹ Butler will go on to question what she calls the colonizing gesture implied in the notion of a universal masculinist signifying economy. See also Cheah et al., "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell."

⁴⁰² Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*, 13.

⁴⁰³ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 267.

⁴⁰⁴ *Gender Trouble*, 142.

sex as anatomy “which has no meaning”⁴⁰⁵ from gender, for the purposes of casting doubt on the naturalness of gender. And in this Butler finds reason to ask whether to be a “given sex is to become a given gender.”⁴⁰⁶ If it is not, then “this radical formulation of the sex/gender distinction suggests that sexed bodies can be the occasion for a number of different genders, and further, that gender itself need not be restricted to the usual two.”⁴⁰⁷ Thus Butler finds in Beauvoir a decoupling of bodies and genders in which gender is not a noun or substantial thing. Such a questioning of gender as a noun can be found in the idea that one is not born a woman; gender is “something that one becomes—but can never be.”⁴⁰⁸ Instead, gender is a becoming or iteration which can never duplicate itself. This understanding of gender involves a mobility which demands a reassessment of the gender binary and its ontological apologetics. Butler’s theory of performativity provides such a reassessment.⁴⁰⁹

In articles published in the years prior to the first publication of *Gender Trouble*, Butler goes into more detail with this second reading of gender as becoming in Beauvoir, most notably in the *Yale French Studies* issue entitled Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century.⁴¹⁰ There Butler argues that Beauvoir presents gender as “a contemporary way of organizing past and future cultural norms, a way of situating oneself with respect to those

⁴⁰⁵ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988), 522.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 143. See also Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.”, Cheah et al., “The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell.”

⁴⁰⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.*, 143.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* See especially 173ff.

⁴¹⁰ Judith Butler, “Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's Second Sex,” *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986). I will also rely on Judith Butler, “Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution,” in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989). See also Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.”, 519ff.

norms, an active style of living one's body in the world."⁴¹¹ This notion of gender builds upon Sartre's notion of the natural body as in itself "inapprehensible"; the body is always already acculturated.⁴¹² Likewise for Beauvoir sex or anatomy is always already gendered.⁴¹³ This suggests that gender is "not traceable to a definable origin" but is instead itself "an originating activity incessantly taking place." On Butler's account, this Beauvoirean notion of gender is not necessarily the choice of an autonomous existent frequently attributed to Beauvoir as well as the early Sartre but instead a "tacit project to renew one's cultural history in one's own terms. This is not a prescriptive task we must endeavor to do, but one in which we have been endeavoring all along."⁴¹⁴

Thus whether or not Beauvoir herself would have approved of such readings, Butler suggests a second, performative reading of Beauvoir in which gender is an existentialist becoming of "one" that this fictional one cannot ever statically be (*Gender Trouble*, 143). I have located one of the beginnings of Butler's performativity theory in her ruminations in the years prior to the first publication of *Gender Trouble* over this second reading in Beauvoir of what it means to become, that is, never statically to be gendered, and thus never to authorize the static, prior subject out of which gender emanates.⁴¹⁵ Butler understands Beauvoir's attentions to be consistently on both the possibility and danger of becoming a gendered subject. Thus Butler argues that

⁴¹¹ Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's Second Sex.", 40.

⁴¹² Butler relies on passages from Part Three, Chapter Two "The Body" in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 328-329.

⁴¹³ Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's Second Sex.", 39.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40. In this sense, Butler argues that Beauvoir does not inherit the voluntarism of Sartre's supposed Cartesianism in building on his theory of the acculturated body. This point is strengthened in fact by appeal to Beauvoir's critique of masculine disembodiment in her appropriation of the Hegelian Subject-Other dialectic. The Other is the Subject's own alienated self, and thus the autonomy of the purported disembodied Subject over and against the embodied Other is shown to be folly.

⁴¹⁵ In fact, see footnote in Chapter Three, *Claiming Antigone: Butler, Zack, Irigaray* for the explicit beginnings of the theory of performativity in Butler.

Beauvoir's theory implies that a sexed body does not necessitate any particular gender performativity.⁴¹⁶ "This radical formulation of the sex/gender distinction suggests that sexed bodies can be the occasion for a number of different genders, and further, that gender itself need not be restricted to the usual two."⁴¹⁷ Thus in this second reading of Beauvoir offered by Butler,

one could respond that there are merely various ways of being a 'man' or a 'woman', but this view ascribes an ontology of substance to gender which misses her [Beauvoir's] point: 'man' and 'woman' ... only emerge as substantial entities to a mystified perspective.

In this second reading the salience of women as the grounding of a subject dissipates in contrast with its stark appearance in the earlier reading of Beauvoir's use of the Hegelian Subject-Other dialectic, not because of differences among an already established group women, but because the grounds for that establishment are not at all clear. The current reading offered by Butler suggests that feminist subjectivity is not a "substantial entity," but rather that gender is a mode of becoming that is not guided or predicted by a previously established body or a constituted subjectivity.

Later Butler will argue that this moment in *The Second Sex* is a "distinct philosophical contribution to feminist theory" as well as an "explicitly feminist account of bodily experience."⁴¹⁸ Where Sartre and Merleau-Ponty discussed the body in only an abstract and implicitly universal sense, "Beauvoir warns us that the universal is often equated with the masculine, that bodies for the most part come in gendered pairs, and that a concrete analysis of the body requires an answer to the question 'How is it that the

⁴¹⁶ For discussion of Butler's reading the sex/gender distinction *into* *The Second Sex*, see Peggy Kamuf's essay in Tom Cohen, *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities : A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). in which she discusses the significance of the fact that no such distinction exists in the French language.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 143. Thus Butler again finds in Beauvoir an Irigarayan theme: the open question of the gendered "one."

⁴¹⁸ Butler, "Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution.", 253.

human body takes on a gendered form?”⁴¹⁹ It is in this sense that Beauvoir offers a theory of both gender identity and gender acquisition based on distinguishing the “historical construct or signifier” that the body is from the naturalness with which it is generally regarded. This defamiliarization of bodies is key for Butler’s reading of the feminist in Beauvoir especially with respect to phenomenology and existentialism, and philosophical contribution to feminist theorizations of embodiment. Thus it is here that Butler argues that two points in *The Second Sex* make up such contributions: “(1) the body is not a natural fact but an historical idea⁴²⁰ and (2) one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” This second claim, discussed above, builds on the first. Bodies acquire historically and culturally specific signification, such as “woman.” As Butler puts it: “Thus it is one thing to be born female, but quite another to undergo proper acculturation as a woman; the first is, it seems, a natural fact, but the second is the embodiment of an historical idea.” The meaning of “become” in Beauvoir is thus crucial in Butler’s account. This is an active word; one “becomes” rather than “is made into.” Butler argues, “For Beauvoir, acculturation is not a fact or even a precondition, but a peculiar kind of achievement, the culturally mediated relationship of an embodied agency to itself.” Thus Butler argues that for Beauvoir, one never “is” a woman because the achievement is never completed, is never fact, otherwise the question of women’s becoming would not be an open, existential question. This raises the question of what it is to “become” even a culturally, historically specific signification if “gender marks the

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ A point which Butler also attributes to Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* in which “the notion of the body as an historical idea suggests only that for the body to have meaning for us, for the body to appear within a field of intelligibility, it must first be signified within an historically specific discourse of meaning,” Ibid., 254.

infant from the moment of its birth?”⁴²¹ I refer the reader to the foregoing discussion of Butler in Chapter Three. An explication of Butler’s understanding of the performativity of gender is the beginning of her answer to this question. I argue that here one sees the beginnings of this theory in Butler’s ruminations over what it means in Beauvoir to become, but never to statically be one’s gender.

Butler complicates concerns that Beauvoir’s work is plagued by a notion of women’s complicity.⁴²² It is clear that all persons participate in gender asymmetry on Beauvoir’s account. But especially in light of Bergoffen’s reading of erotic freedom in Beauvoir (presented below), Butler’s radical reading of Beauvoir reorients the way in which one reads erotic freedom. It is not that Beauvoir writes of an eros that is inevitable; it is rather that she writes to enact an ethics of eros that was not available prior to its enactment. In this way, erotic freedom in Beauvoir functions foremost as a performative declaration of the salience of idiosyncratic behaviors. It seems that the defamiliarization of the name woman in Beauvoir is not primarily articulated as a way of exhorting the complacent to change; instead it is a rewriting of Beauvoir’s own lived experience of quotidian “deviation” from scientific and psychoanalytic myths of sex/gender and sexuality. The defamiliarization of the name woman in *The Second Sex* speaks not to a unfamiliarity to come, but rather to an already felt *imposition* of mythology onto women who are everywhere made to seem devious in their inability to approximate such myths. These myths are not the dreams of the women themselves whom Beauvoir has in mind:

A myth always implies a subject who projects his hopes and his fears toward a sky of transcendence. Women do not see themselves up as Subject and hence have erected no virile myth in which their projects are reflected; they have no religion or poetry of their own: they still dream through dreams of men.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Butler, “Gendering the Body: Beauvoir’s Philosophical Contribution.”, 257.

⁴²² See for example, Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray’s Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 68ff.

⁴²³ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.*, 143.

Women do so precisely because there are no dreams “of women,” authored by women as women. But there are myths in the masculine, “difficult to describe... cannot be grasped or encompassed; it haunts the human consciousness without ever appearing before it in fixed form.”⁴²⁴ If mythology is the locus of woman, then it is precisely in this sense that *she* in *The Second Sex* is “the lack that the existent carries in his heart, and it is in seeking to be made whole through her that man hopes to attain self-realization.”⁴²⁵ But this is not a lack of being that achieves transcendence. Instead, Beauvoir wonders whether it might be possible that “the myth of woman will some day be extinguished; the more women assert themselves as human beings, the more the marvelous quality of the Other will die out in them. But today it still exists in the heart of every man.”⁴²⁶ And indeed the mythologies of which Beauvoir writes are not external or separable from the details of the lives of the members of the diverse cultures of which she writes. These mythologies are that through which men and women alike dream. And yet the ubiquity of the myths of woman cannot determine or predict the resistances of sex-designated bodies to such mythologies.

Attention to this lack renders strange the trenchant expectations that the female embody cultural expectations for raced, classed, gendered persons. Thus I argue that given Butler and Wittig’s (see below) readings, Beauvoir’s articulations of existential freedom in posing the question of feminist subjectivity claim the salience of that lack of gendered being which makes it possible to ask whether what is cast as “deviation” from woman/women/she/female might offer one mode of thinking the feminist. In fact, the

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 142.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

significance of this moment of existential freedom in the context of *The Second Sex* might be said to be its articulation of gender “deviation” as common, constituent and salient to the thinking of gender rather than as abnormal or antagonistic to the dialectic men/women (which is an alternative thinking of the feminist). It is in this sense that Butler’s reading of the *on* that becomes suggests, along with the work of Debra Bergoffen discussed below, an undermining of the stability of the name woman, and that such undermining is only one moment of the feminist, but one that I argue is far less appreciated than the dialectical reading of the name woman/women/she/female.

While to attribute to *The Second Sex* a significant gesture towards undermining the salience of the name woman that a potential feminist subjectivity presumes may seem altogether surprising, I suggest that this ought not be surprising precisely because what Beauvoir means by the ambiguity “of the existential subject” precludes the sort of facile appearances of the Subject that the myths of woman enable. This is to say that when Beauvoir demanded that women consider themselves worthy of assuming the status of a Subject, she was certainly not asking that they assume the Subject status of a preformed, ideal Man (Subject). Beauvoir was asking no less than that persons value their embodied ambiguity with respect to such objectifying names and scripts as men and women, that this might call into question such bad-faith encapsulations, categorizations and definitions. Chanter’s point (see below) here might be that what this gesture misses is its collusion with erasure of woman/women/she/female from the realm of subjectivity. This moment in *The Second Sex* loses touch with the feminist project of asking what subjectivity *in the feminine* in terms of woman/women/she/female can mean.

But Monique Wittig has also read the feminist gesture in Beauvoir to be precisely that which questions the mythology of woman. Wittig's famous interpretation of "one is not born a woman" forwards *The Second Sex* as feminist in a sense which undermines the name women as a natural group.⁴²⁷ Wittig agrees with Butler that the group women is not a prior, natural group whose status is determined on the basis of this prior existence, but instead that the grouping itself is an expression of the mandate that women must assume that status.

A materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the *mark* imposed by the oppressor: the "myth of woman," plus its material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousness and bodies of women.⁴²⁸

Thus, apart from the performativity thesis, Wittig reads Beauvoir in a manner similar to Butler in which the feminist moment of *The Second Sex* is the anticipation of something other than the dialectical naming of woman. For Wittig, this something other in Beauvoir is tied to an individualistic "subjectivity" (quite differently meant than in Hegel and the post-Hegelian feminist theories I have been reading thus far) which calls into question the name women as the other or negation of men. In fact, Wittig points out that "feminist" might mean something other than its root "femme," "woman" suggests; the fight "for woman and her defense—for the myth, then and its reinforcement"⁴²⁹ might be conceived differently. Instead "feminist" might continue to "affirm that our movement had a history and to emphasize the political link with the old feminist movement" while enabling challenge within the movement. "It is, then, this movement that we can put in question for the meaning that it gave to feminism;" but in repudiating the myth of woman, Wittig argues, a new meaning for "feminist" emerges in which the freedom of the individual, not

⁴²⁷ Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, 9-20.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

the group “women,” is at stake. Interestingly, here Wittig writes one moment of the feminist into the past—as the “old feminist movement.” Wittig alludes to the reemergence of “the illogical principle of ‘equality in difference’⁴³⁰ in contemporary views, and yet she regards these views as of the past. In Wittig’s view, this articulation of the feminist is a dredging up of the past rather than a coexistent moment of the feminist. Thus Wittig identifies the feminist and future-reaching import of Beauvoir’s work to be solely its critique of the dialectical name woman.

Butler’s reading of the presumed one who on the contrary can never statically be suggests a mode of reading Beauvoir to which Butler admits Beauvoir herself might never have ascribed. Still, Beauvoir’s text provides for Butler and for Wittig the possibility for contemplation of the feminist that cannot be fully carried out under the man as Subject/ woman as Other dialectic. Nonetheless, due to Beauvoir’s insistence on the ambiguity of subjectivity properly understood, I argue that Butler’s and Wittig’s readings makes the most of a gesture in Beauvoir which deserves more attention. My contribution is to say that this reading suggests that the *on* that becomes does not have a preformed relationship to the name women or “the feminine” or the ontology of sexual difference; the possibility of the feminist subject that was sought in the dialectical relationship of lord-bondsman is replaced here by an interest in making space for an other of this possible feminist subject, an alterity that is not prefigured by a would-be feminist subject. Thus where interpretations of freedom in Beauvoir have tended to discuss this

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 15. Exemplified in the writing of Luce Irigaray. See Irigaray, *Key Writings.*, 202ff; Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*. Penelope Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference : The Later Work of Luce Irigaray* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002).

freedom for significance in the situations “of women,”⁴³¹ Butler offers a reading that suggests that the becoming of *on* does not necessarily espouse the name women nor the project of developing a discrete feminist subject. And while Wittig remains interested in theorizing an alternative subjectivity, she insists that this subjectivity will be “of each singular woman—not the myth but each one of us” and that the “advent of individual subjects demands first destroying the categories of sex, ending the use of them, and rejecting all sciences which still use these categories as their fundamentals (practically all social sciences).”⁴³² These readings suggest that it is precisely what is frequently read as “un-feminist” in the existential moment in *The Second Sex* that suggests another moment of the feminist. This is due to Beauvoir’s interrogating the relationship between the existential one who becomes and the Other to which she (and here the reification of the she is crucial) is quickly relegated. Beauvoir explicitly argues that assuming the status of Subject is of course this otherwise than Other that she intends. However, Butler’s and Wittig’s readings suggest that another option is opened up by Beauvoir’s articulation of the one who becomes—not to become men or like men but to anticipate alterity preempted by the dialectical moment in *The Second Sex*. If this becoming might be the existential aspiration⁴³³ whose bounds are not confined to those of the masculine Subject

⁴³¹ See for example: Sonia Kruks, “Simone de Beauvoir: Teaching Sartre About Freedom” in Simons, *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir*.

⁴³² Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, 20.

⁴³³ Here is where the relationship between Beauvoir’s ruminations on becoming and Butler’s theory of performativity breaks down. In the later, Butler is interested in the degree to which bodies must be made to approximate one side or the other of the gender dichotomy, and always to some degree under duress. Thus the feminist literatures of bodily “maintenance,” from tweezing and shaving to surgery often at great cost, which in fact themselves approximate bodies as gendered, raced, classed. This active aspect of what it means to become gendered is where Butler finds affinity with this “becoming” gesture in Beauvoir. But, for Beauvoir, the becoming of women in question is not directed at the ways such active articulations of gender, race, class, et. al. produce a subsequent effect of naturalness. Beauvoir is not interested in the concomitant performances of gender from which anyone might depart so much as the complex growth of infants into culturally, historically identifiable women, and the possibility that women, as women, might depart from the Myths of woman. But I think Butler is right to suggest that her extensions of Beauvoir’s

diagnosed by Beauvoir, are not confined to the cultivation of an articulable, consistent subject “position” at all, then this gesture exemplified in the notion that “one is not born, but rather becomes” is a gesture beyond the Subject, beyond the names “woman” and “women,” one which challenges the very binarization which these names take for granted. The work of Debra Bergoffen, discussed below, offers just such a reading of Beauvoir. But before this, I turn to a reading in the work of Tina Chanter.

Chanter on Beauvoir’s Dual Legacy

Tina Chanter brings to the fore similar gestures of *The Second Sex*. In fact Chanter explicitly argues that such themes are inconsistent and amount to a “dual legacy.”⁴³⁴ These strands in Butler’s reading of *The Second Sex* find amplification and polarization in Chanter’s reading of the tension, which she points out is by now widely recognized, between two “leading ideas” of *The Second Sex*: “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” which Chanter notes Beauvoir herself identified as a “leading idea” of the book, and the question of what it means for women to “assume the status of the Other,” which Chanter argues is another leading idea of the book despite the fact that it has garnered less interest than the former.⁴³⁵ For Chanter the latter is the feminist import of the text, and a feminist appraisal of the text will require subordinating the former to it.

For Chanter, this tension is an expression of a prior conflict: “the difficulty she [Beauvoir] had in relating these two aspects of her project lay in her attempt to fuse two

theory are not at all inconsistent with the later precisely insofar as Beauvoir is on the one hand calling attention to the actual acculturation of what is regarded as the pure naturalness of the body which makes the Myths of woman thinkable. Butler’s work really extends and develops this notion of acculturation and then suggests whether and how particular acculturations and their naturalization benefit some and infinitely harm others.

⁴³⁴ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 78.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

incompatible theories.”⁴³⁶ That prior conflict is that between “a Sartrean model of freedom—which implies the ability of the individual to transcend any situation—and a Hegelian model of the other—which implies an irresolvable conflict between individuals.”⁴³⁷ Chanter argues that if Beauvoir had pursued more seriously the question of the status of women as Other, then the significance of the claim that “one is not born but rather becomes a woman”⁴³⁸ would have been transformed in such a way as to affect the nature/culture dichotomy in Beauvoir. Such a transformation would entail greater appreciation of the difficulties of overcoming women’s historical construction as other and sexual difference which is not merely cultural but also manifest in interpreted bodies. For Chanter it is the moment of “Sartrean absolute freedom” which is responsible for Beauvoir’s relegation of gender to the cultural, begging to be overridden as well as Beauvoir’s call for members of the second sex to overcome their otherness. The call for such overcoming in Chanter’s view underestimates the degree to which women are made to assume the status of other; it also assumes that one does not value or can not value that which is associated with women. Chanter puts it this way:

By emphasizing that women’s situation is not given but is rather culturally produced, Beauvoir focuses on the possibility of changing women’s situation so that women are no longer subordinate to men. In order to be recognized as equal, must women strive to be seen as more or less the same as men? Insofar as Beauvoir disparages traditionally feminine values, scorns motherhood,⁴³⁹

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁴³⁷ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 50. Debra Bergoffen reads the second theme as a uniquely Beauvoiran erotic freedom, which nevertheless suggests a freedom owing to the unnameable-ness of the gendered subject. Debra B. Bergoffen, “Out from Under: Beauvoir’s Philosophy of the Erotic” in Simons, *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir*. Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*.

⁴³⁸ I only want to note here that Beauvoir’s statement (“On ne naît pas femme: on le devient.”) translated literally is that “one is not born a woman: one becomes it.” Chanter’s translation places emphasis on the fact that one becomes a woman, culturally. But Beauvoir’s wording, as well as Monique Wittig’s famous essay “One is Not Born a Woman,” places emphasis on the notion that one is not born a woman. Chanter’s translation is of course not altogether incorrect, but the wording does make a significant alteration. Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers*.

⁴³⁹ Several have argued that this perception of Beauvoir’s view has been a function of poor translation into English. For discussion of Beauvoir’s critique of the situation in which French women must be mothers rather than a disparagement of motherhood itself, see Guenther, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the*

stresses the importance of women earning independent incomes, and strives to be accepted into a male world on male terms, her answer seems to be a qualified yes. How well thought out is this position, and how does Beauvoir come to the conclusion that women's otherness should be overcome?

Chanter suggests that this advocacy of overcoming otherness is due to the application of a pure existential freedom which does not take seriously enough the linguistic and psychoanalytic othering of the feminine⁴⁴⁰ which inform sexual difference.

This reading of Beauvoir appears as background to a larger explication of the notion of sexual difference in Irigaray in order to defend her against charges of essentialism by Anglo-American readers. Chanter's aim in *The Ethics of Eros* is to reintroduce this Anglo-American audience to Irigaray as well as to the so-called continental philosophical contexts of her work. Chanter argues that it is from the vantage point that Irigaray's work offers, the status of women as other or the historical, the psychoanalytic, the cultural plays a larger role in the becoming of gendered persons than the *The Second Sex* and its theme of existential freedom allows. Before she begins into readings of Irigaray and Hegel, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, Chanter suggests that an assessment of the complex legacy of Beauvoir in feminist theory will provide a way in to Irigaray that has influenced in common Anglo-American feminists and already-sympathetic readers of Irigaray. Beauvoir thus serves as a point of common origin to which Irigaray can be read to respond directly, more specifically the reading of Antigone in Hegel discussed in Chapter Three. It is the relative downplaying of the Hegelian moment in Beauvoir that Chanter argues prevents a greater appreciation of both aspects

Politics of Reproduction., 15-28. See also Julie K. Ward, "Beauvoir's Two Senses of the 'Body' in *The Second Sex*" in Simons, *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir*. For a discussion of this in connection with Parshley's translation, see Simons, "The Silencing of Simone De Beauvoir: Guess What's Missing in *the Second Sex*? ."

⁴⁴⁰ In the French sense, in which feminine is that which is of or associated with female.

of Beauvoir's dual legacy. But in order for this legacy to be appreciated,⁴⁴¹ these moments which conflict in Beauvoir's treatment must be brought into consistent relation with one another. Without more consistent attention to this larger role of the status of women as other, which Chanter reads as the Hegelian moment in Beauvoir,⁴⁴² neither that theme nor the theme of the role of culture in the becoming of women can be appreciated. In other words, these themes must be rethought in relation to each other in order for the significance of *The Second Sex* to be understood in a contemporary context. Therefore these contrasting moments in Beauvoir are brought by Chanter into conflict in order to offer a valuable rereading of them as ultimately compatible in the work of Irigaray.

For Chanter, the overcoming of oppression is a "necessary demand," but such an overcoming is nevertheless not accomplished in exclusively insisting that "women are subjects just as men are, or that women should be treated as equals and construed as the same as men at least with respect to their individuality, worth and dignity." Instead, discussion of the ways in which notions of the subject, far from being capable of simply expanding to express that which they previously could not, in fact preclude difference must be explored with equal interest. In Chanter, this is a matter of questioning the distinction between sex and gender such that women becomes synonymous with

⁴⁴¹ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 48.

⁴⁴² Actually Chanter notes that this Hegelian moment in Beauvoir is surprisingly "anti-Hegelian." Chanter argues that the use of the following Hegelian notions in Beauvoir are actually only loosely Hegelian: the concept of risk of life in the struggle for recognition, the master-slave relation, the relationship between freedom and self-consciousness, 61ff. Thus Chanter argues that Beauvoir "does not carry out her own project of thinking woman as other, from a woman's point of view," 75. I am quite sympathetic to Chanter's approach, but it is this insistence on equating the different with women that I find problematic. My dissertation interrogates the relationship between the name women and feminist theory, and so I cannot take for granted the meaning of the name women/ female, particularly not in its relationship to sexual difference.

female.⁴⁴³ This is not a biological or “essentialist” notion of the female; it is instead a way of denying the distinction between embodiment and acculturation of the feminine. That acculturation is itself embodiment, as Anglo-American feminist theorists have themselves admitted⁴⁴⁴ despite Gayle Rubin’s articulation of the distinction.⁴⁴⁵ Bodies themselves are acculturated, always already subject to discursive interpretation. Thus where Butler had found it promising that Beauvoir distinguishes gender from the bodies it interprets precisely in maintaining that those bodies are themselves not representative of “the given,” Chanter is reluctant to countenance such a distinction. This reluctance on Chanter’s part is due to the superficiality of gender that such a distinction suggests. Gender is not merely a removable veneer of meaning; gender in Chanter’s understanding *constitutes* bodies and texts, making it impossible to conceive of escaping: “While recognizing the impossibility of finding any other place to go, as if we could ever entirely shake ourselves free of our histories, Irigaray puts into question the complacency with which feminism locates itself within the very power structures it rejects.”⁴⁴⁶ I emphasize *constitutes* precisely because this is where Butler and Chanter depart on the meaning and significance of Beauvoir. For Butler, gender is not a totalizing, constituting event. Far from it: gendered bodies constantly fall short of gendered expectations to “be” one gender or another. Butler explains in an interview,

And for me, gender is so much more unstable [than the way in which gender is regarded in “American social theory”]. I’m interested in the problem of cross-identification; I’m interested in

⁴⁴³ Here is precisely where Chanter will argue that Irigaray is not the “essentialist” that Anglo-American readers accuse her of being. “The feminine” in Irigaray is a notoriously difficult gesture to pin down. On the one hand it may refer to that which is of “la femme,” the French word for woman and female. “La feministe” in French would thus be a womanist. However, Irigaray also seems to intend a radical otherness which is preempted by masculine signifying economy.

⁴⁴⁴ Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1983), 106-113. Also, Butler, *Bodies That Matter : On the Discursive Limits Of "Sex"*.

⁴⁴⁵ Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex. .”

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

where masculine/feminine break down, where they cohabit and intersect, where they lose their discreteness. These are *Gender Trouble*-like questions which are not fully compatible with most of the ways in which the sexual difference paradigm functions.⁴⁴⁷

Thus a salient aspect of Butler's reading of Beauvoir involves thinking embodiment without presupposing the relationships between bodies and the disciplines that produce them. There are fissures and resistances to these disciplines that sexual difference erases. Butler reads early Irigaray in a way not wholly incompatible with Chanter's reading in *The Ethics of Eros*. In the same interview quoted above, Butler states:

Her engagement with philosophy was a curious mixture of both loyalty and aggression. And it became very interesting to me when I started thinking about her whole practice of critical mimesis—what she was doing when she was reading Freud, what she was doing when she was reading Plato—and I read *Speculum* again and again, frightened by its anger, compelled by the closeness of the reading, confused by the mimetism of the text. Was she enslaved to these texts, was she displacing them radically, was she perhaps in the bind of being in positions at the same time? And I realized that whatever the feminine was for her, it was not a substance, not a spiritual reality that might be isolated, but it had something to do with this strange practice of reading, one in which she was reading texts that she was not authorized to read, texts from which she was as a woman explicitly excluded or explicitly demeaned, and that she would read them anyway.⁴⁴⁸

This understanding of Irigaray's orientation has much in common with Chanter's introduction to Irigaray as thinker of sexual difference. But their respective readings of Beauvoir in whom sexual difference is perhaps more ambiguous do not share such affinity. Where Butler's interest in *The Second Sex* emphasizes fissures, moments in which that *On* might become other than what history, psychoanalysis, the biological sciences predict, Chanter's interest in Beauvoir's dual legacy emphasizes that constitution which makes it possible to speak of the power structures, the philosophical concepts that make such fissures salient.

Erotic Freedom and Nonidentity

⁴⁴⁷ Cheah et al., "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell."

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

Michele Le Doeuff points out, “Nowhere does Beauvoir give a critique of Sartre’s categories, nowhere does she state her intention to displace or modify them.”⁴⁴⁹ To make matters worse, as Bergoffen characterizes Beauvoir’s self-assessment of her philosophical voice, “Her philosophical works, she said, were not original; they merely echoed Sartre’s thought.”⁴⁵⁰ Thus it is not surprising that in Chanter as elsewhere Beauvoir is frequently read even in her writings on women as a disciple of Sartre rather than as addressing her own concerns with a distinguishing voice. Le Doeuff, for example, who nevertheless lauds the distinctive notion of freedom in Beauvoir, argues that Beauvoir appropriates existentialism; Beauvoir “carried out transformations on”⁴⁵¹ and “takes from existentialism.”⁴⁵² On the whole, Le Doeuff’s treatment suggests that Beauvoir was not herself an author or even collaborator in the development of existentialism.⁴⁵³

Bergoffen calls attention to Beauvoir’s denial of her work as original for the purposes of making clear that in fact Beauvoir’s writing exhibits what Bergoffen calls “a muted voice” that renders her writings on the whole a unique set of existential writings. For example, where Chanter argues that Beauvoir misunderstands Hegelian recognition, Bergoffen argues that Beauvoir rewrites Hegelian recognition via an intentional yet subtle decoupling of reciprocity and violence. This decoupling suggests an alternative,

⁴⁴⁹ Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.*

⁴⁵⁰ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*. Beauvoir makes a statement to this effect in Jessica Benjamin and Margaret A. Simons, “Simone De Beauvoir: An Interview,” *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979). For discussion of Beauvoir’s repeated refusal to name herself a philosopher see “Can a Woman Be a Philosopher?” in Simons, *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir*. See also Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Michel Sicard, “Interferences,” *Obliques* 18-19 (1979), Alice Schwarzer and Simone de Beauvoir, *After the Second Sex : Conversations with Simone Debeauvoir* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁵³ Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.*, 88.

erotic model of recognition in which moral relationships require “our willingness to assume the risks of our ambiguous subjectivity—the risks of finitude, vulnerability and the bond.”⁴⁵⁴ This alternative model of recognition is part of what Bergoffen calls Beauvoir’s “ambiguous legacy to us.” The ambiguity of this legacy is due to the shadow-mode in which Beauvoir’s texts dissent from the more prominent ethic of the project presented.

The notion of freedom in Beauvoir is another case in point. While in her widely cited work *L’ Etude et Le rouet* translated in English as *Hipparchia’s Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, etc.*, Michele Le Doeuff reads *The Second Sex* as appropriating a pre-formed existentialism, she also argues that the notion of freedom in Beauvoir is, contra Chanter, unfortunately chastened by the “dogma” of “‘French-style’ German phenomenology” of the Same and the Other.⁴⁵⁵ “human thought has a universal structure which can be observed equally well among the Bororo peoples as among the tribe of St. Germain-des-Pres, at the time of the Pharaohs as in the age of Planck [sic].” Though this critique faintly echoes post-structuralist critique, Le Doeuff’s concern here is that it is the Same-Other dialectic that prevents Beauvoir’s text from remaining relevant to the feminist philosophical aims. In keeping with the contradiction frequently attributed to Beauvoir, Le Doeuff characterizes these as “heterogeneous”⁴⁵⁶— the Same-Other dialectic and the freedom/authenticity gestures. But this is precisely the opposite of the appraisal given by Chanter of this dual legacy (discussed above.) In fact, Le Doeuff argues that it is the Same-Other dialectic, the gesture which Chanter recognizes as worth

⁴⁵⁴ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir.*, 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Le Doeuff: “Someone does a seminar at the College de France and we stuck in it for fifty years at least.” Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia’s Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.*, 107.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

mining for feminist purposes, which is an *impediment* to making contemporary feminist use of Beauvoir's text. For Le Doeuff, however, freedom in *The Second Sex* is not at all Sartrean: true *liberté* extending beyond the resources of the othering of Woman requires internal consent to disregard such Myths of woman or to discredit demands to live up to gendered (raced and classed) images that implicitly make particular demands of or interrogate *La femme frigide*⁴⁵⁷ and the homosexual⁴⁵⁸ as presented in *Being and Nothingness*.

As I suggested above in Butler's appropriations of the becoming of *on* in *The Second Sex*, scholarly discussion over how to read freedom in Beauvoir have tended to take for granted that her notion of freedom is the project of a subject-in-process prefigured by a pre-established group women. It is women, females considered as such who aspire to Beauvoiran freedom in situation. As we have seen, Butler's reading of this moment in *The Second Sex* does not presume such a subject in the making.

At this point I want to build on this reading given by Butler by turning to the work of Debra Bergoffen. Bergoffen offers a reading of freedom as erotic in Beauvoir that articulates freedom differently from the Woman/women-centered debate described by LeDoeuff. Here freedom or authenticity requires more than a critique of the Myth of Woman in which women as a discrete group is left intact. In fact Bergoffen finds that the "muted voice" of erotic freedom pursues a movement beyond the othering of women not due to internalized misogyny on Beauvoir's part but rather because an ethics of ambiguity requires questioning such static appellations. The static appellations man and

⁴⁵⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 65ff. Cf Beauvoir's readings of Stekel's study *Frigidity in Woman*, upon which Sartre also relies in *Being and Nothingness*. For an interesting take on the vast differences between these treatments of the same source, see Le Doeuff, *Hipparchia's Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.*, 62ff.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 77ff. Cf Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.*, 404-424.

woman can never be fully extricated from the objectifying Myths of woman and concomitant myths of Man (which overlook the “immanent” moments of male anatomy such as wet dreams, flaccidity, etc) which the text calls into question. Thus it is not in virtue of being a woman per se that ties one to immanence for Beauvoir as has been argued; it is shirking especially gendered ambiguity that ties one to immanence. I argue that Bergoffen’s explication of themes in *The Second Sex* is consistent with what I have called above Butler’s second reading, the one which elaborates on the notion that “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes [a woman].” The “muted voice” of Beauvoir is that of erotic freedom in which the ethic of the project is dynamically challenged⁴⁵⁹ and instead “the communicative possibilities of human situation”⁴⁶⁰ are posited. Bergoffen argues that while Beauvoir can be read as demanding that the previously unauthorized assume the status of subject, the muted voice of the text (in fact, of Beauvoir’s oeuvre) destabilizes that very notion of the subject. Although Beauvoir does not oppositionally challenge the ethic of the project, she does instead explore the contexts, limits and dangers of that ethic in relation to gender and sexuality in a number of texts.⁴⁶¹

Beauvoir’s dynamic challenge to the ethic of the project is an ethic of the erotic. This ethic of eros begins in the ambiguity of the subject of ethics: that subject is both a unique subjectivity amidst a world of objects and an object for others. Bergoffen argues that this ambiguity is met in Beauvoir with two interrelated notions: generosity and the

⁴⁵⁹ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir.*, 186.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 186. Bergoffen discusses “Must We Burn Sade?” in Sade, Austryn Wainhouse, and Richard Seaver, *The Marquis De Sade: The 120 Days of Sodom, and Other Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1966). Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age*, trans. Patrick O'Brien (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1973), Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*.

gift.⁴⁶² For Bergoffen, this turn to the erotic “validates the sexed and sexual body and challenges the gender codes of patriarchy in accordance with the criteria of generosity and the gift, and according to the body understood as an ambiguous phenomenological intentionality.”⁴⁶³ In a brief section of *Pyrrhus et Cinéas*,⁴⁶⁴ Beauvoir articulates the “generous act as an act done for nothing” exemplified in both the maternal insofar as the child “cannot be construed as the mother’s project” and the “generous man” who asks “to be recognized in his freedom.”⁴⁶⁵ Neither of these acts has a purpose or use, and in this sense these acts performed for nothing cannot be “repaid.” Such repayment would replay these generous acts as economic exchange. In this sense these acts are “gifts,” and the particular mode of giving in this way necessarily involves risk due to the significance of what is given. It is in interrelationships that such giving is possible; this makes isolation unthinkable in the realm of the gift. When Bergoffen writes of the erotic then for Beauvoir she refers to the necessary entanglement of the ethical possibilities of apparently individual persons.

I find that likewise *The Ethics of Ambiguity* articulates freedom as historically and socially situated. Freedom there only has meaning in its irreducible relations to the

⁴⁶² Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*., see especially 45-71. The notion of the gift was originally discussed as a structural informant in the nature of human transactions in Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1967). Cf. the gift in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)., 373 ff. More recently Jacques Derrida has elaborated on the impossibility of the gift in Jacques Derrida, *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). For a critique of Derrida via Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche, Gender and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)., see Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche : Philosophy's Relation to The "Feminine"* (New York: Routledge, 1995). 83-125.

⁴⁶³ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*., 202.

⁴⁶⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *Pyrrhus Et Cinéas* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944)., 83-84.

⁴⁶⁵ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*., 62-63. Bergoffen does not comment on this conflation of woman/mother suggested by the mother on one hand and man on the other. But she does point out that this piece was written by Beauvoir prior to *The Second Sex*, and the reader does notice that while this piece has traces of themes later developed it also is clearly an earlier work in its lack of attention to gender asymmetry.

freedom of others. “To be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future; the existence of others as a freedom defines my situation and is even the condition of my own freedom.”⁴⁶⁶ This freedom is articulated in conjunction with the lack of a God who might expiate erroneous choices:

far from God’s absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears the responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed....⁴⁶⁷

Instead of claiming divine origin, freedom itself is originary: “Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence.”⁴⁶⁸ To be free is to will oneself to be a “disclosure of being” rather than to “be” statically, to keep being “at a certain distance, to tear oneself from the world.”⁴⁶⁹ But this tearing oneself from the world is never an automatic accomplishment; it is an ethical mode of giving heed to desire, which one can evade.⁴⁷⁰ Evasion may be due to the “anguish of the free decision,”⁴⁷¹ but Beauvoir develops in this text a notion of freedom as more than anxiety-laden: freedom is the ongoing process of disclosure of being and in fact the becoming rather than the static being of one’s desire. Existentialism in that text is explicitly a philosophy of ambiguity in this sense. This notion of ambiguity builds on Kierkegaard’s existential affirmation of the irreducible character of ambiguity as opposed to its reconciliation in Hegel.⁴⁷² I argue that this reading of existentialism as

⁴⁶⁶ Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 91.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 148. I have been helped in this reading by conversation with Debra Bergoffen.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 8-9. In *Negative Dialectics* (49), Adorno argues that existentialism remains in “idealistic bonds” because it is organized according to the old idealistic category of the free act of the subject. Objectivity is regarded by Sartrean existentialism as a matter of indifference explicitly, but Sartre’s plays attest to a more nuanced account in which subjectivity is composed of the very matters of indifference which explicitly pose no obstacle to the acting free agent. Bergoffen’s work, among others, suggests that had Adorno

an embracing of ambiguity contra Hegel locates Beauvoir within post-Hegelian feminist philosophy and theory as already negotiating the preemption of a secure situation of feminist subjectivity. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, the predominant voice is not yet contemplating the feminist; the individual in that text “must at last assume his subjectivity.”⁴⁷³ However, in a departure from *The Ethics*, in *The Second Sex* the question of “her” subjectivity is raised. Feminist subjectivity itself becomes a question—what such a subjectivity might be, what its unique preemptions are. Pondering this question requires discussion of the dialectic of Man (the Subject)/Woman (the other) and of the mythology of woman that reifies what might become the sight of subjectivity. For Beauvoir this will clearly mean a subjectivity different from that of Man which requires the othering of woman, the mythology of woman, and thus a dislodging of the name women from a dialectical reading will be necessary. But what possible meaning can this “new” subjectivity have? What possible “new” meaning for the name women? *The Second Sex* raises these questions without necessarily offering clear answers. Beauvoir gestures to a subjectivity to come, but she articulates it as liberty in another direction *from* “the role of *object, Other* which is offered her [original emphasis].”⁴⁷⁴ This is a posing of the question of feminist subjectivity—in fact Beauvoir’s notion of freedom, interestingly *rather than* the dialectics of self/other or man/woman, would seem to answer the question of feminist subjectivity. Here is where Tina Chanter’s reading of Beauvoir as not-yet feminist in rejecting the name women might be understood to gain traction. It does seem to be the case that it is only beyond the salience of dialectics that a new subjectivity

considered Beauvoir’s work, his reading of existentialism might have been quite different. Adorno’s own reading of Kierkegaard has much in common with that of Beauvoir in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁷⁴ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*.

might emerge. However, freedom in Beauvoir is not a casting-off of all situation; it is ambiguity in situation as Bergoffen argues. Thus I argue that freedom in Beauvoir might be read as a feminist gesture rivaling the dialectical reading of the name women which has served as a feminist resource for many. The tension between these two anticipates feminist aporetics. However it is interesting to note that for Beauvoir, dialectical thinking cannot offer the possibility of subjectivity; that subjectivity comes in ambiguity, in the critique of situation.

The Second Sex, suggests Bergoffen, develops these themes particularly around what Bergoffen terms erotic freedom. She points out that freedom in Beauvoir does have the existential sense, which Beauvoir developed in conversation with Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, of the irreducibility of the embodied to her situation as object for others, according to which “as lived transcendence I am always beyond my represented facticity.”⁴⁷⁵ However, the “muted voice” in Beauvoir’s texts attests to a richer notion of erotic freedom in which that transcendence *per se* is forfeited as a goal for the related notion of ambiguity itself as the realm of the properly subjective.⁴⁷⁶ In fact, it is not transcendence to which the erotic in Beauvoir aims, but instead the richness of embodied ambiguity: “It is the erotic, ambiguous body, not the violent, transcending one that becomes the

⁴⁷⁵ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 56. Bergoffen gives this characterization in describing Beauvoir’s defense of violence in *Pyrrhus et Cineas*, Beauvoir, *Pyrrhus Et Cinéas*. This book remains untranslated into English, but Bergoffen in Chapter One of *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir* gives an outline of its details. Violence is defended there in cases when one is not able to make an appeal, a claim or stance of need, and assuming that the first need is not met, when there are also no others who will respond to my call. When the first condition as well as the second are not met, I have no choice but to resort to violence. Consensus in this argument is contingent, and Beauvoir further suggests that there will always be an other who opposes us. Beauvoir makes this argument in the context of World War II France. See also Sartre and violence in the context of Algerian independence, see Sartre’s Introduction, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963). See also Thomas R. Flynn, *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History*, 2 vols., vol. 2: Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005), 230ff.

⁴⁷⁶ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 160.

privileged site of subjectivity.”⁴⁷⁷ The equation “subjectivity equals the ambiguity of the body” is suggested by the alternative voice of *The Second Sex* as a corrective to the Hegelian equation subjectivity equals transcendence. The Hegelian subject becomes such a subject in violently risking death.⁴⁷⁸ Bergoffen agrees that this subject predicated on the Hegelian dialectic is not consistent with the theorization of the existential in Beauvoir. But contrary to Chanter’s reading it is the theorization of the existential body, the ethical question of the ambiguity of the body, in which Bergoffen locates the feminist import of *The Second Sex*. The muted voice in Beauvoir transforms the “ambiguity of all embodied subjects [into]... a fluidity that escapes patriarchal, bi-polarized sexed identities.”⁴⁷⁹ In fact, fleeing into the security of the myths of gender, such as the metonymy of gender whereby vagina stands in for women and penis stands in for men as discrete modes of static being,⁴⁸⁰ is in both cases a flight *from* the ambiguity of subjectivity: “taking up the strategies of the imaginary, patriarchy invokes the strategies of metonymy to produce gendered bodies. Men will become Man the penis/phallus subject. Women will become Woman the womb/inessential other.”⁴⁸¹ However, for Beauvoir the “penis is not an unambiguous sign of transcendence and the womb a clear mark of immanence.” The penis is not always erect; wet dreams and other ambiguities of the penis are forgotten in the ubiquitous assessment of the male body as transcendent. Likewise, menstrual flow as “signs of an openness to the future and the other” might have been a mark of transcendence if this ambiguity were taken into account. Instead the

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*, 156.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Debra B. Bergoffen, “Simone De Beauvoir: Disrupting the Metonymy of Gender ” in *Resistance, Flight, Creation: Feminist Enactments of French Philosophy*, ed. Dorothea Olkowski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 104.

myths of gender presuppose a rigid pair of names. Criticism of this pairing overreaches the discourse of the othering of the female body as such; these ambiguities which open up subjectivity rather than structuring a subject fall outside of definitions of the female/woman on which one can draw in order to articulate a discrete feminine difference.

This ethics of the erotic cannot presume a reified subject: “It is... a possible ethic for those men and women who understand that it is neither as men nor as women, but rather as ambiguously fleshed embodied intentionalities that they approach the place of the subject.”⁴⁸² Thus erotic freedom requires a suspension of the question of the subject, a postponement of the subject. Instead of the transcendent subject, erotic freedom is enacted by “fleshed embodied intentionalities,”⁴⁸³ desires which do not constitute the position of a Subject (Man) or aspire to a discrete subject still unknown (Woman.) These fleshed embodied intentionalities “understand that this place [of the subject] is an opening not an enclosure.” Thus Bergoffen offers a reading of the “muted voice” in *The Second Sex* for which erotic freedom does not in fact seek to approximate the Subject of History, psychoanalysis, class conflict, but rather values the ambiguity of subjectivity for its compatibility with the “we project” of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* in which the freedom of the other is a necessary component of one’s own freedom. Beauvoir’s considerations of erotic freedom are “intended to teach us the difference between an invitation to and a codification of certain expressions of subjectivity.”⁴⁸⁴ This articulation of ambiguity puts

⁴⁸² Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir.*, 218.

⁴⁸³ Sara Heinämaa argues that one must return to Husserl’s philosophy of the living body presented in *Krisis, Ding und Raum* and *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Phänomenologische Untersuchung zur Konstitution* in order to understand what Beauvoir means by situating subjectivity in the lived body, Sara Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference : Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 26.

⁴⁸⁴ Bergoffen, *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir.*, 154.

into question the “bad faith of the desire to be” with which many have ironically charged the author of *The Second Sex*. It does so precisely by approaching the question of the subject as an ethical question,⁴⁸⁵ posing the question of feminist subjectivity by undermining the dialectical woman as other interpretation.

If the ethics of the erotic is one trajectory of *The Second Sex*, however, it is as I have discussed balanced with attention to the theme of Woman as Other. As we saw for Tina Chanter, it is this moment in the text which provides the feminist theorist with the theoretical space in which to explore the othering of women. However, erotic freedom tests the limits of the name of women on which such theory relies. Of course, for Chanter, “the female” is no more a ground of feminist theory than “woman”; instead she is interested to return feminist theorists to the significance of manifestations of embodied, sexual difference. It is in this sense that Chanter finds Beauvoir’s gestures to existential freedom dissatisfying: “In the case of women, this idea translates into the suggestion that once we realize how culture limits our opportunities for action, we can act on that knowledge, challenge the constraints imposed upon us, and change our situations.”⁴⁸⁶ Is Chanter opposed to questioning such social restrictions? Of course she is not. But she is concerned about how one might go about articulating such challenges if those challenges are not first properly articulated and interrogated. For Chanter this requires “acknowledging its [‘the alterity imposed upon women’] unplumbed resources,”⁴⁸⁷ the ways in which the mythologies of woman have functioned in philosophical discourse. Delving into the resources of the gesture of “Woman as Other” in the way that Beauvoir only just began to do, and in the way in which Chanter finds that Luce Irigaray’s ethics of

⁴⁸⁵ Huffer, ““There Is No Gomorrah”: Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory.”

⁴⁸⁶ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers.*, 49.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

eros does do is a way of going about articulating the myriad challenges to those historically unauthorized in such investigations.

Still, as I suggested in previous chapters, articulating the feminist as having its locus in posing the question of the othering of women threatens to import a one-dimensional scope. It does so by privileging gendered/sexed othering as an othering that can be interpreted apart from race or class or sexuality or ability/disability. I now turn to the work of Drucilla Cornell whose articulation of what she refers to as the “feminine within the imaginary domain” appropriating the work of Luce Irigaray discussed in Chapter Three attempts to offset this one-dimensional effect.⁴⁸⁸ Patricia Huntington will argue that this attempt is not successful due to the structural racism of the notion of sexual difference. I raise these issues in this chapter because they are directly relevant to Chanter’s placement of hope of reading sexual difference as feminist theory precisely in the notion that it explores the “unplumbed resources” of the sexed-unauthorized. This moment in *The Second Sex*, which is consistent with Beauvoir’s exploration of the various Myths of woman, represents for Chanter the feminist import of the text. In my view, Chanter does locate one moment of the feminist in Beauvoir’s work. However, if this moment is to live up to a reading of the feminist otherwise than in a “narrow” manner, as Angela Davis has put it,⁴⁸⁹ then it will have to examine what is foreclosed by its own reliance on a philosophy of sexual difference. By interpreting the feminist in Sedgwick and Spivak in the following two chapters, I am interested in their approaching feminist aporetics that spurn a one-dimensional or narrow approach to the feminist.

⁴⁸⁸ But see Cornell’s more recent distancing herself from Irigaray’s later work in Cheah et al., “The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell.”

⁴⁸⁹ Angela Davis, “Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation” in Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *The Black Feminist Reader* (Malden, Mass., USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

In *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law*⁴⁹⁰

Drucilla Cornell intervenes in the essentialist/anti-essentialist debates of the eighties by arguing that there is an important difference between essentialist or naturalist accounts and the elaboration on the specificity of Woman/women as mythically rewritten in particular contexts. Cornell draws on Irigaray's attempt to render feminine difference through "*mimesis*," to assume the "feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it."⁴⁹¹ This attempt is necessary for the disruption of the logic of the same which denies the existence of suffering due to gender asymmetry. There is real danger in essentialist accounts such as that of Robin West⁴⁹² who nevertheless offers an excellent account of why a feminist "voice" in legal theory is necessary for making visible such suffering. On the other hand, to wipe out the feminine in order not to reinforce gender asymmetry also renders such suffering invisible. Cornell offers a way out of this dilemma by suggesting that attempts to re-metaphorize the feminine, rather than describe women as they "are."⁴⁹³ On this reading of Irigaray,⁴⁹⁴ one must with irreducible risk attempt *mimesis* or imperfect imitation of the feminine in the attempt to overreach "*derelection*," in which "feminine difference cannot be expressed except as signified in masculine imagery or the masculine symbolic."⁴⁹⁵ That the re-metaphorization of the feminine cannot absolutely

⁴⁹⁰ Drucilla Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law, Thinking Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁴⁹¹ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 76. Quoted in Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law*, 147.

⁴⁹² Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law*, 21ff.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁹⁴ Drawing primarily from Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*. But also Luce Irigaray, "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 1 (1981), Luce Irigaray, "The Gesture in Psychoanalysis," in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Teresa Brennan (London: Routledge, 1989).

⁴⁹⁵ Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law*, 7.

escape derelection is what makes such attempts risky. Nevertheless, this risk is worth taking precisely because “our bodies, our desire have been buried by a discourse in which we cannot metaphorize our desire.”⁴⁹⁶

Cornell turns to the work of Toni Morrison to articulate the possibilities for remetaphorization of the maternal, which can make appeal to national, racial and class difference. Specifically Cornell argues that the remetaphorization of the Medea myth in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* offers an example of “reiterative universalism,” a term borrowed from Michael Walzer.⁴⁹⁷ This reiterative universal works within myth in order to reinterpret myth, rather than denying the psychoanalytic, ethical or political power of myth-making. Such a denial would also silence the feminine, which “is” myth, and would therefore only reinstate the neutrality of legal discourse, which is Cornell’s literature of primary concern.

But the turn to *Beloved* is an attempt to demonstrate a writing of feminine difference which can also bring to the fore national, racial and class difference. Sethe’s killing of her children in order to protect them from the white patriarchal order that has created the specific conditions in which she cannot raise her children is reminiscent of the myth of the castrating mother. However, it recalls this myth even as it fundamentally intervenes in the “idealization of mothering as the basis for a unique feminine ‘reality’.”⁴⁹⁸ Thus the retelling of the Medea myth rewrites the myths of slavery and of the mother and

relies on myth to dramatize the very difference of the Afro-American mother’s situation. In this sense, the ‘universals’ expressed in myth are not and cannot be just the mere repetition of the same. Indeed, the ‘universal,’ the symbol of the ‘killing mother,’ cannot be known except as it is told in context.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 204.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 195.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

Cornell also draws on the work of Regina Austin⁴⁹⁹ whose allegory of Sapphire, an African American woman, demonstrates that African American and woman can not be understood as properties “of” a prior person. Instead Sapphire “is feminine, but as Woman she ‘is’ differently. She ‘is’ an Afro-American woman.”⁵⁰⁰ The difficulty of the language for representing who she “is” in terms of race, class, sexuality is symptomatic of the question: what does the remetaphorization of the feminine mean for African American women, for transgendered MtFs or MtFs, for the “manly women”⁵⁰¹ of whom Judith Halberstam writes so eloquently whose bodies resist presumed definitions of the woman/women/she/female? Is it possible that the feminine in its apparent singularity of purpose internally makes difficult some expressions of gender, race, class, sexuality ability/disability? It is germane to Cornell’s concerns that consideration of the harms of gender asymmetry require drawing on, resisting within, the very myths that have enabled gender asymmetry. This is the dilemma in which Cornell’s book begins and, one could argue, ends; it is in frustration with the limits of such myths that the book culminates as well. Thus, I share with Cornell in these frustrations when I ask: what can be the possibilities of remetaphorization of the feminine when they rely on the very myths that make remetaphorization necessary? As we will see, Patricia Huntington worries about the fact that it is to the mythology of slavery that Morrison must turn, on Cornell’s reading, to remetaphorize race and gender. For Cornell, concerns such as this will require that remetaphorization of the feminine maintain an *internal* critique. This raises the question of what counts as internal, as mimetic, and therefore as subversive. Must one approximate, if imperfectly, “feminine” ideals in order to thwart them? Here the question

⁴⁹⁹ Regina Austin, “Sapphire Bound!,” *Wisconsin Law Review*, no. 3 (1989).

⁵⁰⁰ Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation : Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law.*, 196.

⁵⁰¹ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.

arises of what the feminine yet unknown can possibly connote if not the “feminine” in the colloquial, binarized sense. If it is this that one must approximate, albeit with a difference,⁵⁰² then this significantly limits what can count as thwarting the harms of gender asymmetry and not as accommodation to them. Does what falls outside of this manner of thwarting become non-feminist or of no consequence for feminist theory or activism? If Cornell’s project here is to get “beyond accommodation,” then who thwarts and who accommodates are crucial questions.

Relatedly, re-metaphorization and its internal critique taken together are “the different story in which the either/or I have described no longer need ensnare us.” This different story, I suggest is best understood not as an escape from ensnarement. The value of Cornell’s work in *Beyond Accommodation* is its power to demonstrate *both* need for and the limitations of the contemplation or re-metaphorization of the feminine while keeping site of the need for genealogies which expose the constitutive power of such contemplations. Thus I next turn to Huntington who articulates well the internal problems of the remyth-making that Cornell describes. However, I do want to pause here to note that while Cornell draws on Irigaray, she also draws on Derrida for whom such myth-making can never indicate what it seeks to indicate: difference which cannot be conceptualized. Re-metaphorization of the feminine on this reading must reinstate the

⁵⁰² It is argued that Butler’s articulation of performativity is indebted to Irigaray’s articulation of mimesis. This certainly seems plausible. But here I think they are crucially different. For Butler, the performative does not necessarily reinscribe sexual difference. For Irigaray, “to play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself... to make ‘visible,’ by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language,” Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One.*, 76. The feminine is still unknown, for Irigaray, but this requires that the sexual difference as that which cannot be assimilated to the masculine be instated where it previously was not. For Butler, this making visible of sexual difference is unsatisfactory on its insistence on the duality of sexuality—that there are two. For Irigaray, of course there are ‘not yet’ two, but for Butler the bringing about of two is still not yet to enable the proliferation of difference as such.

feminine as a determinative concept which threatens to authorize policed identity cards. One way of reading Cornell is then as a dialogue staged between readings of the very gesture of sexual difference in Derrida and Irigaray, in which the latter's view takes in the concerns of the former, but not the other way around. Importantly, Huntington seems to have read the former out of Cornell's treatment (not to mention also Regina Austin's allegory of Sappho). Nonetheless, Huntington raises key concerns.

Patricia Huntington argues that while Cornell's expansion of Irigaray's psychoanalytic approach incorporates racial, ethnic and national diversity, it does not manage to balance a mutual problematization of the experiences of diverse women with an attempt to combat a "global world that produces the multiple, yet interrelated exploitative mechanisms that sustain diverse forms of oppression in the first place." Huntington's concern is that while Cornell for one incorporates questions of racial, ethnic and national diversity, the Irigarayan "methodology" on which Cornell relies promulgates the very "white authorial presence" (Huntington quotes bell hooks⁵⁰³) to which she seeks to attend. This concern has three components.

First, Irigaray's "quasitranscendental approach to symbolic structures, *pace* Cornell, tacitly fragments traditions or subtraditions into *discrete* manifestations of a univocal, in this case, dyadic symbolic structure."⁵⁰⁴ The problem with this dyadic symbolic structure is precisely its dyadic effect: "Presumably since women are the 'same' in that they are marginalized, they need not worry that differences in their respective material and philosophical positions may impede the advancement of some other

⁵⁰³ bell hooks, *Yearning : Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, 1st ed. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990).

⁵⁰⁴ Patricia Huntington, "Fragmentation, Race, and Gender: Building Solidarity in the Postmodern Era," in *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, ed. Lewis R. Gordon (New York: Routledge, 1997).

women.”⁵⁰⁵ Huntington is careful to point out that Cornell “finds no difficulty in steering between the formal concept of the Western symbolic order as a dyadic or bipolar configuration and examining the concrete social and material differences in women’s situations.”⁵⁰⁶ Still, she is concerned about the way in which the adherence to a dyadic structure prefigures a splintering of the discourse of the feminine, which positions sexual difference as foundational and all other forms of difference as subsidiaries. What Huntington calls “splintering” has affinity with Zack’s concerns with intersectionality, discussed in Chapter Three. However, Huntington argues that such splintering of disparate groups within a larger group of women would be welcome if it did not itself substantiate sexual difference as founding difference. For Zack, the splintering of the larger group of women into subsidiary groups prevents the imagining of a common set of political concerns for women who purportedly can claim a common relational essence. For Huntington, such an injunction of unity will always be an articulation of sexual difference as the foundational difference—and differences among women will only be subsidiary differences to which women as women relate. The problem with this view for Huntington is that the dyadic structure of sexual difference theory seems to exist on one plane and all other forms of difference seem to exist on another plane such that the splintering of the former does not actually redress its foundational status. It is in this spirit that Huntington addresses at the start of her essay Irigaray’s famous claim, “Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not in fact the issue, of our age”⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 194.

⁵⁰⁷ Luce Irigaray, *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5. See also the following in which “the problem of race is, in fact a secondary problem—.” Irigaray, Luce. *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*. Translated by Alison Martin. New York: Routledge, 1996., 47. Discussed in Bergoffen, Debra. “Irigaray’s Couples” in Cimitile, Maria C. and Elaine P. Miller, editors. *Returning to Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy, Politics and the Question of Unity*. SUNY Series in

with the earlier and famous claim of W.E.B. Du Bois, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.”⁵⁰⁸ When sexual difference is considered to be one concern and racial difference another problem addressed only within the rubric of sexual difference, this not only gives rise to a problematic “additive effect” as Kimberle Crenshaw has pointed out.⁵⁰⁹ In Huntington’s view, this leads to a tendency to view “women’s ‘specificities’ ... as pristine wholes untainted and untouched by one another, at least at the most fundamental level.” These pristine wholes are preserved precisely because of the “often competing and incommensurable views of and responses to a shared global set of economic and social conditions that situate groups in diverse relations not only to those conditions but also to one another.”⁵¹⁰ In this respect, Huntington requests an embrace of the incommensurability of views rather than an assumption of consistency as a starting point for conversation.

Huntington’s second concern with an Irigarayan approach is relatedly that its very reliance of critique on a dyadic structure preempts “even the limited goal of ‘psychic resistance’ advanced by her work.”⁵¹¹ Such psychic resistance is predicated, Huntington suggests, on the capacity to address specificities of women’s lives that have to do with oppressions including as well as other than the sexual. But when the sexual is made the

Gender Theory. State University of New York Press, 2007., 151-172. For Bergoffen, this quote suggests Irigaray’s continued adherence to the claim that sexual difference is the most important question of “our” time. Bergoffen is interested in the ways in which the placental relation and the mother-daughter relation contest facile readings of Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference as solely situated in the heterosexual couple.

⁵⁰⁸ Huntington invokes these lines together as a way of introducing the challenge that she sees as still unaddressed raised by women of color in the late 1970s and early 1980s to articulate the racial exclusions of (white) feminist theory. Thus the essay that follows articulates the impediments of Irigarayan methodology for meeting this challenge despite some attempts to do so.

⁵⁰⁹“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color” in Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Critical Race Theory : The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co., 1995).

⁵¹⁰ Huntington, “Fragmentation, Race, and Gender: Building Solidarity in the Postmodern Era.”, 195.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

starting point, which allows for subsequent specifying of the racial within a rubric of the sexual, the psychic resistance of women of color is not possible. Huntington asks, “How can critical mythologizing cultivate the type of critical consciousness requisite to found solidarity among women, when it shies away from the ‘sticky area’ wherein conflicts in women’s perspective and circumstance prove incommensurable?”⁵¹²

Finally, Huntington worries that Irigaray’s methodology places the burden to think race, class and gender together exclusively on women of color. Huntington asks,

Why is it that Irigaray’s own appeals to mythic presentations of the feminine never touch on the racial and class features of white women’s location in the seemingly racially pure Oedipal triangle or masculine-feminine dyad? Why do analyses of white women’s gender-based disadvantage not indicate the social, political and economic power that often accompany being located as “white”? Or why are the axes of relative power known by some white women revealed *solely* against the backdrop of the black female slave?

Thus it is not only that race and class often go undertheorized in the discourse of the feminine, it is that when race and class do appear, it is by exploiting what Michele Wallace has expressed as a “segregated ‘black other’ as ‘a starting point,’ and I [Huntington] would add, litmus test for “white self-criticism.”⁵¹³ The specific problem here is the degree to which the discourse of the feminine preempts expression of the subjectivity of black women when the feminine must be consistent, when “women as a group” operates a priori. Gayatri Spivak’s pointed question of whether the subaltern can speak—not how does the subaltern or what one can one do to enable subaltern speech—Spivak’s question is rather the open question of subaltern speech is representable. Chapter Six discusses the name women in the context of Spivak’s writings on “the strategic use of essentialism” as well as the question of whether the subaltern is articulable. For now I mention Spivak to relate her work on this question of

⁵¹² Huntington, “Fragmentation, Race, and Gender: Building Solidarity in the Postmodern Era.”, 196.

⁵¹³ Ibid. Huntington quotes Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial Press, 1979). This book has been republished with critical introduction, Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of Superwoman* (London ; New York: Verso, 1990).

representationality of the gendered subaltern to these concerns raised by Huntington. While Huntington is concerned that it is the dyadic structure of the discourse of the feminine which preempts the critical appearance and fragmentation of feminist theory, we will see that for Spivak posing the question of the gendered subaltern speech approximates the feminist far better than dialectics can. But as we will see, this approach is also not immune from criticism.

Thus I want to add here that Huntington's critique becomes even more compelling when one considers Spivak's formulations of the impossibility of representation of the gendered subaltern as well as the concerns that Cornell herself raises in a later interview in which she discusses her dynamic relationship to Irigaray's work.⁵¹⁴ Specifically, Cornell affirms Huntington's concerns while also adding that sexual difference tends to reify the very name women, which makes demands on the very persons whose lives are caught up in the fate of feminist activism. Cornell puts it this way: "If the feminine in Irigaray was once an aesthetic idea to make havoc with what could be rationally perceived, it is now a much more traditional aesthetic idea to make present to reason a kind of ideal of difference."⁵¹⁵ Here Cornell expresses a concern with the path of the discourse of sexual difference in Irigaray's work such that the project that Butler characterizes as the question of what it might mean "to read from a position of radical deauthorization in order to expose the contingent authority of the text" becomes a theory projecting an "ideal of difference" in which the sex/gender forms precisely the sort of basis with which Huntington is concerned. Cornell's concerns point to the inadequacy of

⁵¹⁴ Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference : The Later Work of Luce Irigaray*.

⁵¹⁵ Cheah et al., "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell.", 30. See discussion of this change in Cornell's reading of Irigaray in Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference : The Later Work of Luce Irigaray*., 50-57.

Huntington's conversation—Huntington arguably must express her concerns via the name women. However it is precisely this dialectical name, its dyadic status, which her critique means to question.

I have been trying to articulate some of the problems with thinking the feminist both dialectically, thinking the feminist in terms of the negative and with thinking the feminist with anticipation of nonidentity. I have discussed in this chapter the ways in which Beauvoir's work opens up both moments of the feminist—and disputes over the status of Beauvoir's writing as feminist miss this complex interpretation of the feminist in her work by discounting one or the other as not-yet-feminist.⁵¹⁶ Such disputes over the feminist confine feminist philosophy and deny the complexity of feminist purposes and futures. Beauvoir on my reading attempts to speak to such complications of the feminist.

In the next chapter I turn to a more recent set of works in which the feminist aporetic reappears—the work of Eve Sedgwick. I read Sedgwick as coming closer than Beauvoir to what I mean by the aporia at the heart of the feminist, but as we will see Sedgwick interprets this aporia as “impasse” rather than as the mutually undermining negativity/nonidentity aporetic that I have been discussing. Sedgwick both augments feminist subjectivity and articulates the feminist as preemption of subjectivity or critique of the very means by which subjectivity is articulated. Sedgwick's work is also the occasion for further articulation of the feminist aporetic in its relationship to the queer. The feminist and the queer, from the reading given in this dissertation, cannot be perfectly delineated. As we have seen in this chapter, Butler's queer feminist reading of Beauvoir is also a reading of one feminist moment in Beauvoir, that moment which

⁵¹⁶ Especially in Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers*. “One Is Not Born a Woman” in Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*.

cannot be articulated in strict appreciation for the man as Subject/woman as Other dialectic. Still the question of the relation between the negative and nonidentical in feminist queer theory has yet to be addressed; I turn to the interpretation of this in Sedgwick.

Chapter Five

Impasse and Aporia: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Tropes of Gender

Through a process that began, but only began, with the perception of some differences among our mostly inexplicit, often somewhat uncrystallized sexual self-definitions, it appeared that each woman in the class possessed (or might, rather, feel we were possessed by) an ability to make one or more of the other women radically and excruciatingly doubt the authority of her own self-definition as a woman; as a feminist; and as a positional subject of a particular sexuality.⁵¹⁷

Identification with/as has a distinctive resonance for women in the oppressively tidy dovetailing between old ideologies of women's traditional 'selflessness' and a new one of feminist commitment that seems to begin with a self but is legitimated only by willfully obscuring most of its boundaries.⁵¹⁸

How does the feminist aporetic relate to feminist queer theory? In this chapter I approach this question through the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.⁵¹⁹ In Sedgwick, the fluctuating significance of the name women must be read in its relationship to the questions posed by the queer,

the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be made*) to signify monolithically.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 61.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵¹⁹ As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner put it, "...one corpus of work (often Eve Sedgwick's or Judith Butler's) is commonly made a metonym for queer theory or queer culture building itself, exemplary either for good or for bad. But no particular project is metonymic of queer commentary." Thus I turn to Sedgwick not as exemplar of queer theory but for her particular reading of the impasse of gender. An important critique to note is that of Gopinath who takes issue with Sedgwick's positioning of the closet as "the defining structure for gay oppression in this century" by reading Ismat Chughtai's short story "The Quilt" in order to illustrate "the mechanisms by which current discourses around the formation of "lesbian" or queer subjectivity—even those that are avowedly feminist and antiracist—can rely upon and function in the service of familiar colonial strategies of subjectification," (103.) I return to this concern below. See also Joseph Allen Boone, *Queer Frontiers : Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), Jan Campbell, *Arguing with the Phallus : Feminist, Queer, and Postcolonial Theory : A Psychoanalytic Contribution* (London ; New York New York: Zed Books ; Distributed in the USA exclusively by St. Martin's Press, 2000), Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, *Sex Wars : Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), Gayatri Gopinath, "Homo-Economics: Queer Sexualities in a Transnational Frame," in *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity*, ed. Rosemary Marangoly George (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place : Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives, Sexual Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), Huffer, "'There Is No Gomorrah': Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory.," Diane Richardson, Janice McLaughlin, and Mark E. Casey, *Intersections between Feminist and Queer Theory* (Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Weed and Schor, *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*.

⁵²⁰ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies, Series Q* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.

Why do I turn to Eve Sedgwick in a dissertation exploring aporetic feminist subjectivity? Does her work not obviously inhabit that moment of the feminist aporetic which articulates the limitations of any dialectical relation, which states in queer feminist voice the violences done by the assertion (often feminist but not exclusively) of the dialectics of male/female, man/woman, men/women?⁵²¹ Does Sedgwick's work not reside solely in one moment of the aporia, rejecting the promise of the "exaltation of the negative"⁵²² of feminist theories? Does it not await unqualifiedly the nonidentical or alterity preempting subjectivity and expressed through a breakdown of the concept/negative dialectic?

I read the work of Judith Butler already under discussion as feminist queer theory; however insofar as Butler understands feminist theory to be a project preempting the iteration of a new subject, I read the feminist and the queer as a singular moment in Butler.⁵²³ In Sedgwick on the other hand a different relation of the feminist and the queer appears. However, it must be said that *Epistemology of the Closet*⁵²⁴ is offered as a diagnosis of the "indicatively male" definitional crises of late twentieth-century Western culture. Sedgwick is interested firstly in the effects of the definitional crisis among white men of homo/heterosexual definition, and only secondarily or derivatively in other categories which bear its "ineffaceable marking":

secrecy/disclosure, knowledge/ignorance, private/public, masculine/feminine, majority/minority, innocence/initiation, natural/artificial, new/old, discipline/terrorism, canonic/noncanonic,

⁵²¹ "I think everyone who does gay and lesbian studies is haunted by the suicide of adolescents. To us, the hard statistics come easily: that queer teenagers are two to three times likelier to attempt suicide, and to accomplish it, than others; that up to 30 percent of teen suicides are likely to be gay or lesbian; that a third of lesbian and gay teenagers say they have attempted suicide; that minority queer adolescents are at even more extreme risk," Ibid., 1.

⁵²² Julia Kristeva, Philippe Petit, and Sylvère Lotringer, *Revolt, She Said, Semiotext(E) Foreign Agents Series* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2002), 15.

⁵²³ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, vii. Indeed, for Butler, Antigone figures the limits of feminist pursuits seeking state sanction. Antigone instead suggests possibilities for a feminist reading of the impossibilities of the distinction between kinship and state. Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*.

⁵²⁴ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

wholeness/decadence, urbane/provincial, domestic/foreign, health/illness, same/different, active/passive, in/out, cognition/paranoia, art/kitsch, utopia/apocalypse, sincerity/sentimentality, and voluntariness/addiction.⁵²⁵

Why then do I turn to Sedgwick for whom any question about feminist subjectivity will be a subsidiary of reflection on the crisis of male homo/heterosexual definition?

I turn more specifically to Sedgwick's feminist⁵²⁶ thinking of gender and sexuality not in spite of these questions, but because of these questions. I turn to her work precisely because she problematizes what she refers to as an imperative to identify with/as women (as seen in epigraph) even as she argues that her own "transitive gender" (discussed below) is not the only gender trope. Thus in this chapter I turn to Sedgwick's work in order to think as inherent the relationship among the queer and the feminist in the same texts. For Sedgwick, in late twentieth century U.S. gender and sexuality must be understood through two productive and interrelated ambiguities: that pertaining to sexuality and that pertaining to gender. These mutually interact in a grid copied below. I am interested in particular in the "impasse of gender" pertaining to "homosexual gender," which I argue keeps the feminist aporetic in play. As a result of this impasse, the question of the "subject" of antihomophobic/queer theory⁵²⁷ or gay and lesbian studies in

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 15. Here Sedgwick defines feminist as "gender-centered" as opposed to anti-homophobic, later queer, as "sexuality-centered." A primary theme of this dissertation is the attempt to think feminist theory as constituted by its supposed "minority" views. While I agree that feminist theories have historically inadequately thought the sexual, not to mention Betty Friedan's relegating the "purple menace" to the "anti-feminist," I am interested in precisely that aspect of Sedgwick's own work that refuses to draw lines between the feminist and the queer. The work begun in Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" understands a thinking of the sexual as both pertinent to and exceeding feminist work insofar as this work is neglected by feminists. My project adopts and extends this interest by asking about the implications for feminist subjectivity of considering *feminist* queer theory. That is to say, what are the political and ethical implications of those feminist theories which resonate with or are in fact articulated as queer for all feminist subjectivities? The Rubin essay appears in Kauffman, *American Feminist Thought at Century's End: A Reader*. See also Lynne Huffer, *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures: Nostalgia, Ethics, and the Question of Difference* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), Huffer, "'There Is No Gomorrah': Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory."

⁵²⁷ In *Epistemology*, Sedgwick uses the term "antihomophobic" as a way of referring to the subjectivity of her work and in *Tendencies*, written largely contemporaneously with the former, replaces antihomophobic

Sedgwick's work is ultimately an unanswerable one. Her work, on my reading, both posits the possibility of an (a) alternative feminist subject located in the gender separatist trope and the (b) feminist preemption of any such subject by the salience of the queer. This work approaches the feminist aporetic, but it does not yet articulate the tension of the negative dialectic, which I have rewritten as the tension of the feminist aporetic. The "impasse" of gender is not strong enough: the lesbian continuum itself is an attempt to locate a "subject" which fails; likewise the queer preempts any subjectivity from which to speak. Both moments of the feminist aporetic in Sedgwick lose track of race and class. Nevertheless, I read the impasse of which Sedgwick writes as a way of approaching the aporia of feminist subjectivity; Sedgwick refuses to take one position over the other. My concern is that the positions between which she refuses to choose seem somehow to coexist. In my view the moments of the feminist aporetic cannot coexist; they are mutually preempting. Hence, I argue that Sedgwick's tropes approach the (a) negative and (b) nonidentical, that which must however inadequately be articulated through the dialectic concept/negative discussed in Chapter Two. For Sedgwick, these two available tropes of gender, in their inconsistency and irreducibility to each other, rule out any definitive answer to the question of a feminist queer subjectivity. Thus, the impasse of gender definition may be read as an implicit, earlier articulation of the dilemma to which

with "queer." Queer "emerged into public consciousness" "around 1990" according to David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Esteban Munoz, "Introduction: What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?," *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005). In their "anti-encyclopedic entry" which argues that queer theory "has no precise bibliographic shape," Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner date the emergence of "queer theory," the use of the phrase to "after 1990," 344. Queer theory in their view aims, "without forgetting the importance of the hetero-homo distinction of object choice in modern culture, queer work wants to address the full range of power-ridden normativities of sex," 345. Queer theory and commentary "in this sense is not necessarily superior to or more inclusive than conventional lesbian and gay studies; the two have overlapping but different aims and therefore potentially different publics," 346. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Guest Column: What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?," *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (May 1995).

my larger project speaks regarding the question of the subject of feminist theory and philosophy.

Let me say first that I am not so interested here in the debate over the status of *Epistemology of the Closet* as a feminist text as I am in the subjects or impossibility of subjects that the text variously presumes. I am interested in the feminist status of *Epistemology* in the same way in which I was interested in the feminist status of *The Second Sex*. Sedgwick's work is now regarded as "foundational" queer theory; in *Epistemology of the Closet*, what Sedgwick calls 'antihomophobic theory' anticipates this field. Bidy Martin has argued that the text, in the effort to focus on sexuality in a way that does not reduce it to gender, ends up treating "sexuality [as] strangely exempt from the social enmeshments and constraints of gender (read: women) and thus even from the body."⁵²⁸ While applauding Sedgwick's resistance to a reduction of sexuality to gender, Martin worries that Sedgwick erases gender and by association the femme. Sedgwick's text does so by taking gender to be the stagnant, fixed matter from which sexuality and by association the queer are seen as free-floating. Martin suggests moreover that when gender is invisible in Sedgwick's text, the text reinforces a gender-absent normativity in which "the operations of misogyny disappear from view." I want to take this criticism seriously despite the fact that in what follows I am not interested in defending Sedgwick against this reading. Rather I mean to explore the tension in the text between different tropes of queer gender which attest to an ambiguity in which Martin's critique is not necessarily interested. I am interested in what I read, pace Martin, as the ambiguity (rather than the overall invisibility) of the name women in the text and in the value which

⁵²⁸ Bidy Martin, "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias," *Diacritics* 24, no. 2/3 (1994). Reprinted in Bidy Martin, *Femininity Played Straight : The Significance of Being Lesbian* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Sedgwick herself attaches to this ambiguity.⁵²⁹ Along the way, however, I will make use of Martin's suggestions for augmentation of Sedgwick's work because I am also interested in what my own aporia—whether to anticipate an as-yet-unknown subject or to preempt such a subject—leaves out or covers over.

In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Sedgwick was concerned with the “immanence of men's same sex bonds, and their prohibitive structuration” to relationships between men and women in nineteenth century English literature. This account was meant to characterize a historical period preceding that of the 20th century discussed in *Epistemology of the Closet*. The latter is concerned with “a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century.”⁵³⁰ Thus the two should be read together as they are connected in their concern for the repercussions of the dynamics of male homosocial desire for women in particular:

the emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality was in an intimate and shifting relationship to class; and that no element of that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole.⁵³¹

This account builds on Gayle Rubin's rewriting of “Levi-Strauss's celebratory treatment of this relegation of women” to the role of “‘conduit of a relationship’ in which the true partner is a man [original emphasis].” Instead, Sedgwick follows Rubin in offering “an

⁵²⁹ I find Martin's criticism of Sedgwick to be helpful insofar as Sedgwick admits that she tends to “privilege ... universalizing over minoritizing, and gender-transitive over gender-separatist understandings of sexual choice... (13).” But my argument in this chapter relies on a reading of Sedgwick's Axiom Five as pervasive: “The historical search for a Great Paradigm Shift may obscure the present conditions of sexual identity.” That is to say that Sedgwick ultimately refuses to take any one paradigm over any one other; ambiguity is to be cherished insofar as it characterizes “present conditions.” Indeed, “the space of permission for this work and the depth of the intellectual landscape in which it might have a contribution to make owe everything to the wealth of essentialist, minoritizing, and separatist gay thought and struggle also in progress” Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*., 13.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵³¹ *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 1.

array of tools for specifying and analyzing” male homosocial desire and its relationships to the asymmetrical power relationships among women and men.

If *Between Men* has particular affinity with Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women,” then it might also be said that Epistemology has affinity with Rubin’s later “Thinking Sex” in that both bring feminist insights to bear on a dearth of sexuality theory and a cultural and feminist resistance to such theory. In fact although Sedgwick has repeatedly identified her work as feminist,⁵³² she understands this work to have a complicated relationship to feminist theory. She maintains the interest alluded to above in a non-reducible however inseparable relationship between theories of gender and sexuality. *Epistemology of the Closet*, being an extension of arguments presented in *Between Men*, is not surprisingly described by Sedgwick as a “feminist book.”⁵³³ Sedgwick says that this is the case “mainly in the sense that its analyses were produced by someone whose thought has been macroscopically and microscopically infused with feminism over a long period.”⁵³⁴ In *Between Men* Sedgwick agreed with Gayle Rubin, “The suppression of the [male] homosexual component of human sexuality, and by corollary, the oppression of [male] homosexuals, is... a product of the same system whose rules and relations oppress women.”⁵³⁵ Thus systems of homophobia and misogyny are intimately related, but Sedgwick takes *Epistemology of the Closet* to be centered on theorizing sexuality in a way that does not reduce sexuality to gender. She insists that wherever “a distinctively feminist (i.e., gender-centered) and a distinctively antihomophobic (i.e., sexuality-

⁵³² See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Tide and Trust” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Summer 1989), 745-757; *Between Men*, 19-20.

⁵³³ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*., 15.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵³⁵ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Raymond Danowski, and Raymond Danowski Poetry Library (Emory University. General Libraries), *Between Men : English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, Gender and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)., 3.

centered) inquiry”⁵³⁶ diverge, she has attempted to stick to the latter in this text. Thus, while it is also the case that in several instances, Sedgwick introduces moments in the text by making connections between feminist theoretical concerns and those of antihomophobic theory, such as the revaluation of what she denotes as sentimentality,⁵³⁷ I must leave it as an open question how one might characterize the complex relationship of the text to feminist theory. This will of course have everything to do with how one defines feminist theory, and it is germane to my interests here that no such monolithic definition can possibly do. Instead I am more interested here in the fluctuating status of the name women that the text projects.

It is the question of the status of *Epistemology of the Closet* as a feminist text, not the settling on some answer to this question, that has significance for the purposes of my larger project. The status of the book as feminist would seem to be a function of the salience of the name women in it. Sedgwick’s minoritizing/universalizing impasse and impasse of gender definition, constituting a “crisis of homo/heterosexual definition,” have been much discussed for their implications for the stability or stabilizability of theories of gender and sexuality,⁵³⁸ for their relationship to the trope of the closet which disregards, “other possible epistemic categories or tropes of spatialization that may exist outside, or indeed within, a Euro-American context,”⁵³⁹ for their polarizing of gender and sexuality as categories of analysis. My interest in this much-discussed work is the tropes of gender whose incompatibility make any strong stand on the coherence or incoherence of the name women impossible for Sedgwick. Sedgwick’s discussion of the impasse

⁵³⁶ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 15.

⁵³⁷ Ibid. 110, 114.

⁵³⁸ Deutscher, *Yielding Gender : Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy*.

⁵³⁹ Gopinath, “Homo-Economics: Queer Sexualities in a Transnational Frame.”, 103.

conveys the impossibility of a queer subject and articulates the contours of the perennial question of whether or not the name women may be given content. Sedgwick makes this point, and in doing so, labels the point feminist “(i.e., gender-centered.)” In other words, ostensibly the impasse reflects on a name women whose visibility in the text waxes and wanes, is alternately significant and insignificant, and that ostensibly renders the question of the subject of feminist theory likewise intriguing.

But because *Epistemology of the Closet* does constitute a contribution to feminist and gender inquiry on the whole, I mean to suggest that this renders the waxing and waning of the name women in the text interesting. If the text constitutes a contribution to gender theory and that this is ostensibly feminist terrain on Sedgwick’s account, one has to wonder whether what is being posited is not a dissolution of feminism or a “post-feminism” but instead both the possibility of a subjectivity of feminist theory without the name women, and at other times, a queer feminist subject which takes heightened part in the dialectical salience of the name women. The name women on offer here is crucially unstable, and this instability is what Sedgwick calls an impasse of gender definition of queer gender. My claim is that all moments of this waxing and waning are germane to feminist theory; the queer and the feminist in Sedgwick are not delineable.

Two Impasses of Homo-Heterosexual Definition

Sedgwick identifies the minoritizing/universalizing impasse and the impasse of gender definition as preventing monolithic definitions pertaining to what is actually the “space of overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual definitional forces.” But the appreciation of impasse itself as a strategy for the dislocation of “discursive and institutional common sense” homophobia is a central theme of *Epistemology of the*

Closet. Monolithic definitions ignore vast diversities of sexualities and genders, which repeatedly subvert either universalizing or minoritizing definitions.⁵⁴⁰ Appreciation of impasse itself will in this sense become an important aspect of queer theory for Sedgwick insofar as impasse is evocative of the resistance to categorization and identity which queer connotes.⁵⁴¹

The *minoritizing/universalizing impasse* is one between two narratives pertaining to social and political locations of same-sex desire. For Sedgwick, these narratives provide strictly contradictory definitions of hetero/homo- interlocking sexualities, however numerous have been the attempts to adjudicate between these views of sexual identity definition. Despite such attempts, there remains the “absolute hold of this yoking of [two] contradictory views on modern discourse.”⁵⁴² First, that same-sex desire is a minority experience shared by persons. Second, that universally “sexual desire [as] an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones.”⁵⁴³

Most moderately to well-educated Western people in this century seem to share a similar understanding of homosexual definition, independent of whether they themselves are gay or straight, homophobic or antihomophobic. That understanding is close to what Proust’s probably was, what for that matter mine is and probably yours.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 22. In this Axiom 1 entitled “People are different from each other,” Sedgwick remarks, “It is astonishing how few respectable conceptual tools we have for dealing with this self-evident fact.” Adorno’s understanding of the concept discussed in Chapter Two suggests that this is not happenstance. On this point in particular, Sedgwick takes difference as axiomatic rather than interrogating the conditions under which such a “self-evident” axiom betrays “no conceptual tools.” Adorno’s critique of the concept is thus consistent with Sedgwick’s interests, but it would seem that no thoroughgoing comparison is possible regarding their treatments of the possibility for thinking the negative/nonidentical of the concept.

⁵⁴¹ Eve Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8-9.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 86.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 85.

Sedgwick's interest is in the degree of confusion that these definitions betray despite the apparently widespread obliviousness to the confusion. It seems to be the case both that on the one hand, there is a "distinct population of persons who 'really are' gay"⁵⁴⁴ and on the other, that universally individuals, in their overall experience of sexual desire, cannot be unilaterally and discretely labeled either hetero- or homosexual, that the experience of same-sex desire in particular is a potential experience of all and that as a result there is no consistently cordon-able minority in this respect.⁵⁴⁵ Instead, the universalizing narrative takes individual acts as more salient than overall sexual categorizations of persons; however the universalizing narrative also emphasizes the potentially resistant character of discrete sexual acts to assimilation with other acts performed by one person. Thus under the universalizing understanding of homo/heterosexual definition, the very idea of homosexual or heterosexual as a unified identity is questionable.

This "potent incoherence"⁵⁴⁶ can be seen in much-discussed legal rulings *Bowers v. Hardwick* and *Sergeant Perry J. Watkins v. United States Army*. In *Bowers v. Hardwick*,⁵⁴⁷ the Supreme Court ruled that it should be the prerogative of individual states to define any *acts in particular* as "sodomy" on the part of the individual and despite any rights, privacy or otherwise, defended by the Constitution. However, shortly after this, in *Sergeant Perry J. Watkins v. United States Army*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that homosexual *persons qua persons* are in fact entitled to legal protections under the Equal Protection clause. The dissonance is between a

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁴⁵ For Sedgwick, these narratives may be mobilized for homophobic as well as antihomophobic motivations. See especially 10, 83-84.

⁵⁴⁶ These are Sedgwick's words; however, for example, Penelope Deutscher argues more strongly that incoherence such as this is productively ambiguous and actually stabilizes phallocentrism. *Yielding Gender* Deutscher, *Yielding Gender : Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy*.

⁵⁴⁷ 478 US 186 (1986).

“universalizing discourse of acts and a minoritizing discourse of persons,” in which “at least within the discourse of the law, the former of these prohibits what the latter of them protects.” These decisions represent opposing interpretations of same sex desire that cannot be made consistent with each other without losing some important aspect of one or the other dynamic.

This minoritizing/universalizing impasse informs a related *impasse of gender definition*, that between two contradictory “tropes of gender definition”: the trope of inversion and the trope of gender separatism. If the minoritizing/universalizing impasse suggests contradictory narratives regarding sexualities, these tropes express contradictory narratives regarding the incongruent ways in which sexualities relate to genders through which same-sex desire may be understood,⁵⁴⁸ resulting in a grid:

	Separatist:	Integrative:
Homo/hetero <i>sexual</i> definition:	<i>Minoritizing</i> , e.g., gay identity, “essentialist,” third-sex models, civil rights models	<i>Universalizing</i> , e.g., bisexual potential, “social constructionist,” “sodomy” models, “lesbian continuum”
<i>Gender</i> definition:	<i>Gender separatist</i> , e.g., homosocial continuum, lesbian separatist, gay/manhood-initiation models, lesbian solidarity models	<i>Inversion/liminality/transitivity</i> , e.g., cross-sex, androgyny

The trope of inversion has it that desire “by definition subsists in the current that runs between one male self and one female self, in whatever sex of bodies these selves may be manifested.”⁵⁴⁹ The trope of inversion suggests that sexual desire specifically

⁵⁴⁸ Although I take it that any definition of “same-sex desire” will have implications for “cross-sex desire” on Sedgwick’s own account.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

transgresses “the boundaries of gender”;⁵⁵⁰ sexual desire reaches “across” genders to pair “true”, “inner”⁵⁵¹ female/male gender-pairings, heterogender. It is on the basis of this reading of the trope of inversion that Sedgwick understands it to preserve an “essential heterosexuality within desire itself,” insofar as it is only “cross genders” that are desired. This trope of gender inversion is held together not only by an understanding of gender which is binary and discrete, but also by a notion of gender which is tied to notions of the “feminine” and “masculine” as characteristic of bodies which can be either male or female.⁵⁵²

This trope of inversion, however, is reduced to a “choreography of breathless farce” with “the broadening of view to include any larger circuit of desire.”⁵⁵³ Thus ultimately the trope of inversion is characterized by “dizzying instability” in that the discrete meanings of such categories as male/female, man/woman, butch/femme, gay/lesbian become difficult to trace. However, Sedgwick holds that this instability has in fact become a “token of value.” It is precisely its nonsense that makes the expression of “genderfuck” powerful:

At the 1992 gay pride parade in New York City.... Most of the people wearing the version with the osculating male sailors, on the other hand, were lesbians. FAGGOT and BIG FAG were the T-shirt

⁵⁵⁰ It is claims of this sort that have Bidy Martin read Sedgwick as ironically reifying gendered categories which then can be “crossed.” The question is what the relationship between passing and crossing would be for Sedgwick. It seems to me that for Sedgwick something very similar if not the same is meant by these; for Martin, this is not the case. If I’m right, why doesn’t Sedgwick consider ‘passing’?

⁵⁵¹ And here is precisely where Butler’s criticism of sex as itself gendered appears blatantly appropriate. Sedgwick takes for granted in this text the pre-discursivity of sex; still, the very malleability, in fact the “dizzying instability” of the gender inversion model reveals the text’s struggle with this classic distinction.

⁵⁵² Here is where queer theory may be seen as inconsistent with the Intersexual Movement, which refuses to erase the numerous people whose anatomy is neither female nor male and hopes to bring attention to the folly of understanding “female” and “male” as picking out discrete sets of properties that correspond to “females” and “males.” Where queer theory rejects strong identity claims and any ostensible epistemological privilege of those claims, with particular respect to sexuality, the Intersex Movement rejects strong identity claims with respect to biological sex and does so in such a way that calls into question the bounds (male/female) that make queer rejections of transitivity possible. See Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004) , 4-9.

⁵⁵³ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet.*, 87.

legends self-applied by many, many women; DYKE and the more topical LICK BUSH by many, many men. ... And everywhere at the march, on women and on men, there were T-shirts that said simply: QUEER.⁵⁵⁴

Thus Sedgwick characterizes the trope of inversion as ultimately exceeding the historical notion of ‘inversion’ itself insofar as it is not so much in inverting but rather in overwhelming the coherence of the dialectics of masculine/feminine that this trope consists. By questioning these dialectics which are presumed to exist between masculine and feminine bodies which do not line up with man/woman, butch/femme, he/she, desire under the trope of inversion places the queer as only liminally or peripherally connected to either the group women or the group men, the heterosexual being at the definitional center of these groups. This particular location of same-sex desire at the margins of heterogender can be compared with the location of same-sex desire at the center of the group women under the trope of separatism as discussed below.

In the space of the inversion trope, it is difficult to say what the name women means—and it may be that the name women used in this space is given variable meaning depending on context.⁵⁵⁵ The trope of inversion thus blurs the line between men and women, making it impossible to formulate a monolithic group women if that name must be a function of one’s desire and identification and the degree to which these are

⁵⁵⁴ Sedgwick, *Tendencies.*, xi.

⁵⁵⁵ For example, Fausto-Sterling, whose work has lent biological scholarship to the contemporary intersex rights movement, ends an article with the following: “Sometimes people suggest to me, with not a little horror, that I am arguing for a pastel world in which androgyny reigns and men and women are boringly the same. In my vision, however, strong colors coexist with pastels. There are and will continue to be highly masculine people out there; it’s just that some of them are women. And some of the most feminine people I know happen to be men” “The Five Sexes, Revisited,” 24. In the final sentences, what do the words “women” and “men” connote? It is not clear, but perhaps in this context, men and women are identified by what has been called “biological sex.” However, in other contexts in the same article, the same words men and women refer to groups divided differently—according to “emotional gender.” Here I am repeating an old theme in feminist theory—the constant shift of “female” and “women” as terms. I am in full support of the fluidity that Fausto-Sterling invisions; but to note this fluidity as fluidity *is* to support it.

mutually opposed. This may also be seen as in part a restatement of the claim made numerous elsewhere that lesbians, with respect to a *given* name women, are in fact not women,⁵⁵⁶ because their sexuality places them outside of cultural expectations for Woman. It is perhaps as a rejection of this zero sum game that Sedgwick suggests,

a hypothesis worth making explicit: that there are important senses in which ‘queer’ can signify only *when attached to the first person*. One possible corollary: that what it takes—all it takes—to make the description ‘queer’ a true one is the impulsion *to use it in the first person*.⁵⁵⁷

As opposed to gay or lesbian which “still present themselves (however delusively) as objective, empirical categories governed by empirical rules of evidence (however contested),” queer preempts such supposed categories. To “be” queer is to reject categories of identification such as woman and lesbian through cross-identifications which confuse the very gesture of “crossing.” And yet Sedgwick argues that it is as a crossing (here, of “identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses” race and ethnicity) that the shifting “*gravitas*, the meaning” of queer emerges.

For Bidy Martin, this attention to the “cross-identifications” draws the limits of feminist theory around the gay-male identified lesbian, it associates this particular lesbian with sexuality, the “lesbian-feminist with gender identification, and makes the femme lesbian completely invisible.”⁵⁵⁸ In so doing, “the irrepressible, relatively class-nonspecific popular culture in which James Dean has been as numinous an icon for

⁵⁵⁶ The more famous of these have been Havelock Ellis, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Monique Wittig, Cheshire Calhoun. See Havelock Ellis, John Addington Symonds, and Ivan Crozier, *Sexual Inversion : A Critical Edition* (Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)., R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis; a Medico-Forensic Study*, 1st unexpurgated ed. (New York: Putnam, 1965)., Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. and Cheshire Calhoun, “Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory,” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁵⁵⁷ Sedgwick, *Tendencies.*, 9.

⁵⁵⁸ Martin, “Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias.”, 108.

lesbians as Garbo or Dietrich has for gay men seems resistant to a purely feminist theorization.” Here Martin’s concern is that the trope of inversion, as we will see for the trope of separatism, is too limited in its understanding of differences of gender and sexuality.

Martin’s point is well-taken. But I want to add it to the reasons why I turn to Sedgwick in the first place. I am interested in the problematic or the question of the relation between two questions: the question of the trope of inversion and the question of the trope of separatism (below.) When I say the question of the trope I mean to ask about its possibilities, its problems, its horizons and limitations. As we saw in Beauvoir, there are two directions expanding in this work, and I am interested in asking about their possibilities as well as the conflicts between them, the latter of which are especially not appreciated in either Beauvoir or Sedgwick. These conflicts, the inability in Sedgwick’s terms of the tropes of gender merely to potentially coexist, are in my view better characterized as pointing to aporia at the heart of feminist subjectivity.

Anne Fausto-Sterling, writing of intersex not only as an embattled public, but also as an underappreciated aspect of what it is to be gendered, asks

Who is an intersexual--and how many intersexuals are there? The concept of intersexuality is rooted in the very ideas of male and female. In the idealized, Platonic, biological world, human beings are divided into two kinds: a perfectly dimorphic species. Males have an X and a Y chromosome, testes, a penis and all of the appropriate internal plumbing for delivering urine and semen to the outside world. They also have well-known secondary sexual characteristics, including a muscular build and facial hair. Women have two X chromosomes, ovaries, all of the internal plumbing to transport urine and ova to the outside world, a system to support pregnancy and fetal development, as well as a variety of recognizable secondary sexual characteristics.

That idealized story papers over many obvious caveats: some women have facial hair, some men have none; some women speak with deep voices, some men veritably squeak. Less well known is the fact that, on close inspection, absolute dimorphism disintegrates even at the level of basic biology. Chromosomes, hormones, the internal sex structures, the gonads and the external genitalia all vary more than most people realize. Those born outside of the Platonic dimorphic mold are called intersexuals.

I make this jump from discussing the question of the trope of inversion, of the boundaries for who counts as a woman to discussing widespread intersexuality as a way of asking about the ways in which gendered/sexed differentiation, which are inseparable from interpretations of sexuality, are irreducible. The boundaries that such dialectics as male/female entail, which prefigure the very definitional violence of the label “intersex,” on which the inversion trope as metaphor builds, cover over such differentiation. Given the differentiation that gender interprets, what should the question be—perhaps even the feminist question—in response to the “boundaries” of the group women as projected by the trope of inversion? It should not be the question, when a particular X does not meet the usual expectations for a category member X, how shall that scientist/parent/person on the street best categorize the deficiency of this particular X that this particular X IS? Does this not involve the blatant presupposition that all possible Xs should look like some ideal X? As Esther Morris puts it, “People don’t fail to meet the definition of normal gender, but the confines of the definitions fail to meet the people.”⁵⁵⁹ Shouldn’t the question instead be: what *is* after all the value of the categorization scheme to which a particular culture readily returns? This question is directed at the dubiousness of binary heterogender and thus the name woman/women/she as one which is frequently imposed upon an actually dramatically diverse group of persons, many of whom will be unwilling to identify with current social and biological expectations to which must always be added the most naïve notion of heterosexuality. This is of course not yet to mention the multi-dimensional expectations for women in the social dimensions of race, ethnicity, ability/disability. These expectations inform a name woman/women/she to which globally a very few people indeed actually want or can be made to relate. It is this set of

⁵⁵⁹< <http://mrkhorg.homestead.com/files/ORG/AdditionalMonologue.htm>> Accessed August 6, 2008.

expectations that I read Sedgwick, in the second epigraph, to be lamenting *in a feminist voice*; likewise Axiom 1: People are different from each other.⁵⁶⁰ But, again, Martin's caveat should be added: Sedgwick seems to edge toward marking her own limits for feminist inquiry.

Where can femme, butch, queer of color sexuality possibly appear?⁵⁶¹ Martin worries about Sedgwick's analogy of homosexual coming out to the "affirmation of identities based on race."⁵⁶² Racism unlike homophobia for Sedgwick is "based on a stigma that is visible in all but exceptional cases" which "(...are neither rare nor irrelevant, but that delineate the outlines rather than coloring the center of racial experience); so are the oppressions based on gender, age, size, physical handicap."⁵⁶³ Thus for Sedgwick race is "readily knowable, readable."⁵⁶⁴ Martin's worry is with

the ways in which these kinds of formulations project fixity onto race and gender, which then become too immediate as identifications to allow any play unless one makes cross-identifications with, say, a James Dean, or a person of color can pass as white, a passing that is, of course, a crossing. Racial passing, which is a crossing, and gender crossing, which may well operate as a passing (as a man) are required in this scheme in order to make visible any distance from what is otherwise the ground for differentiated figures. Such crossings have the potential to destabilize and collapse problematic boundaries. But we have to be wary of the tendency to make sexuality the means of crossing, and to make gender and race into grounds so indicatively fixed that masculine [as well as white/presumed aracial] positions become the emblem again of mobility. Men do not seem gendered and whites are not racialized in accounts that make these issues too distinct.

I quote Martin at length because I want her excellent critique of Sedgwick to figure into my work as internal critique, of Sedgwick as well as of critique of my own project. But more: I want Martin's work here to figure as critique—as in fact sympathetic with Sedgwick's aims (as Martin is) and yet wary of the limitations of feminist subjectivity,

⁵⁶⁰ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 22.

⁵⁶¹ Evelyn Hammonds, "Black (W)Holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," in *Feminist Meets Queer Theory*, ed. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

⁵⁶² Martin, "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias," 110.

⁵⁶³ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 75.

⁵⁶⁴ Martin, "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias."

even in the terms in which I have sought to explore it. I am interested in the questions that only belatedly or cannot appear as well as the ones that readily appear. Such questions that only belatedly or cannot appear are the locus of the work of Gayatri Gopinath who argues that Ismat Chughtai's short story "The Quilt" challenges Sedgwick's assertion that "the closet is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century" by arguing, "Chughtai's text puts forth a particular conceptualization of female homoerotic pleasure that exceeds and escapes existing theorizations of 'lesbian' subjectivity."⁵⁶⁵ Gopinath's feminist queer theory spells out the ways in which Sedgwick's is an example of feminist, antiracist theory which inadvertently makes use of "colonial strategies of subjectification"⁵⁶⁶ in its insistence on the closet as universal structure.

What are the implications of feminist queer theory for feminist subjectivity which would take the name women, its implied whiteness, heterosexuality, economic privilege for granted? What are the implications of these concerns of Gopinath and Martin with the way in which Sedgwick articulates the queer? Before attempting to answer these questions through interpretation of the work of Sedgwick, discussion of the trope of gender separatism is necessary.

The trope of gender separatism on Sedgwick's account assimilates identification and desire, seeing sexual desire for members of one's perceived "same" group as picking out those who are most identifiable with that group. The trope of transitive gender divorced identification and sexual desire, in fact presupposed their partition. On the other

⁵⁶⁵ Gopinath, "Homo-Economics: Queer Sexualities in a Transnational Frame."

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 103. See also Eng, Halberstam, and Munoz, "Introduction: What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?," Judith Halberstam, "Shame and White Gay Masculinity" *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005).

hand, the trope of separatism has it that sexual desire in exactly the same situation is instead an attraction to “sameness.” Thus under the trope of separatism same-sex desire is identification by definition, and it forms a center of the name women in this text.

Gender-separatist models would thus place the woman-loving women and the man-loving man each at the “natural” *defining center of their own gender*, again in contrast to inversion models that locate gay people—whether biologically or culturally—at the threshold between genders [my own emphasis].⁵⁶⁷

Thus the trope of gender separatism divides women and men into two groups, with centers constituted by same sex desire. Sedgwick cites as an illustration Adrienne Rich’s famous lesbian continuum, which offers a meaning of the name women centering on the “woman-identified-woman.” Instead of liminality or transitivity between genders, the trope of gender separatism sees same sex desire as “reflecting an impulse of separatism—though by no means necessarily political separatism—within each gender.” It is in the terms of the trope of gender separatism, then, that Sedgwick understands the “stunningly efficacious coup of feminist redefinition to transform lesbianism,⁵⁶⁸ in a predominant view [the trope of inversion], from a matter of female virilization to one of woman-identification.”⁵⁶⁹ Thus in the terms of the trope of separatism, same sex desire between women becomes a testament to identification with women. Under the trope of gender separatism, far from liminalizing or disqualifying one for membership in the group women, same sex desire would instead seem to be in a “stunningly efficacious re-
visioning”⁵⁷⁰ a qualifying component of her claim to identification with the name

⁵⁶⁷ *Epistemology of the Closet*, 88.

⁵⁶⁸ See Cheshire Calhoun’s essay in *Feminist Theory Reader*. Sedgwick cites Radicalesbians, “The Woman Identified Woman,” reprinted in Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, eds. *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), 240-245; and Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality.”

⁵⁶⁹ *Epistemology of the Closet*, 84.

⁵⁷⁰ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 36.

women. This is entirely incompatible with the reading of the name women under the trope of transitive gender.

Here again I want to add a consideration of Bidy Martin's concerns. For Martin, the trope of separatism leaves out as much as the trope of inversion did. Neither one provides for the diversity of genders and sexualities. In the case of the trope of gender separatism, following Joan Nestle and Amber Hollibaugh, Martin criticizes the lesbian continuum for being "as repressive of femmeness as it is of cross-gender identifications."⁵⁷¹ Gayle Rubin expresses similar concerns in an interview with Judith Butler.⁵⁷²

I did not like the way in which lesbians motivated by lust, or lesbians who were invested in butch/femme roles, were treated as inferior residents of the lesbian continuum, while some women who never had sexual desire for women were granted more elevated status. This narrative and its prejudices were expressed in the title of the Nancy Sahli article, which was called "Smashing: Women's Relationships Before the Fall."⁵⁷³ It is highly developed in Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men*.⁵⁷⁴ Caroll Smith-Rosenberg's original 1975 essay⁵⁷⁵ deliberately blurred some of the distinctions between categories of lesbianism as a sexual status and other types of female intimacy, but she refrained from using romantic friendship as the standard by which lesbianism should be measured.

...

Butler: But then Rich's notion of the continuum, I take it you...

Rubin: Rich's piece shares many of the same elements and assumptions that turn up in the historical work [in lesbian historiography]. I was not opposed to historical research on these relationships but thought it was a mistake to privilege them in defining the category of "lesbian" either historically or in a contemporary context, and to judge other forms of lesbianism as wanting, degraded, or inferior.

Rubin's concern with what Sedgwick terms the trope of separatism is that far from

⁵⁷¹ Martin, "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias.", 108. For criticism of the lesbian continuum, see Calhoun, "Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory.", Amber L. Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home, Series Q*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), Kauffman, *American Feminist Thought at Century's End: A Reader*, Joan Nestle, *A Restricted Country* (Ithaca: Firebrand, 1990), Joan Nestle, ed., *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (Boston: Alyson, 1991).

⁵⁷² Rubin and Butler, "Sexual Traffic. Interview."

⁵⁷³ Nancy Sahli, "Smashing: Women's Relationships before the Fall," *Chrysalis* 8 (1979).

⁵⁷⁴ Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, 1st Perennial ed. (New York: Perennial, 2001).

⁵⁷⁵ Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975).

centering the lesbian and queer, it displaces “sexual preference with a form of gender solidarity” that supposedly took shape in “romantic friendship” in which the nonlesbian is indistinguishable from the lesbian and the queer. Instead the lesbian and the queer who/which are themselves erased insofar as they “stand in” for the whole domain of female friendship. In fact, “from reading *Surpassing the Love of Men*, you might conclude that ‘mannish lesbians’ were concocted by sexologists as a plot to discredit romantic friendship.”⁵⁷⁶ Thus for Martin and Rubin, the trope of separatism expressed by the lesbian continuum creates a group women by means of both erasure of same sex desire and the analogy of same sex desire with social affinity. For Martin, this failure of the trope of separatism to appreciate the complexity of gendered expression is matched by the transitive trope.

Definitions of female same-sex desire, then, are more complex than Sedgwick’s helpful delineation of the two most common ways of configuring the relationship between gender and homosexual object choice, namely, that same-sex desire is indicative of cross-gender identification, on the one hand, and that it may occupy ‘the very definitional center of each gender’ on the other. Adding butchness and femeness to the equations that Sedgwick has formulated and explained multiplies the terms of these possible equations. Sedgwick gives sexuality the capacity to collapse conventional gender definitions and distinctions; I would multiply the permutations of gender with sexual aims, objects and practices instead, so that identifications and desires that cross traditional boundaries do not efface the complexities of gender identities and expressions.

Martin’s worry in both cases is not only the loss of differentiation within these tropes, but also the invisibility and degradation of femininity. Under the trope of transitive gender, Sedgwick’s own cross-identification with gay men obscures the femininity which cross-identifies. Under the trope of gender separatism, the in effect homogenization of women takes same-sex desire as both the meaning and background of the social affinity of the

⁵⁷⁶ Rubin and Butler, “Sexual Traffic. *Interview.*”, 82. Calhoun, “Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory.”

group. Thus the impasse which Martin herself dubs helpful does not in fact locate a “subject” (woman) in the trope of separatism— it in fact marginalizes “women” (in quotes because this is precisely what is at issue) as readily as does the trope of transitory gender. This critique shows up under a feminist queer reading of this feminist queer theory.

Sedgwick also explains that this impasse of gender definition and the previously discussed minoritizing/universalizing impasse impact each other. Each of the four sections tends to correspond to another. Gender-separatist models of gender definition tend to cooperate with universalizing definitions of homo/heterosexuality, for example in terms of Rich’s continuum.⁵⁷⁷ In that gender-separatism by definition unites along gendered lines, universalizing definitions of homo/heterosexuality support a universalizing notion of the potential for same-sex desire among members of that gendered group. Gender-transitive models tend to coincide with minoritizing definitions which take the minoritized few to exist on the transitional margins of gendered groups.

However, in addition to these alliances between the impasses of gender and homo/heterosexual definition, the universalizing and minoritizing impasse gains momentum in the lack of monolithic gender definition, and the reverse is true as well. After all, it is in Sedgwick’s reading of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, precisely because of the “homosexuality *dispersed in the vicinity* of Albertine,” rather than the “homosexuality *attached to the figure* of [M. de] Charlus [emphasis mine],” the reading of Albertine along universalizing lines, which propels invasive speculation over her

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 89.

“true” gender definition.⁵⁷⁸ Sedgwick sees the perpetuation of debate over Albertine’s gender as motivated by inconsistencies in the text that suggest the universalizing trope. This presentation of Albertine’s sexuality is incompatible with that of M. de Charlus, the presentation of whose sexuality suggests for Sedgwick the minoritizing trope. Thus when “the chalky rag of gender [is] pulled across the blackboard of sexuality, the chalky rag of sexuality across the blackboard of gender,”⁵⁷⁹ it is Albertine whose gender is contested with the most energy. For some readers, the Albertine plot may be read as “utopian” because of this indeterminacy. However, Sedgwick reads this plot as neither utopian nor comparable to that of Charlus. Albertine is instead both a casualty and an instigator of male homosexual panic, a figure whose appearance is both a consequence and unwitting source of male homosocial desire seeking to squelch itself. Albertine represents then for Sedgwick the intractability of indeterminate gender and sexuality; Albertine is both a product and an agent of the impasses of gender and sexuality definitions available in 20th century Western culture.

Tropes of Gender and the Contested Name Women

What is interesting to me about Sedgwick’s attention to the trope of transitive gender is her unwillingness to count this trope as monolithic, as a new alternative to the older trope of separatism, which was the “lesbian interpretive framework most readily available at the time this project began... the separatist-feminist one that emerged from the 1970s.”⁵⁸⁰ In comparison to the trope of transitivity with its diffusion of the name women Sedgwick describes the trope of gender separatism as having equal

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 239.

⁵⁸⁰ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 36.

representational potential. She refuses to take either the trope of transitive gender or separatism over the other. Instead, she assumes a non-stance which advocates

a multi-pronged movement whose idealist and materialist impulses, whose minority-model and universalist-model strategies, and ... whose gender-separatist and gender-integrative analyses would likewise proceed in parallel without any high premium placed on ideological rationalization between them. In effect this is how the gay movements of this century have actually been structured, if not how they have often been perceived or evaluated. The breadth and fullness of the political gestalt of gay-affirmative struggle give a powerful resonance to the voice of each of its constituencies. The cost in ideological rigor, though high indeed, is very simply inevitable: this is not a conceptual landscape in which ideological rigor across levels, across constituencies is at all possible, be it ever so desirable.⁵⁸¹

Sedgwick is primarily speaking here of the history of antihomophobic political struggle, to which she understands the irreducibility of the competing “gender-separatist and gender-integrative analyses” to be complexly related. Gender separatism and gender transitivity as tropes within a larger antihomophobic movement have incompatible understandings of the relationships between individuals within that larger group. A multi-pronged movement gives “a powerful resonance to the voice of each of its constituencies”; the incompatibility of narratives for Sedgwick translates into a rich resonance that is more vibrant than one unifiable narrative alone.

Nevertheless, and germane to my interests here, Sedgwick does express dissatisfaction with this ambiguous stance. She claims to take no stance absolutely, but she admits an inclination toward the universalizing and gender-transitive narratives (even though these do not tend to go together in her own reading of them). She admits to a privileging in her own thought “of constructivist over essentialist, universalizing over minoritizing, and gender-transitive over gender-separatist understandings of sexual

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 13.

choice....”⁵⁸² But ultimately for Sedgwick, this intractability of indeterminate gender and sexuality applies generally to 19th and 20th century Western culture:

I have no optimism at all about the availability of a standpoint of thought from which either question⁵⁸³ could be intelligibly, never mind efficaciously adjudicated, given that the same yoking of contradictions has presided over all the thought on the subject, and all its violent and pregnant modern history, that has gone to form our own thought. Instead, the more pressing project would seem to be a study of the incoherent dispensation itself, the indis severable girdle of incongruities under whose discomfiting span, for most of a century, have unfolded both the most generative and the most murderous plots of our culture.⁵⁸⁴

The undecideability of the status of heterogender, specifically of women, is of course only one undecideability being addressed. It is for Sedgwick only one strand in a tangle of ambiguities pertaining to interpretations of gender and sexuality that are only anchored by the purchase of moments (lesbian, women) and identities (lesbian, woman) in diverse contexts. The purchase of these names, equally generative and murderous, cannot be denied or risk denying the generative and being naïve to the murderous. For Sedgwick gender is an irreducible impasse that informs “our own thought;” to miss the impasse, to choose one moment over the other, would be to miss resources of either the transitive or separatist tropes. For Martin as to some extent for Gopinath, Sedgwick’s vision excludes those marked by feminine gender or race or class rather than allows for a genuine plurality of voices; race, ethnicity, geography, class—these are in different ways erased by the impasse of gender which takes the trope of separatism and the trope of liminality as the primary disagreement constituting queer (in the sense of antihomophobic) gender. In my view Martin’s criticism is analogous with Huntington’s concern about the dyadic

⁵⁸² Ibid., 13.

⁵⁸³ This passage refers to the impasse of gender definition and the “minoritizing/universalizing impasse” to which the former relates, discussed above. Again, the minoritizing/universalizing impasse is that between the narrative of same-sex desire as a minority experience and the competing narrative of “sexual desire [as] an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice versa for apparently homosexual ones....” Ibid., 90.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 90.

structure of sexual difference discussed in the previous chapter. For this reason, I wonder whether it is not impasse but a lack of position that marks Sedgwick's interpretation of gender—in fact a interpretation on Martin's account that erases the femme lesbian, on Gopinath's account that erases alternatives to the closet as universal trope, in the effort to articulate the salience of the impasse of gender. In fact this impasse suggests that neither interpretation is adequate for itself, and that together they exclude relevant critiques of this interpretation of queer gender. Feminist subjectivity here is torn between two options, each of which questions the viability of the other, both of which in Sedgwick erase race, ethnicity and class.

This questioning of the definition and limits of the name women is answered by the section of Sedgwick's hermeneutical grid in which the name women is least salient: the inversion/liminality/transitivity trope of gender definition. This section of the grid suggests that the name women holds little salience against the diversity of individuals, and this lack of salience is simultaneously provided for by the instability of the definition of the name given in the gender separatist trope. If the name women relies on a conflation of desire and identification or sameness for definition, then when under the trope of gender inversion sameness is obscured as a quality of gender definition, the name women becomes equally obscure, and the queer emerges not positively but as alterity. In the space of this narrative of gender definition, the salience of the name women diminishes when especially under the universalizing trope the population of the margins of this category is more numerous than any center could be. Further, I can't help but wonder why it is that same sex desire has tended to motivate more questions of the status of lesbians as women (either in maintenance of heteronormativity or by self-identified

lesbians themselves) and tends not to motivate questions as to the status of the name women. It is only temporarily if at all that the name women given by the hermeneutical grid—supposedly having same sex desire at its center— can be considered secure or definitive. The name women is in this sense contested—many definitions of women have been given, and many definitions of women have been implicitly or outright rejected—as false, as exclusionary, as reinforcing of harmful norms—displaying a wide variety of relationships to and understandings of the name women. Thus, as Beauvoir points out, there is every reason to believe that any definition of “women” will meet with disapproval by someone in a position to speak on the matter.

Still, Sedgwick in the above passage makes it clear that while she finds an ambiguous stance the only appropriate one, she does feel inclined to one moment in the contradiction rather than the other.⁵⁸⁵ Why, if Sedgwick makes it clear that she does favor one over the other, does she go to such lengths to argue that there can be for sexuality and gender no fact of the matter? I argue that the refusal to choose one trope or the other despite Sedgwick’s privileging of one moment over the other might be better understood by an appreciation of the in fact contradiction which the “impasse” approaches. Sedgwick engages two interpretations at once: on the one hand the dialectic of subject/object in which the feminine figures as negation or object which might yet

⁵⁸⁵ This refusal to respond definitively to the question of whether or not to interpret heterogender and women in a definitive manner while admitting to a privileging of the universalizing and gender-transitive tropes, is different from the stance towards these questions taken by Judith Butler. Butler, for whom the name women can be given no content that does not exclude or reinforce binary gender and heteronormativity, has in her later career admitted to the political need for advocating on the part of women, even though such advocacy cannot give content to the name when used. Therefore, while Sedgwick might be read as favoring the trope of transitive gender, it is also the case that Sedgwick’s states that in terms of what she calls “ideological rigor” there can be no definitive answer given.⁵⁸⁵ Butler argues differently that for the sake of ideological rigor (a phrase Butler would never use), content ought never to be given to the name women, even in ambiguity. Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Postmodernism,” in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds., *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Reprinted in Benhabib et al., *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*.

serve as a site of subjectivity, in which that dialectical relation might be questioned and on the other hand the nonidentical or alterity which such a dialectic denies. The apparent coexistence of the contradictory tropes of gender in Sedgwick might be compelling if it were not the non-position of the feminist “self.” But insofar as Antigone, one and the same figure, embodies this contradiction, must repeatedly answer to it, look to the aporetic for whatever confused answers she might wrestle, interpretive impasse is all too nonchalant a reading.

The salience of any dialectically negative name (lesbian, femme, women) and the inability to speak of a nonidentical or alterity (which Sedgwick gestures to with the queer) which would subvert the dialectic are mutually informative. This is not itself a dialectical relationship precisely because the alterity of the queer is not articulable against lesbian, but is instead opened up as a possibility in the interruption of the dialectic in which lesbian participates. For Adorno, the nonidentical cannot show itself except through dialectic played against itself. Thus, queer as gap, dissonance, lapse which is understood as possibility, “excess” of meaning.⁵⁸⁶ But queer in Sedgwick’s work also

can mean something different: a lot of the way I have used it so far in this dossier is to denote, almost simply, same-sex sexual object choice, lesbian or gay, whether or not it is organized around multiple criss-crossings of definitional lines. And given the historical and contemporary force of the prohibitions against every same-sex sexual expression, for anyone to disavow those meanings, or to displace them from the term’s definitional center, would be to dematerialize any possibility of queerness itself.

Thus the possibility of queerness is had in its *interference in* a dialectical relation that also brings to light “the historical and contemporary force of the prohibitions against every same-sex sexual expression.” At the time and place of this writing, the dialectical relation is the “context” of both prohibitions and powerful “crossings” which Sedgwick

⁵⁸⁶ Sedgwick, *Tendencies.*, 8.

struggles to articulate. (“I think everyone who does gay and lesbian studies is haunted by the suicides of adolescents.”⁵⁸⁷) Simply to deny either same-sex sexual expression as forbidden in some particular ways would be to re-enforce their prohibition; Sedgwick’s concern is that to speak of the queer in the negative terms of interruption and gap would be to “dematerialize any possibility of queerness itself.” This is an uncomfortable moment in the text as one realizes that to name a “crossing” as queer articulates it as both powerful and prohibited; the burden is placed yet again on the queer (the person or the act/ moment) to be the sign of rupture of the dialectic. That dialectic prefigures the queer; this is precisely the tragedy of Adorno’s insistence that that which is nonidentical can only “show itself” in the terms of the dialectic. But wouldn’t the goal of critique be *not* to read the rupture as rupture? Adorno can only gesture to the hope for the nonidentical to which negative dialectics attends. That the rupture or gap has its possibility of expression in the immanent critique of the dialectic, that the dialectic in spite of itself attests to the nonidentical, the negative dialectic can only point to these. But the feminist aporetic following negative dialectics points to the *valuing* of gaps and dissonance not as antagonistic but instead as speaking to the plurality of genders, sexualities, races, ethnicities already in existence among feminists. But again: in the way in which I have been pursuing it, this valuing appears in part through the granting of salience to the dialectic, which requires a not-yet staged contest between subjects

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., 1.

(masculine/feminine, man/woman, butch/femme, gay/lesbian—not yet staged as the second of each pair is as of yet the negative of the first) for expression. Again, this is at odds with feminist critique of the subject; the feminist questioning of the dialectic which enables subjectivity and the salience of such names. Gayle Rubin writes “Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender and Boundaries”⁵⁸⁸ in order to “diversify conceptions of butchness, to promote a more nuanced conceptualization of gender variation among lesbian and bisexual women, and to forestall prejudice against individuals who use other modes of managing gender.”⁵⁸⁹ In that essay, she worries that within the lesbian community there might be a resurgence of the sort of discrimination leading to the expelling of male-to-female (MtF) transsexual lesbians from the 1991 Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. Though discrimination against MTFs had subsided in her view at the time of publication in 1992,

The next debate over inclusion and exclusion will focus on female-to-male transsexuals.... Female-to-male transsexuals who are in, or in the process of leaving, lesbian communities are becoming the objects of controversy and posing new challenges to the ways in which lesbian communities handle diversity.⁵⁹⁰

Thus Rubin writes this essay in order to understand FtMs as part of a lesbian community

⁵⁸⁸ Nestle, ed., *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 476. Biddy Martin argues that in doing so, Rubin in effect offers a “gender dysphoric scale that ranges from some butches’ relative comfort with their female bodies to female-to-male transsexuals’ desire for a different anatomy.” And that “while the political purpose of such a continuum seems clear and compelling, to challenge the stigma attached to transsexualism, and while it is true that butch lesbians have been associated historically with gender dysphoria or gender dysfunction, I would suggest that making gender dysphoria or gender dysfunction too central to butchness constructs butchness in negativity....” Martin’s critique is well taken. But I have two comments. First, Rubin does not offer a continuum at all. She offers a valuing of diversity, with no graduated evaluation of community members. Rubin’s own trenchant critique of the lesbian continuum, on which Martin has similarly written, is crucial here. Second, Martin’s worry that the butch is defined negatively in Rubin’s work might be seen as an function of the way in which Rubin approaches gender dysphoria (which she is careful to argue is not perversion) through the rubric of butch and femme. In an effort to relate transsexuality to butch, Rubin ends up understanding transsexuality as similar to but not-but. Martin’s concern is important in the context of the themes I discuss below.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 475.

in which gender is more diverse than the label lesbian is taken to allow. She argues that categories such as lesbian

are important. We cannot organize a social life, a political movement, or our individual identities and desires without them. The fact that categories invariably leak and can never contain all the relevant “existing things” [taken from a quote from Foucault] does not render them useless, only limited. Categories like “woman,” “butch,” “lesbian,” or “transsexual” are all imperfect, historical, temporary, and arbitrary. We use them, and they use us. We use them to construct meaningful lives, and they mold us into historically specific forms of personhood. Instead of fighting for immaculate classifications and impenetrable boundaries, let us strive to maintain a community that understands diversity as a gift, see anomalies as precious, and treats all basic principles with a hefty dose of skepticism.⁵⁹¹

In many ways, this statement on which Rubin ends her essay articulates in direct terms the import of the negative dialectic which I have been attempting to articulate differently as a feminist aporetic. Of course, Rubin is interested specifically in the discrimination against FtMs (lesbians or not) within lesbian communities; but insofar as what is at issue is the ability or lack of ability to name “a positional subject of a particular sexuality,”⁵⁹² I find her excellent statement germane to my interests. However, for Adorno as well as to some extent for Sedgwick this statement smooths over a key tension: that between “categories” on the one hand and the “anomalies” prefigured as anomalies by such categories. In Sedgwick’s terms, the tropes of gender transitivity and separatism finally will disagree as to which is more salient— “queer” or “lesbian.” Sedgwick maintains that even the queer cannot lose sight of its prohibited status, that it does not escape the very real taboo of same-sex desire. However, for Sedgwick it is precisely in playing these inconsistent tropes against each other rather than denying that there is inconsistency that

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 477-478.

⁵⁹² See first epigraph to this chapter.

anti-homophobic movements (including feminist) benefit. The feminist aporetic takes this one step further: any “definition” of woman/women/she/female as well as any definition of the feminist will be fraught by inconsistency. This inconsistency is the site of a tension which haunts any feminist text, but it is more than inconsistency. It is aporia at the heart of, to borrow from Gayatri Spivak, that which one cannot *not* want.

It is the mutual information of the separatist and transitive tropes that articulates an inconsistent, productive non-theory between them and defers Sedgwick’s decision regarding these incompatible tropes of gender. The multiplicity of possible definitions creates the impasse. This multiplicity for Sedgwick becomes a “powerful resonance,” giving depth to constituent antihomophobic movements.⁵⁹³ It would not quite be correct on Sedgwick’s account to describe the impasse of gender definition as internal disagreement. For Sedgwick, the undecideability of the impasse provides for a broad spectrum of expression. In other words, that there is contradiction at the heart of homo-heterosexual definition is for Sedgwick far from a problem or mutual preemption. Impasse is rather a source of valuable complexity, a plurality of voices, a wealth of coexisting interpretations.

While I am compelled in my writing by the hope for just such a vision, my concern in this project is to cultivate an awareness of precisely the ways in which such a harmonious vision eludes the feminist, whose “definition” I argue to be aporetic. I am deeply sympathetic with Sedgwick’s view; in fact, an assumption of my project is that aporia is generative, disagreement is precious. But prior even to this valuing I argue that there must come an appreciation not solely of contradiction between me and someone

⁵⁹³ *Epistemology of the Closet*, 13.

else, but of the deep chasm of contradiction *within my own view*. Ignoring the negativity/nonidentical tension of the feminist while asserting that the feminist resides solely in negativity will only serve to render suspect, or perhaps threatening, appearances of the nonidentical. As I have argued above with respect to the work of Rubin, I am concerned in reading Sedgwick to point out the mutual imposition of the separatist and transitory tropes. I do so because these tropes impose upon each other not as discrete theories (say, feminist on one hand and queer on the other), but they impose upon each other within the same “theory”—Sedgwick, Beauvoir, Butler, Irigaray. I put theory in parentheses because if I am correct that a feminist aporetic is at play in these works, “theory” is not quite the right word. A theory implies a coherence, an explanatory ability for which the feminist aporetic does not allow. And yet a “non-theory” is no better. This is of course a different sort of aporia, which is not altogether unrelated to the feminist aporetic. But my point is that the theory/non-theory distinction will only gesture to what I mean in denying the status of the feminist aporetic as a theory.

Thus I have argued that as *impasse* suggests a disagreement, a state of indecision between two incompatible interpretations which nevertheless might coexist albeit disjointedly, this does not yet articulate the mutual undermining of the moments of the feminist in which I am interested. The feminist aporetic pursues two moments of the feminist which radically undermine each other. What is feminist subjectivity? Is it a question that might inaugurate a new subjectivity, a subject under construction or potential subject which draws from the dialectics of gender, race, sexuality, class? Or is “feminist subjectivity” instead an oxymoron, the feminist being opposed to subjectivity due to its investments in the very dialectics to which the feminist is opposed? Due to

Sedgwick's understandings of sexuality and gender definition as marked by impasse, "the incoherent dispensation under which we now live," her work is interested in understanding "better [its] structuring, the mechanisms, the immense consequences" that have constituted "our very resources for asking questions about sexuality."⁵⁹⁴ Thus I argued that Sedgwick's queer feminist work anticipates the feminist aporetic without articulating its profound implications for the feminist and the question of feminist subjectivity. Dialectical thinking and anticipation of radical alterity dramatically undermine each other; these are not so much interpretations at an impasse, but mutually generating, reciprocally insidious moments of the feminist. Sedgwick negotiates this clash by insisting on the persistence of impasse and its resources, the "generative" as well as the "murderous plots"⁵⁹⁵ that their lack of consistency produces. The moments of the feminist aporetic instead preempt each other—their violence is within the feminist preventing the sort of generation which Sedgwick anticipates.

What, then, is the feminist aporetic? The trope of separatism cultivates for queer (in the sense of anti-homophobic) feminist purposes the negative which attempts to articulate a anti-homophobic, separatist subject and fails; the trope of transitory gender itself articulates for queer feminist purposes the impossibility of such a subject, the imminent failure of the any attempt to craft a coherent subjectivity. And yet the failure of a subjectivity which might locate a queer *feminist* voice remains a question in Martin's criticism of Sedgwick. These interpretations undermine each other, leaving the queer feminist with no position. Although this account importantly thinks the feminist as not only theory of sex/gender but also sexuality, it is criticized for overlooking race,

⁵⁹⁴ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 91.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

ethnicity, geography, class. In discussion of Sedgwick's interpretation of the feminist, criticisms emerge. And yet in my view this is not theory; it is not able to articulate its own indebtedness to salient names except by reinforcing those names. Still, the feminist aporetic is immanent critique of this texture⁵⁹⁶ -- in which interpretation of the feminist appears to emerge as theory.

⁵⁹⁶ "The crux is what happens in [philosophy], not a thesis or a position—the texture, not the deductive or inductive course of one-track minds," Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 33.

Chapter Six

Strategic Use of Essentialism and the Question of Subaltern Speech: On Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Living Reading

In the previous chapter I discussed the question of feminist subjectivity in the work of Eve Sedgwick. Sedgwick's work underestimates the crisis of the feminist aporetic in reading aporia as impasse, which does not articulate the mutual undermining or significance of inconsistent moments of the feminist. Impasse does not convey the precariousness of the feminist—as either negativity or nonidentity. In other words, while Sedgwick's work negotiates an appreciation for discontinuous interpretations of the feminist, it does so by reading the two moments as coexistent interpretations—producing the “generative” as well as the “murderous.”⁵⁹⁷

In this chapter I turn to the work of another writer Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak whose work differently negotiates discontinuous interpretations of the feminist. However, instead of articulating an impasse which does appreciate incoherence in sexuality and gender definition, Spivak's work moves in another direction. At a crucial point, Spivak refers to an “ethical aporia” at the intersection between “the right to an impasse, ... deconstructive feminism” and “the desire to identify with the oppression of woman in terms of an ontological deception.”⁵⁹⁸ However, instead of regarding this as aporia, Spivak reads the latter as itself “ontological ruse” which the feminist proper is interested in diagnosing. In other words, Spivak's work obviates the exploration of aporia at the heart of the feminist, articulating one moment of the feminist as in fact not feminist, but “anti-sexist”; for Spivak there is ultimately no conflict within the feminist because the feminist is self-consistently the former moment, that of the “right to an impasse.”

⁵⁹⁷ Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 90.

⁵⁹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 136.

Spivak's work negotiates the feminist aporetic without articulating what is at stake in such negotiations. Interestingly, however, earlier in her career Spivak famously introduces the strategic use of essentialism as a way of maintaining the use of terms such as woman and worker. For the purposes of anti-sexist and Marxian thought, Spivak suggested, one must use terms that one can only presuppose, that one does not want ultimately to defend. Why, if this name is "ruse" is such a name necessary? Spivak later replaces the name woman with thinking the "gendered subaltern"⁵⁹⁹ in order to articulate the question of subaltern speech which anticipates the nonidentity or alterity of gendered subaltern. I argue that this alteration in the name by which Spivak interprets the feminist is again appreciated interestingly as both necessary for articulating critique (the subaltern as heterogeneous decolonized space) and stunt (*who* is the gendered subaltern? and yet the gendered subaltern "*has* spoken in some way."⁶⁰⁰) However the ambiguities of the dialectical strategic use of essentialism are not put to rest by thinking the gendered subaltern as nonidentical. In a 1993 interview, Spivak identifies two moments in her oeuvre which have received the most attention.⁶⁰¹ One is her answer to the question "Can the Subaltern Speak?," and the other is "this little thing: the strategic use of

⁵⁹⁹ Spivak defines the subaltern in a number of different ways throughout her oeuvre. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Spivak later claims that she understood the subaltern contra its use in Gramsci to be those who are cut off from or without access to "lines of social mobility." In this respect there are no subaltern nations. Gayatri Spivak, "The Trajectory of the Subaltern in My Work" (paper presented at the Voices, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2004). In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, the subaltern is "reserved for the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space" in which the misguided "romantic purist" aim of "preserving subalternity" is a "contradiction in terms" due to the ineffability of the subaltern. The preservation of subalternity from starting down the "long road to hegemony" is misguided because hegemony as opposed to invisibility is "absolutely to be desired." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999)., 310.

⁶⁰⁰ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.*, 309.

⁶⁰¹ See <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Spivak.html>. Accessed July 23, 2008.

essentialism.”⁶⁰² In this chapter I read these two moments in Spivak’s work together, each being exemplary of two moments of the feminist aporetic. Spivak’s work calls strategically employed dialectics radically into question even as she espouses the strategic use of essentialism as when she articulates the question of subaltern speech; Spivak’s work questions the efficacy of the gendered subaltern even as she insists on the critique offered by the question of the gendered subaltern as such as when she insists on the political necessity of dialectical thinking. I am interested in Spivak’s keeping in play of both the question of the negative and the question of the nonidentical in the complex considerations surrounding each of these moments of her work, but I am dissatisfied with the protection in Spivak’s work of the questions of the negative and the nonidentical from each other.

I proceed by interpreting the first articulations of the strategic use of essentialism. I discuss the emergence and ambiguous rejection of the strategic use of essentialism in Spivak’s work. My interest is in Spivak’s curious deployment of the name woman “strategically” while insisting that she herself is not a dialectician. In the later half of the chapter, I rely on “Can the Subaltern Speak?”⁶⁰³ and the revisitation of this question as articulated in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*.⁶⁰⁴ Spivak engages the negative (“symbolic cliterodectomy”, “the constituency of anti-sexism”) in her articulations of the strategic use of essentialism; when she poses the question of the gendered subaltern she anticipates the nonidentical.

⁶⁰² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sara Danius, and Stefan Jonsson, “An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,” *boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 35.

⁶⁰³ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

⁶⁰⁴ Particularly the chapter entitled “History” in Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. This chapter contains a revision of “Can the Subaltern Speak?” originally appearing in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

My reading of Spivak's strategic use of essentialism lifts it out of the details of the female essentialism-antiessentialism debate among U.S. academic feminists of the 1980's in which it emerges. It does so even as it must at some moments consider Spivak's work as articulated in the context of that debate. Ultimately, I am not interested in Spivak's own intentions⁶⁰⁵ within that context, but instead in the degree to which something of the insistence on the strategic use of essentialism if not the phrase itself remains in Spivak's work.⁶⁰⁶ The strategic use of essentialism (nb: Spivak never speaks of "strategic essentialism," even though this is constantly attributed to her) was articulated at that time as a negotiation of the debate. However, I am not interested in returning to the debate over essentialism, but rather in looking at Spivak's negotiation of feminist subjectivity as an articulation of the feminist aporetic, relying on the name women, and undermining that name with the question of the gendered subaltern. Engaging in a critical dialectical circle; obviating that circle. Spivak attempts to do both, and this tension in her work reveals a subtlety of the strategic use of essentialism not usually attributed to it. I am not so much interested in the way in which the strategic use of essentialism was perhaps read in the 1980's, as a way of debating the status of gender as essential. Instead I am interested in how the tensions in Spivak's work evoke the mutual undermining of the negative and the nonidentical.

The Strategic Use of Essentialism and Anti-Sexism

⁶⁰⁵ The question of authorial intention is a difficult one. In this chapter, I am interested in the text. Thus I use the author's name as a placeholder, but I do not mean to attribute my interpretations of Spivak's writing to a prior author to which such claims refer.

⁶⁰⁶ For example, in a recent question and answer session of her key note address, Spivak maintains that binary oppositions cannot be "perfectly undone." That without the dichotomy European/indigenous Indian on which she had just spoken in her lecture, "You cannot advance any kind of argument without making these divisions...." But then, she adds, one does need a critical "post script." Spivak, "The Trajectory of the Subaltern in My Work".

Spivak first invokes the strategic use of essentialism as a way of explaining her own previous invocations of the universalizing notion of “symbolic cliterodectomy” as “marking the place of women’s desire.”⁶⁰⁷ The essay referred to, “French Feminism In An International Frame,”⁶⁰⁸ was written in 1981 and expressed what would Spivak would later call postcolonialism. This essay pursues the question of a “constituency of an international feminism” through readings of Julia Kristeva’s *About Chinese Women*, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. Spivak reads the “possibility of being a deconstructor of the metaphysics of identity, and yet [remain] ... caught within a masculinist ideology,”⁶⁰⁹ as latent in the work of Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, and only slightly more accessible in the work of Sarah Kofman. She finds that a constituency of international feminism which may constitute anti-sexism can be found in recognizing that which escapes the framing of reproductive heteronormativity, the clitoris. Symbolic cliterodectomy is then presented as a way of describing the effacement of the desires of women conceived of as a transnational group with political salience by engaging in a dialectics of sexism. The notion of symbolic cliterodectomy articulates that which escapes or is the excess Spivak argues of the reproduction-oriented framework of Lacanian discourse as well as the cultures which this discourse sought to represent. “In legally defining woman as object of exchange, passage or possession in terms of reproduction, it is not only the womb that is literally ‘appropriated’; it is the clitoris as the signifier of the sexed subject that is effaced.”⁶¹⁰ This effacement amounts to symbolic clitorodectomy: “All historical and theoretical investigation into the definition of woman as legal *object*...; or as politico-

⁶⁰⁷ Spivak and Grosz, “Criticism, Feminism and the Institution.”, 183.

⁶⁰⁸ Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics.*, 184-211.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

economic passageway for property and legitimacy would fall within the investigation of the varieties of the effacement of the clitoris.”⁶¹¹ Use of this language connects female genital mutilation with the larger patterns to which it contributes. It makes female genital mutilation not an abnormality experienced by a few but rather a moment in a larger pattern in which many share:

It ties together the terrified child held down by her grandmother as the blood runs down her groin and the “liberated” heterosexual woman who, in spite of Mary Jane Sherfey and the famous page 53 of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, in bed with a casual lover—engaged, in other words, in the “freest” of “free” activities—confronts, at worst, the “shame” of admitting to the “abnormality” of her orgasm: at best, the acceptance of such a “special” need; and the radical feminist who, setting herself apart from the circle of reproduction, systematically discloses the beauty of the lesbian body; the dowried bride—a body for burning—and the female wage-slave—a body for maximum exploitation.⁶¹²

In making of the experience of FGM a metonymy (to borrow from Grosz’s words quoted below) , Spivak understands “symbolic clitoridectomy” not to efface the bodily experience of FGM, an explicit description of which, taken from a dissertation which discusses FGM in the Sudan, initiates the essay. Rather the notion of clitoridectomy as a metonym places this experience within a transnational pattern of the effacement of female desire. It is that transnational pattern which enacts “anti-sexism”: not a bare denial of sexism as salient, but rather a figuring of the limits of the discourse of sexism. In this dialectical mode, Spivak responds to what she will later refer to as reproductive heteronormativity, “the broadest global institution.”⁶¹³

As a locating of the effacement of female desire, symbolic clitoridectomy addresses only one half of the double vision that Spivak reads in the work of Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous, Kofman: anti-sexism as distinct from feminism. *Anti-sexism* is for Spivak not yet a feminism, but it is a moment which cannot be overlooked in the haste to

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Ibid., 211.

⁶¹³ Spivak, “The Trajectory of the Subaltern in My Work”.

wholly ignore or get beyond sexist discourse. And yet Spivak engages in dialectical anti-sexism by means of a discourse which reclaims the “excess of the clitoris.” Her anti-sexism critiques the uterine social organization; the clitoris as excess responds both to sexism and to modes of anti-sexism which would strictly contradict sexism. Uterine social organization (“the arrangement of the world in terms of the reproduction of future generations, where the uterus is the chief agent and means of production,”⁶¹⁴) itself cannot be escaped or bypassed. Rather recognizing the clitoris as excess momentarily destabilizes the uterine norm, but in this recognition it does not offer a renovation that would move beyond the sexism—anti-sexism duel. And again Spivak’s repeated insistence in the interview with Grosz on “anti-sexism” takes up the negative position, engages in dialectic, in order to speak against conceptual sexism; she insists on protecting dialectical thinking as a mode of thinking which prefigures the feminist.

Symbolic clitoridectomy is intended as a way of locating “our common yet history-specific lot.”⁶¹⁵ But it does so even as it cannot speak to “race and class... the inbuilt colonialism of First World feminism toward the Third.”⁶¹⁶ Given that inbuilt colonialism was one impetus for the essay, a large portion of the essay being occupied with the gaze with which Kristeva regards “third world women,” one wonders about the import of this concern for the notion of symbolic clitoridectomy. This concern is not itself an excess of the essay; constitutive colonialism as a barrier to imagining the constituency of international feminism is at the heart of the essay. Why then does this concern register near the end as a rather muffled reservation?

⁶¹⁴ Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics.*, 210.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

These reservations on Spivak's part at the end of the essay express precisely what Spivak refers to herself as the "dangerousness" of using notions without persistent critique of them. "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution," an interview given by Spivak with Elizabeth Grosz, is the first explicit mention of the notion of the strategic use of essentialism. In this interview, Grosz asks Spivak to elaborate on the notion of symbolic clitoridectomy. In doing so, Grosz describes the "number of published texts [in which] you have discussed 'universal' oppression of women under patriarchy in terms of the effacement of the clitoris, of women's sexual pleasure whereby clitoridectomy can be considered a metonymy of women's social and legal status."⁶¹⁷ Spivak responds that this universality allows for "a marking of the place of women's desire" by means of a "strategic choice."⁶¹⁸ This strategic choice allows her for example by the end of "French Feminism in International Frame" to undermine any one-dimensional notion of women by contrasting vastly different situations. This strategic choice "... ties together the terrified child held down by her grandmother as the blood runs down her groin and the 'liberated' heterosexual woman ... engaged, in other words, in the 'freest' of 'free' activities...." Spivak assumes this common violation. The value in making this unjustified move is in seeing other than "woman inhabiting spaces of absence" and in the ability to speak to transnational labor patterns. Again, Spivak reads this choice as anti-sexism, not yet feminism. "I was asking myself the question... how can the unexamined

⁶¹⁷ Spivak and Grosz, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution.", 182.

⁶¹⁸⁶¹⁸ What does Spivak mean by "strategy" and "strategic"? As I discuss below, Spivak distinguishes strategy from theory in that a strategy "suits a situation," Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 4. Strategic use allows for some distance between theorist and the names that she must use for the purposes of "acknowledgement of the dangerousness of something one cannot not use." Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 5. (But *why* cannot one not use the name women or gendered subaltern?) Spivak repeatedly laments that her use of critique is not read in "the robust European philosophical sense," in which critique does not mean "adversely inclined" but rather critique of names "one cannot not use." Thus "strategic" articulates that political necessity that critique read only colloquially does not convey.

universalizing discourse of a certain sort of feminism become useful for us since this is the hegemonic space of feminist discourse.”⁶¹⁹ Spivak argues that her interest, her reason for making use of such a generalization, is “working out the *heterogeneous* production of sexed subjects[emphasis mine]” as well as in articulating the gendered international division of labour. Spivak recognizes the obvious concern that this strategy presupposes the dichotomously sexed subjects of which she seeks to work out the production. Instead she argues that she is concerned fundamentally with the limits of the work of Kristeva, limits which are witnessed in the “encounter with the materiality of that other of the West—that is one of the limits.”⁶²⁰ These limits attest to the heterogeneity of which feminist theory must admit; however,

I chose a universal discourse in that moment because I felt that rather than define myself as repudiating universality, because universalization, finalization, is an irreducible moment in any discourse—rather than define myself as specific rather than universal—I should see what in the universalizing discourse could be useful and then go on to see where that discourse meets its limits and its challenge within that field.⁶²¹

Rather than as universal, Spivak describes her strategy for Grosz in works such as “French Feminism in an International Frame” as “essential”: “I think we have to choose again strategically, not universal discourse but essentialist discourse.... There is, for example, the strategic choice of a genitalist essentialism in anti-sexist work today.”

Grosz responds to this what would become a regular response to Spivak’s strategic use of essentialism: “I am interested in how to *use* universalism, essentialism etc. strategically, without necessarily making an overall commitment to these kinds of concepts.”⁶²² Grosz’s concern is whether the strategic use of essentialism in some sense commits one to genital essentialism. Spivak’s response is that the strategic use of

⁶¹⁹ Spivak and Grosz, “Criticism, Feminism and the Institution.”, 183.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 184.

essentialism does make one an “essentialist from time to time.” This is a jettisoning of one’s “purity as a theorist.”⁶²³ She characterizes the strategic use of essentialism as an attempt to make visible “anti-sexist” discourse, discourse which requires that one give up the fashionable aversion to “vulgar anti-sexism.”⁶²⁴ For Spivak here, essentialist, vulgar anti-sexism requires a taking up of available conceptions of the clitoris, the female, reproduction. Spivak: “You see, you *are* committed to these concepts, whether you acknowledge it or not. I think it’s absolutely on target to take a stand against the discourses of essentialism... But *strategically* we cannot.” Spivak elaborates:

Even as we talk about *feminist* practice, or privileging practice over theory, we are universalizing—not only generalizing but universalizing. Since the moment of essentializing, universalizing, saying yes to the onto-phenomenological question, is irreducible, let us at least situate it at the moment.⁶²⁵

Spivak argues instead, “Let us become vigilant about our own practice and use it [essentializing] as much as we can rather than make the totally counter-productive gesture of repudiating it.”⁶²⁶ The use of essentialism in terms of “Western high feminism”⁶²⁷ means choosing the clitoris as a universal (a use which Spivak does not ascribe to); the use of essentialism, on the other hand, in terms of anti-sexism is a reaction to “what the other side gives us, defining use genitally.” Thus Spivak suggests as in “French Feminism in an International Frame,” that anti-sexism itself is not feminism. For Spivak, anti-sexism in particular requires the use of essentialism for the purpose of speaking to the preexisting ways in which the assumed salience of genital essentialism and genital difference function transnationally. Giving up one’s theoretical purity in assuming an essentialist discourse allows the theorist appropriately to react:

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 185.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., 184.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 184.

You pick up the universal that will give you the power to fight against the other side and what you are throwing away by doing that is your theoretical purity. Whereas the great custodians of the anti-universal are obliged therefore simply to act in the interest of a great narrative, the narrative of exploitation while they keep themselves clean by not committing themselves to anything. In fact they are actually run by a great narrative even as they are busy protecting their theoretical purity by repudiating essentialism.

Thus anti-sexism takes up the essentialism of sexism and turns it on itself. Still, Spivak maintains that this anti-sexism is not itself feminism; or it is not yet feminism. As Spivak puts it,

Anti-sexism is reactive in the face of where we are thrown. I am sure you wouldn't agree that notions of feminism could in fact be located in terms of sexual difference understood as genital difference. That is a total reduction of feminism, but as anti-sexism is reactive, it seems to me that there one has to produce a reverse legitimization of sexism itself. If you just define yourself as anti-sexist you are indeed legitimizing sexism.

Spivak maintains that to attempt to avoid legitimizing sexism by not engaging sexism would be to leave it intact. Anti-sexism does make sexism available in its reliance on a stark notion of sexual difference (genitalist essentialism). However, for Spivak this is a necessary outcome if one must in fact admit that it is impossible to avoid essentialist discourse when one wants to address essentialist discourses. Again, essentialist discourse is irreducible in contexts in which that essentialism has been previously established. Thus, in order to avoid irrelevance, the strategic use of essentialism allows one to articulate a reaction.

And yet when Grosz questions Spivak's distinction between feminism and anti-sexism, Spivak does seem to suggest that anti-sexism is an important *feminist* moment. As Grosz puts it: "A feminism which didn't address the question of anti-sexism is in danger of utopianism."⁶²⁸ And Spivak responds in such a way as to say that anti-sexism ought to be a feminist concern:

I think its happening – in fact the example I gave here which is troubling me a great deal, when I was in Urbino at the conference on deconstruction just a couple of weeks ago and I stood up to speak about

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 185.

the foreclosing of the importance of the question of sexual difference or the law of genre in Derrida..., [sic] the people who were most uneasy were the card carrying female deconstructivists because they wouldn't touch anti-sexist work because that would only prove once again that they were not being theoretically pure deconstructivists and what was most marked was the unease....

As has been noted above, Spivak is quite clear that the “one thing that comes out [of this strategic use of essentialism] is that you jettison your own purity as a theorist.” Here Spivak sees the desire for theoretical purity evidenced in the foreclosing of the importance of the question of sexual difference” as a direct threat to the relevance of *feminist* theory. In a response analogous to her refusal to make Marxism, feminism and deconstruction continuous, or into “elegant coherence,” Spivak prefers to maintain the discontinuities, to preserve the “immense resources” of each.⁶²⁹ Spivak later remarks that Marxism, feminism and deconstruction bring, and ought to bring, “each other into crisis.” Similarly, Spivak resists the impulse to smooth over the discontinuity of anti-sexism which reinscribes sexism and a feminism which seeks a positive movement over the negative, critical gesture of the genital reduction. To seek purity or coherence with respect to these contrasting feminist and anti-sexist moments would be to deny oneself the immense resources of one or the other.

Thus Spivak's articulations of the anti-sexist/feminist distinction articulate a disagreement between them: the anti-sexist is a necessarily negative, reactive response while the feminist proper critiques anti-sexist ontology. In not recognizing anti-sexism as feminism, Spivak does not read the feminist as internally disagreeing. In Spivak's terms, anti-sexism and the feminist disagree—the disagreement is thus not within the feminist. However, I argue that Spivak misses something important about the feminist in making this distinction. For her, anti-sexism and feminism have opposing relationships to an

⁶²⁹ Ibid., 187.

emphasis on genital difference, and that these garner different interpretations of such difference. In fact this distinction cannot hold. It suggests an aporia that preempts the ease of reading the feminist as strictly the critique of the ontology of anti-sexism. To what degree can this anti-sexist discourse extract itself from the feminist? Is anti-sexism not in Spivak's own remarks a moment of the feminist? Indeed Spivak herself will later speak of the "anti-sexist project *of* feminism [emphasis mine]." ⁶³⁰ If remaining tied to notions of sexual or genital difference amounts to essentialism, indeed locates the origin of essentialism in feminist discourses of sexual difference, then does the work of Spivak not pose the question of sexual difference as an anti-feminist gesture? One wonders what the status is of Spivak's insistence near the end that she is not interested in theoretical purity "even as I remain an anti-essentialist." ⁶³¹ Thus Spivak is both an "essentialist" and an "anti-essentialist," and it becomes necessary to view her work as both and neither. This predicament would seem to say more than the sum of its words: in articulating the essentialism that one must use, I am not a willing player. This interesting adherence to anti-essentialism at the very first mention of the strategic use of essentialism attests to the unwieldiness of the project at hand. This no doubt has to do with the status of essentialism here as strategic, but it is the impulse to maintain together, to place equal weight on, essentialism and anti-essentialism which is of interest. Is it better to wield power in the use of the essentialism which makes a feminist subject available or to repudiate the offering of that power, to recognize that no subjectivity is possible that does not erase the ethnicity of the feminine? It seems to me that Spivak's strategic use of

⁶³⁰ Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 124.

⁶³¹ Spivak and Grosz, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution."

essentialism refuses to choose. Thus inadvertently it would seem that *within* the strategic use of essentialism, Spivak's work already anticipates the aporia in question.

In an interview conducted in 1988 with Ellen Rooney, Spivak downplays this first mention of the strategic use of essentialism as “really only mentioned in an interview.” In fact, Spivak expresses surprise that the strategic use of essentialism has become well-known in the U.S., despite the limited circulation and recognition of the Australian journal *Thesis Eleven* in the U.S. However, as seen in the above discussion of the *Thesis Eleven* interview, Spivak and Grosz discuss at length the “strategic choice of a genitalist essentialism” which Spivak makes in previous articulations of a universal signifier of symbolic cliterodectomy. She defends the strategic use of essentialism as opening up the possibility of speaking to the work of women, the experiences of women. Here again, Spivak's complex purposes in that earlier interview:

Since I believe that one shouldn't throw away things but use them, strategically I suggested that perhaps rather than woman inhabiting spaces of absence, perhaps here was an item which could be used as a universal signifier. I was asking myself the question... how can the unexamined universalizing discourse of a certain sort of feminism become useful for us since this is the hegemonic space of feminist discourse. I chose that one and tried to scrupulously work it through in terms not just of actual clitoridectomies but symbolic ones. My own interest, on the other hand, is as I have just indicated, is in working out the heterogeneous production of sexed subjects. It is also, to move the question outside of subject-constitution—in terms of recognizing the international division of labour.⁶³²

Far from “really only mentioned,” as discussed above, the strategic use of essentialism in the *Thesis Eleven* interview appears as a substantive elaboration of the arguments presented around the notion of symbolic clitoridectomy. However, in this interview with Rooney as well as every later one, the notion of symbolic clitoridectomy is not mentioned. Instead, the strategic use of essentialism per se is on trial.

⁶³² Ibid., 183.

It has been suggested that the strategic use of essentialism first builds on Spivak's reading of Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One*: "For the elaboration of a theory of woman, men I think suffice."⁶³³ The strategic use of essentialism recognizes this Irigarayan point, and yet requires that the name women cannot escape deconstruction notwithstanding its strategic usefulness. Thus it seems more plausible that Spivak is motivated in the strategic use of essentialism by the "deconstructive lesson," which she expressed as early as 1978 in "Feminism and Critical Theory," that

no rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible, so that if one wants to, one could go on deconstructing the opposition between man and woman, and finally show that it is a binary opposition that displaces itself. Therefore, . . . I cannot recommend that kind of dichotomy at all, yet I feel that definitions are necessary in order to keep us going, to allow us to take a stand. The only way that I can see myself making definitions is in a provisional and polemical one: I construct my definition as a woman not in terms of a woman's putative essence but in terms of words currently in use. "Man" is such a word in common usage. Not *a* word, but *the* word. I therefore fix my glance upon this word even as I question the enterprise of redefining the premises of any theory.⁶³⁴

Man/woman, even as a "binary *opposition* that displaces itself," are thus the only means allowing one to "take a stand." This passage distances its negotiations from dialectical thinking by insisting on the ultimate ruse of man/woman, and yet this ruse uniquely makes it possible to "keep us going." Women as a dialectical moment then, strategically generates an opposition to "*the* word."

My own definition of a woman is very simple: it rests on the word "man" as use in the texts that provide the foundation for the corner of the literary criticism establishment that I inhabit. You might say at this point, defining the word "woman" as resting on the word "man" is a reactionary position. Should I not carve out an independent definition for myself as a woman?⁶³⁵

On the contrary, if no ultimately rigorous definition of women is possible, but the name women can provide for the generation of dialectical opposition to the way in which that ultimately ambiguous name is used, then as a resource one cannot jettison it.

⁶³³ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 123.

⁶³⁴ Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 103.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

It is precisely the precariousness of these terms (woman, man) that motivates the leap from their lack of discrete meaning directly to their oppositionality in contexts to which Spivak wants to speak. One must use the term women if one wants to speak to the binary, to fix one's glance on "*the word*" men, to "take a stand" or articulate a position and as cited above, to speak to the international division of labor.

Towards the end of "Feminism and Critical Theory" essay, Spivak employs "women," which she has above described as ultimately admitting of no rigorous definition and only distinguishable in opposition to preestablishment of "man," to describe a history which undermines the stability and hypocrisy of the notion of women.

In Seoul, South Korea, in March 1982, 237 woman workers in a factory owned by Control Data, a Minnesota-based multinational corporation, struck over a demand for a wage raise. Six union leaders were dismissed and imprisoned. In July, the women took hostage two visiting U.S. vice-presidents, demanding reinstatement of the union leaders. Control Data's main office was willing to release the women; the Korean government was reluctant. On July 16, the Korean male workers at the factory beat up the female workers and ended the dispute. Many of the women were injured and two suffered miscarriages.⁶³⁶

This incident can only be understood in the context of industrial capitalism's search for surplus labor in a third world country in which "no one, including their [the women workers in the factory owned by Control Data] men, will agitate for an adequate wage. In a two-job family, the man saves face if the woman makes less."⁶³⁷ But the women spoken of in this context are not the women working for Control Data in the U.S. lauded as victorious in a paragraph appearing in *Ms.* magazine in which, "Control Data is among those enlightened corporations that offer social-service leaves.... Kit Ketchum ... writes: 'I commend Control Data for their commitment to employing and promoting women....' Why not suggest this to your employer?"⁶³⁸ Spivak makes use here of a term that her

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 120.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 120-121.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 122-123.

larger articulation renders spurious as it is used by *Ms.* magazine. The notion of women in the context of the Seoul factory and the notion of women in the Minnesota Control Data office is not continuous—geography, class, race are among the social dimensions rendering, for example, the injuries, even the miscarriages, of the persons beaten for striking in the Seoul factory not saliently “women’s” experience working for Control Data. But the use of the term as if it is continuous renders visible, makes space for, the arrogance and absence in the discourse of women appearing in *Ms.*

Only one year after the introduction of the strategic use of essentialism as described in the Grosz interview, Spivak distances herself from this phrase significantly. In an interview with Spivak entitled “In a Word. *Interview*,” Ellen Rooney quotes Bruce Robbins as having identified an acceptance on the part of intellectuals in the U.S. that a “risk of essence”⁶³⁹ may perhaps be necessary, and that this risk has by this time become associated with Gayatri Spivak (as well as with Stephen Heath who echoes Spivak.⁶⁴⁰ In response to this, Spivak suggests that the strategic use of essentialism has caught on in the U.S. academy because of its tendency to “turn into an alibi for proselytizing academic essentialists.”⁶⁴¹ She suggests that her use of essentialism per se rather than its status as strategy has served as the focus of attention, which is evidenced in Rooney’s own attribution of “strategic essentialism” to Spivak when Spivak never in fact uses this phrase. But the importance of essentialism as strategy ought to have an effect on the way in which that essentialism is regarded. Contrary to the way in which strategic essentialism has come to be regarded, Spivak’s elaboration on what she means by essentialism in this interview bears little resemblance to a belief or ascription to the existence of essences:

⁶³⁹ This phrase was introduced by Stephen Heath, “Differences,” *Screen* 19, no. 3 (1978).

⁶⁴⁰ Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 3.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Deconstruction, whatever it may be, is not most valuably an exposure of error, certainly not other people's error, other people's essentialism. The most serious critique in deconstruction is the critique of things that are extremely useful, things without which we cannot live on, take chances.... That should be the approach to how we are essentialists.⁶⁴²

Thus essentialism is to address that without which one cannot live. But because of this widespread misunderstanding of the way in which Spivak understands the possibilities and commitments of essentialism, already with Rooney, Spivak distances herself from her more deliberate statement of the strategic use of essentialism in the *Thesis Eleven* interview. She no longer claims the strategic use of essentialism as viable.

Despite this rejection of her earlier view, Spivak continues in this interview to insist that essentialism might be taken as a strategy. She says, "A strategy suits a situation; a strategy is not a theory."⁶⁴³ Critique of a strategy employing a "masterword like woman or worker or the name of a nation" must be "persistent all along the way, even when it seems that to remind oneself of it is counterproductive."⁶⁴⁴ She insists that it is possible to take one's distance from what has been regarded as essence and make use of that notion for the purposes of undermining its effects as has been done by the Subaltern Studies Group, a "countermovement" of South Asian academic history; theirs is a "different structural position from someone working from within the U.S. university."⁶⁴⁵ We might say that it is the position of negation of South Asian academy by the Subaltern Studies Group that makes their strategic use of essentialism viable for Spivak as opposed to "someone working from within the U.S. university."

Here I want to point out that the image in terms of which the strategic use of essentialism was first articulated, the notion of symbolic cliterodectomy described in

⁶⁴² Ibid., 4.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 4.

“French Feminism in International Frame,” is not referred to in the present interview. The articulation of the strategic use of essentialism as described in the *Thesis Eleven* interview sought to make a place for the voicing of anti-sexism, not necessarily feminism. This distinction does not come up in “In a Word. *Interview*,” but it seems to remain in the background. That the strategic use of essentialism sought to articulate an anti-sexism and not necessarily a feminism is in the present interview obscured because of the lack of reference to the notion of symbolic cliterodectomy in context of which the strategic use of essentialism was initially articulated.

Far from reinforcing a belief in essences, Spivak’s interest in making use of the words women and worker is in recognizing their salience as irreducible however ultimately precarious. Again, this notion only makes sense in the context of the “symbolic cliterodectomy” on which the strategic use of essentialism was previously meant to elaborate.

At one point in one version of the interview, Rooney uses the word “identity” as a suggested synonym for the word essence (this appears differently in the interview as printed in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*).⁶⁴⁶ Spivak corrects Rooney; identity is not essence. Furthermore, this attempt to avoid reference to essence by simply choosing another word for essence is often wielded by those who forget the potentially strategic character of “essentialism.” For Spivak this use of identity as a replacement for essence does not appreciate the salience of supposed essences; this replacement is an attempt to avoid placing oneself in critical discourse, as an essentialist/anti-essentialist. Instead of thinking that one could avoid this debate, Spivak suggests again that one must use such

⁶⁴⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ellen Rooney, “In a Word. *Interview*,” in *The Essential Difference*, ed. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, *Differences* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

negative names as women, but that this use must be part of a strategy of “persistent critique” of the concept and the negativity it projects. She further argues (here slightly differently from the printing of the interview in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*) that it is all-important to recognize *who* the wielder is of this strategy.

When I speak of the Subaltern Studies Group, for example, I’m not speaking of, let us say, a group situated within a very privileged institution of learning in one of the most powerful neo-colonial countries. The Subaltern Studies Group is working as a counter-movement within Indian history as written even by politically correct Indians trying to fabricate a national identity in decolonization; to an extent, it is in a different structural position from someone working from within, not only the University of Pittsburgh but certainly Brown University. You and I are in a different position in terms of the production of neo-colonialist knowledge, so you can’t simply take the example of one group and their historians. . . . So, to an extent, we have to look at where the group—the person, the persons, or the movement—is situated when we make claims for or against essentialism.

Nevertheless in this interview Spivak laments the ways in which the strategic use of essentialism has tended to be taken for essentialist theory so readily. Because of this misunderstanding, she admits to having reservations about having spoken this way at all: “So I have certainly reconsidered my cry for a strategic use of essentialism because it is too deliberate.” She therefore goes on to separate herself from any kind of essentialism as theory, and thereby creates a strong distinction between strategy and theory as discussed above. To take essentialism which was and is a theory in other contexts and to use it instead as a strategy is lost, argues Spivak on members of the U.S. academy. “The idea of a *strategy* in a personalist⁶⁴⁷ culture, among people within the humanities who are generally wordsmiths, has been forgotten. The strategic really is taken as a kind of self-differentiation from the poor essentialists,”⁶⁴⁸ but is regarded as and at times is actually no different from essentialism as such. Thus the strategic use of essentialism she finds becomes not a license for criticism of that without which we cannot live on, but rather a

⁶⁴⁷ Spivak uses this to mean a culture marked by the mistaken imperative “*only* the personal is political.” Gayatri Spivak and Ellen Rooney, “In a Word. *Interview*,” in *The Essential Difference*, ed. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, *Differences* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 155.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

license for leaving unquestioned essences of woman, of worker and yet distancing oneself from unfashionable, “poor essentialists.” It is because of this misunderstanding that Spivak qualifiedly rejects the strategic use of essentialism:

So long as the critique of essentialism is understood not as an exposure of error, our own or others’, but as an acknowledgment of the dangerousness of what one must use, I think my revised statement—that we should consider how ourselves and others are essentialists in different ways—I think I would stand by it. The critique of essentialism should not be seen as being critical in the colloquial, Anglo-American sense of being adversely inclined, but as a critique in the very strong European [perhaps Kantian] philosophical sense, that is to say, as an acknowledgement of its usefulness.⁶⁴⁹

The revised relationship to essentialism expressed here continues to take it as something which makes available certain critical discourses. The notion of critique refers back to the description of the “deconstructive lesson” discussed above: critique is never an “exposure of error” with respect to words commonly used. It is instead the critique of “the dangerousness of what one must use.”⁶⁵⁰ Deconstruction “proceeds in terms of the unavoidable usefulness⁶⁵¹ of something that is very dangerous.”⁶⁵² Spivak in this essay no longer characterizes her approach as the strategic use of essentialism. Rather, she stands by the notion that “we should consider how ourselves and others are essentialists in different ways” as well as recognize this risk inherent in “something without which we cannot do anything.”⁶⁵³

And thus it is not surprising that Spivak, in clarifying this nuanced rejection of the strategic use of essentialism in the later 1993 *boundary 2* interview with which this

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 157.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ This word should never go uncommented upon. It seems that it is in fact overt gestures to the “usefulness” of terms like women that brings forward the problematic character of Spivak’s strategic essentialism. Isn’t the question precisely whether or not women is useful and to who and when and in what manner and contexts? Spivak’s comment suggests that women as a name is ubiquitous, and that point seems clear. But the trouble is that in making use of “women” strategically or theoretically, one covers over the question of whether or not women as an ostensibly one-dimensional concept is in fact a term that is equally useful to everyone. Who is the ‘we’ who cannot live without the masterword women?

⁶⁵² Spivak and Rooney, “In a Word. *Interview*,” 156.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 156.

chapter began, more strongly recants the strategic use of essentialism. However Spivak's rejection is not of the strategic use of essentialism per se as it had been in the "In a Word. Interview." Instead, she claims to keep the strategic use of essentialism as silent *project*: to keep strategic essentialism as project, "that really is a different idea"⁶⁵⁴: "my notion just simply became the union ticket for essentialism. As to what is meant by strategy, no one wondered about that." And so "as a phrase, I have given up on it." However, Spivak also says, "As to whether I have given up on it as a project, that is really a different idea." Spivak does not elaborate on what she means by taking the strategic use of essentialism as project. But later in the interview she claims *not* to

go with the strategic use of essentialism anymore. I'm much more interested in seeing the differences among these so-called essences in various cultural inscriptions. They are not the same everywhere. The question of female agency is dependent upon constitutions. Constitutions are extremely historical things that are produced quite often by the dismantling of a colony or an empire, and therefore, in the constitution, the mark of the former masters is still present. A constitution is a cusp document, a transitional document. And yet, the possibility of female agency is written in that discourse.⁶⁵⁵

The possibility of "female agency" is tied here not to a unifying notion of what it is to be female, to be women, but rather to the particularity of constitutions. This would seem to be a reversal of her earlier claim in the same interview except that the strategic use of essentialism is perhaps exactly silently at play *as project*, providing space for discussion of disparate constitutions in which the possibility of female agency is written. Instead of the explicit project of the use of essentialism held at strategic distance, Spivak in this interview appears to present a turn to focusing on the cultural differences within the context of silent strategic use of essentialism such as are discussed above in the events of the strike in the Seoul Control Data-owned factory.

⁶⁵⁴ Spivak, Danius, and Jonsson, "An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.", 35.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 36.

Thus I am not interested in making much of this apparent reversal. Rather I am interested in the unwieldiness of the dual impulse we might say in the strategic use of essentialism itself, on the one hand, to talk about the destructive purposes to which the name women can be put when considered apart from geography, race, class, sexuality, and, on the other hand, to make reference to, give specific attention to the persons (women) at the receiving end of these destructive purposes. “Women” admits of no rigorous definition; “women” is a word without which (we) cannot live. “Women” are beaten for making demands in Seoul; “women” praise Control Data for employing and promoting “women.” X are beaten for making demands in Seoul; X praise Control Data for employing and promoting X. Here race and ethnicity are hidden by the use of the word; gender can only be expressed by the use of the word. Who is meant, how these might articulate their own relationship to the name women in these contexts—these are lost in the stark reference to women. That this micrology might be lost entirely is the “dangerousness” of that which we cannot not want.

The strategic use of essentialism originally sought a way of tying together an international constituency of feminism in such a way as to draw attention to, not cover over, the discontinuities of that constituency. In that usage, the persons whose experience the strategic use of essentialism sought to express were vastly differently located with respect to the name women given in symbolic clitoridectomy. But twenty years later, the discursivity of sex itself seems more apparent, so that there is no recourse to the female as an unproblematic way of referring to bare commonality among an international constituency of feminism. That constituency cannot in fact be thought of as preformed, debating its status on a biologically set stage, and articulating within a closed circle the

differences within. It is precisely the closure of that circle to which Spivak points in warning of the dangerousness of that without which we cannot live. But still I want to ask here the ever-important question of the “we.” Who is this “we”? Who are those whom Spivak presumes cannot live without certain ways of naming themselves? An answer to this question will be of course contextual, but I want to point to it here as a way of recording one sense of the dangerousness of the strategic use of essentialism which has anyway been abandoned as an overt phrase by Spivak.

Spivak has more recently said, “what I call the ‘gendered subaltern,’ especially in decolonized space, has become the name ‘woman’ for me.”⁶⁵⁶ “Gendered subaltern,” she suggests, replaces the name “woman” in the interest of the “hope behind the political desire... that the possibility for the name [woman] will finally be erased.” This statement comes at the end of an essay⁶⁵⁷ in which Spivak argues that deconstructive feminism “cannot be sustained in the name of ‘woman’ within the Derridian problematic.”⁶⁵⁸

Deconstructive feminism cannot claim

both the desire to identify with the oppression of woman in terms of an ontological deception, and the desire for the right to an impasse, to a deconstructive feminism which would take woman as a name for the graphematic structure and the nontruth of truth. We have to give up the one or the other.⁶⁵⁹

Spivak clearly gives up the former which I argue thought the feminist in terms of the negative of the concept, *the word* “man.” Thinking the “gendered subaltern” will move in another direction in thinking the feminist in terms of the nonidentical, which questions the name “woman,” in the hope that that negation might be finally erased.

⁶⁵⁶ Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 140.

⁶⁵⁷ Gayatri Spivak, “Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations,” in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York Routledge, 1993).

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

Here Spivak reconsiders her earlier view⁶⁶⁰ of Derrida's reading of Nietzsche in which the name woman "is one a name for that non-truth of truth."⁶⁶¹ There, Spivak suggested that the figure of woman is not one of indeterminacy, "that the question of woman in general... is *their* question, not *ours*."⁶⁶² In *Spurs*, woman herself "still remains the *object* of the question. To reverse the situation would be to ask the question of woman as a subject: what am I? That would bring back all the absolutely convincing deconstructive critiques of the sovereign subject."⁶⁶³ I find this conclusion dissatisfying. First, Spivak's own wording of the question suggests that it is in fact *still* a question about an object being asked—*what* am I?—Spivak's tweaking of Freud's famous question of *what* woman wants. The *what* of what am I is yet another question about an object-desire, "she," the not-I. Second, to ask the question what am I is perhaps one way of characterizing a project which poses the question of feminist subjectivity. If I hope to approximate the feminist, who does this mean I am? Do I inhabit a framework—which somehow opposes the "anti-feminist"? Do I oppose framework per se? And it is my thesis that no "absolutely convincing deconstructive critiques of the sovereign subject" as we saw in Adorno for example settle the matter once and for all. Interestingly, Spivak claims at the end of "Displacement" that her essay might be summed up in two points, one of which is that "a feminist reader would see in Marx's correction of Hegel a gesture useful for feminism."⁶⁶⁴ Thus, the Spivak of "Displacement" saw promise in an overtly

⁶⁶⁰ Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman."

⁶⁶¹ Spivak, "Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations," 128.

⁶⁶² Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," 184.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 186. A proper reading of Derrida is in order. However, for now I must focus on Spivak's reading of Derrida, despite the fact that my study of various appropriators of Derrida—Butler, Cornell, Irigaray, Spivak—disagree completely concerning the import of Derrida's interpretation of the feminine. I suspect that this disagreement over Derrida might in fact offer its own study of the discontinuities of post-Hegelian feminist theories, a tension which here I find in Adorno.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

Marxian interpretation of the negative, which asks “what am I [the not-I]?” instead of “what is woman?”

In her more recent essay, instead, “today, negotiating” Spivak gives “the assent for the moment to Derrida’s argument.”⁶⁶⁵ It is here that Spivak articulates an ethical aporia—that between the two hopes listed above: the desire to identify with the oppression of woman and the desire for the right to articulations of impasse made available through deconstructive critique which would preempt her earlier Marxian interpretation of sexual difference. But here Spivak “sides” with Derrida: “Sexual *identity* is sexual *différance*, not sexual difference; it produces sexual difference.”⁶⁶⁶ Here Spivak understands *différance* to be one of the names for the necessity *both* to eradicate the absence of (phallogocentric) origin of writing and to speak of this origin, to misname it “‘graphematic’, since there is no other way one can call it.”⁶⁶⁷ To name the origin would be to reify it—when the point was precisely not to reify it, but instead to question or unsettle it. This is the “double bind” which is at the origin of practice for Spivak, which she finds in deconstruction. In fact, “‘woman’ is another name for this irreducible double bind.”⁶⁶⁸

Spivak argues that deconstructive feminism cannot claim “both the desire to identify with the oppression of woman in terms of an ontological deception, and the

⁶⁶⁵ Spivak, “Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations,” 128-129.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 132. In order to present Spivak’s position in this essay, I make use of a Derridean language that I do not fully understand, and do not have time to turn to Derrida in order to explain. I rely entirely on Spivak here; what is important for my thesis is Spivak’s forwarding of impasse here as the “ungraspable ground” of that which is feminist and the tension between this and the need to speak of “woman”/“gendered subaltern.”

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 132. The “graphematic structure” of deconstruction is Spivak’s way in to reassessing its relevance for “feminism.” Spivak explains, “The adjective ‘graphematic’ comes from Derrida’s analysis that writing is historically the structure that is supposed necessarily to operate in the presumed absence of its origin, the sender,” 130.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 132.

desire for the right to an impasse, to a deconstructive feminism.... We have to give up the one or the other.”⁶⁶⁹ A few lines down Spivak refers to this as “ethical aporia,” and so she might be read as being thrown into a practice of ethics, she suggests, “as the experience of the impossible.” But this aporia is “backed up by intellectual preparation and its relationship to a political decision”; it would seem that the aporia is located not within the question of feminist subjectivity for Spivak, but instead after that decision has been made (here in favor of radical alterity) and in the confrontation with the political: “If *we* [feminist deconstructionists?] lose the ‘name’ of specifically woman for writing there is no cause for lament.”⁶⁷⁰ In Derrida as in Jacqueline Rose (whose pessimistic criticism of deconstructionist feminism Spivak addresses), “guarding this particular name [woman] for the graphematic structure is perhaps the most essentialist move of all—this turning of deconstruction into a narrative whether in praise or dispraise.”⁶⁷¹

Spivak laments that this leaves us “rather far away from the ‘subject’ of feminist ethicopolitics.” Thus, “we must still insist on the project of antisexism, because sexism *is* also a pathology.”⁶⁷² And yet “it is *in the interest of* diagnosing the ontological ruse, on the basis of which there is oppression of woman, that we have to bring our understanding of the relationship between the name ‘woman’ and deconstruction into crisis.”⁶⁷³ In addition to Derrida, here Spivak might be responding to Drucilla Cornell’s feminist deconstructivist remetaphorization of the feminine for legal theoretical purposes.⁶⁷⁴ Cornell argues that feminism cannot do without a rewriting of the feminine, “what has

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 136.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Ibid., 136.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation : Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law*.

yet to be rendered at all, as the repressed, as the disruption of the unconscious, as the explosive force of an imaginary that cannot be completely shut out.”⁶⁷⁵ Cornell criticizes the essentialism of Robin West and Catherine MacKinnon, and yet she argues that their work demonstrates the necessity for the recreating of a feminine which can allow for the visibility of a feminine which has yet to be articulated.⁶⁷⁶ Cornell is indeed critical of essentialism, but unlike Spivak she argues that essentialism has no place in feminist theory that would leave a place for the articulation of the feminine. For Cornell of *Beyond Accomodation*, to try to get beyond sexual difference is to erase particularly the feminine. When the feminine is erased, one finds oneself sublated in a neutrally (masculine) gendered discourse. The mark of gender is necessary for the legal voicing of its myriad tragedies. Spivak responds,

If we do not take the time to understand this in our zeal to be “political,” then I fear we act out the kind of play that Nietzsche figured out in *The Genealogy of Morals*: in the interest of giving an alibi to his desire to punish, which is written into his way of being, in other words in the interest of a survival game, man produces an alibi which is called justice. And in the interest of the alibi, man has to define and articulate, over and over again, the name of man. It seems to me that if *we* [deconstructive feminists?] forget that *we* cannot have a deconstructive feminism which decides to transform the usefulness of the name “woman,” itself based on a certain kind of historical anxiety for the graphematic structure, into a narrative, and thus take up arms against what we sometimes call essentialism, *then* we might be acting out this particular scenario, adequately contradicting and thus legitimizing it—by devising newer names of woman—in the interest of giving the desire to punish the alibi of justice. And if you ask me whether the disenfranchised can think this critique, I would say yes.

Thus, Spivak suggests— in a manner that recalls the strategic use of essentialism and reintroduces the language of “anti-sexism”— that Cornell rejects essentialism too hastily, and does so in order to rewrite a feminine which only repeats the phallogocentric denial of the origin (the sender). Thus, Spivak’s reponse to Cornell is to say that the feminist deconstructionist does not rewrite narrative; but the feminist deconstructionist must have

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁷⁶ The work of the early Irigaray is also important for Cornell. For Cornell’s more recent criticisms of Irigaray, see Cheah et al., “The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell.”

recourse to what Spivak refers to here as “what we sometimes call essentialism,” in the name of the constituency of anti-sexism. It would appear that the name woman, not “newer names of woman,” is necessary for its own critique, but only with a constant appreciation for the failures of such uses, for that which gets erased in such uses.

Spivak articulates this response as marked by ethical aporia. In order to explain away this aporia however, she appeals to Foucault’s “double-play with ‘power’ and power... the name and, as it were, the thing, the phenomenal essence.”^{677,678}

By the end of the section [“Objective” in *History of Sexuality I*], everything happens as if the lessons learned from Nietzsche, precisely the alibi for the ontological compulsion to articulate as epistemology ... could be undone by an act of will. Thus Foucault is able to say, “We must at the same time conceive of sex without the law, and power without the king.” This sentence leads into the section entitled “Method.” Arrived here, the *name* “power” is systematically sold short for the “thing” power, and we are able to get a method because we know the objective, not reduced to an act of willed thought.

Spivak ends the essay then with the claim that she has recently shifted from writing of the “name ‘woman’ ... into the subaltern of contemporary colonization.”⁶⁷⁹ This would seem for Spivak to be a way of speaking of an “imagined name,” one that is “irreducible.” Spivak speaks of the name “woman” when she says, “I want to be able not to lament when the material possibility for the name will have disappeared.”⁶⁸⁰ And yet, “To relate it to the subtitle of my chapter [“Negotiations”]: the two sides (can there be two) [sic] of sexual difference are thus, in the reading that is living, in constant ground-level

⁶⁷⁷ I am not sure what to make of this in light of Spivak’s implicit criticism of Cornell; *where* is the phenomenal essence that Spivak can refer to? This would be Cornell’s question even today. Spivak assumes that such an essence is waiting to be deconstructed—but an important feminist moment in her own work it seems to me is the voicing of the question of the very possibility of a gendered subaltern voice. What’s more, Spivak seems to gloss over Cornell’s important question: what to do with the vast differences between “women” such that one cannot speak of women without erasing those differences? Spivak’s alternative is to speak of women, essences, gendered subalternity *with* ubiquitous skepticism. The internal tension of this mode is my interest in this chapter. I do not necessarily prefer Cornell’s remetaphorization of the feminine of *Beyond Accomodation*, but Spivak’s alternative must be read as aporetic—otherwise it is dizzying and depressing.

⁶⁷⁸ Spivak, “Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations.”, 137.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

negotiation, with no leisure (*nec-otium*)⁶⁸¹ at all, before sides can be taken.” Spivak thus ends on a note of playfulness. This is unwillingness to settle on any one interpretation or “side”; it is a deferral of decision between various readings of “sexual difference.” She mentions that at a meeting with Cixous in October 1991 on “Readings of Sexual Difference,” Derrida himself

shuttles to the other side: all readings are of/from (the double-jointed French *de*) sexual difference from inside sexual difference. One is never completely on one side of it, it is the story of a constant untimely interruption (*histoire d'un contretemps*)—of getting to the in-different *human* perspective?⁶⁸²

Why does this paragraph end in a question mark? The next words are those quoted above: “To relate it to the subtitle of my chapter... in the reading that is living, in constant ground-level negotiation....” Does Spivak question the possibility of an “in-different human perspective,” even though this would seem to be the hope of the disappearance of the name “woman”? Why the elliptical ending in an essay that has attempted to articulate a dramatic change in Spivak’s regard for the possibilities of deconstruction for feminist theories? Spivak does not regard this tension as pointing to a conflict within the feminist, but rather she seems to do away with this tension by suggesting that each albeit conflicting moment on her reading represents an invaluable critical moment in its own right that must contribute to a feminist “reading that is living,” conflictual, changing. Clearly Spivak recognizes the conflict between deconstructive feminism and “woman” as an “ethical aporia,”⁶⁸³ however, she appeals to Foucault I argue as a way of abating this tension or explaining it. However, the aporia in question is one (for the purposes of this project) of *the feminist*— that which is termed feminist, that which professes to be

⁶⁸¹ [Negotium in Latin means business or transactions, and I suppose negotiations. It is formed by the combination of nec + otium, lack of leisure.]

⁶⁸² Spivak, “Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations.”

⁶⁸³ Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 136-137.

feminist. Spivak in all cases is concerned to speak for “the constituency of anti-sexism,” but *the mode of referring to this constituency* changes depending on at which moment in the living reading one is. How does this changing mode affect that constituency or some members of that constituency? The way of thinking the constituency changes precisely because this constituency is a question not only among but within each member of that constituency. This is not a disagreement that Spivak has with someone else, though she certainly does disagree with Cornell. Spivak argues that multiple negotiations are necessary—that of the negative inspired by a Marxian reading, that of the nonidentical inspired by a Derridian reading. Spivak refers to this as “ethical aporia, backed up by intellectual preparation and its relationship to a political decision,”⁶⁸⁴ it would seem that that ethical aporia seems precipitated not by reflection on the feminist, but rather by the feminist deconstructionist who is of one mind encountering a public of another. The aporia is not internal for Spivak to the feminist; the aporia is an ethical one precipitated by external events. However, Spivak’s question mark writ large in the final paragraphs of this essay as well as in her implicit maintenance of the strategic use of essentialism continues.

What is the significance of this question mark? As she does here, in her work on the question of gendered subaltern speech, Spivak questions the possibility of a “subject of feminist theory.” As “the gendered subaltern, especially in decolonized space, has become the name ‘woman’ for me,”⁶⁸⁵ the ambiguity of “woman” in the strategic use of essentialism I argue appears again in the question of gendered subaltern speech. There again in Spivak I read an implicit feminist aporetic. This questioning of the possibility of

⁶⁸⁴ Spivak, “Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations,” 136.

⁶⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

a subject of feminist theory in her work on the gendered subaltern as in the above retains similarly interestingly conflicting moments. I turn now to a consideration of Spivak's writing particularly of the Rani of Sirmur to discuss further the nonidentical in Spivak.

Subalternity and Alterity

The negotiations of the strategic use of essentialism explicitly disappear from Spivak's writing, and instead a thinking of the gendered subaltern takes its place. In her 1988 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak calls for a "still more radical decentering of the subject" in claiming that "there is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak."⁶⁸⁶ Bhuvanewari Bhaduri's rewriting of the "social text of *sati*-suicide" by deliberately committing suicide during menstruation could not be read as resistance at all. Bhuvanewari committed suicide because she was unable to carry out a political assassination. "Aware of the practical need for trust, she killed herself."⁶⁸⁷ It was precisely to thwart readings of her suicide as precipitated by "illegitimate passion" that Bhuvanewari intervened on the *sati* social script. But her "resistance could not be read as resistance at all."⁶⁸⁸ Her resistance took the form of generalizing "the sanctioned motive for female suicide" in order to "displace (not merely deny), in the physiological inscription of her body, its [female suicide's] imprisonment within legitimate passion by a single male."⁶⁸⁹ In doing so, she deliberately reverses "the interdict against a menstruating widow's right to immolate herself; the unclean widow must wait, publicly, until the cleansing bath of the fourth day... in order to claim her dubious privilege."⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁶ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?."

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁶⁸⁸ Spivak, "The Trajectory of the Subaltern in My Work".

⁶⁸⁹ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?.", 308.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Instead Bhuvanewari's act was not understandable; "her act became absurd."⁶⁹¹

It was a decade later before it was even discovered that she was a participant in the armed struggle for the independence of India. As Spivak later explains, Bhuvanewari was her own (Spivak's) grandmother's sister. Prior to trying to understand these events for herself, Spivak asked a family member, "a Bengali woman, a philosopher and Sanskritist whose early intellectual production is almost identical to mine" to tell Spivak about her own understanding of the suicide. "Two responses: (a) Why, when her two sisters, Saileswari and Rāseswari, led such full and wonderful lives, are you interested in the hapless Bhuvanewari? (b) I asked her nieces. It appears that it was a case of illicit love."

It is the startling combination of interpreted absurdity and poignant planned act that leads Spivak to pronounce in that original essay, "The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read."⁶⁹² "The subaltern cannot speak," but this does not mean that her speech is ahistorically foreclosed. Instead, "the female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish."⁶⁹³ But this task "must confront the impossibility of such gestures" as the confluence of gender, race, ethnicity and class which deconstructive criticism has attempted to render with "the feminine"—the "'figure' of woman."⁶⁹⁴ Derrida and Marx are preferable to the Deleuze and Foucault of "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze"⁶⁹⁵ precisely in such attempts by the former to locate alterity in the supposed subject, rather than by positing external "canny subalterns."⁶⁹⁶ Spivak asks, "Why should

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 287.

⁶⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice : Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).

⁶⁹⁶ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 275.

such occlusions be sanctioned in precisely those intellectuals who are our best prophets of heterogeneity and the Other?”⁶⁹⁷ But the feminine in Derrida cannot serve as a model for the work of the Subaltern Studies group because whereas woman “whose minimal predication as indeterminate is already available to the phallogentric tradition,” the representation of such an occlusion is not possible for the gendered subaltern. Thus subaltern historiography raises questions of method that would prevent it from using such a ruse.”⁶⁹⁸ In phallogentric tradition, the subaltern has no history; however, the “subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.” The questions raised by subaltern historiography involve the inarticulability of class which Spivak finds in Marx. But Spivak is particularly concerned that no dialectics of colonial subject/subaltern feminine object is available. Thus dialectics erase the speech of the gendered subaltern. Far from an available “standpoint” of the subaltern, of the possibility of a “native informant,” her language is not possible. The subaltern cannot speak.

In revisiting this essay,⁶⁹⁹ Spivak retracts this statement: “It was an inadvisable remark.”⁷⁰⁰ Spivak discusses a critique of her early statement.⁷⁰¹ Abena Busia argues that

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., 272.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 287.

⁶⁹⁹ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur,” in *Europe and Its Others*, ed. Francis Barker (Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985). Spivak revisits the question of subaltern speech in the context of this “feminist book” in which the “philosophical presuppositions, historical excavations, and literary representations of the dominant—insofar as they are shared by the emergent postcolonial— also trace a subliminal and discontinuous emergence of the ‘native informant’: autochthone and/or subaltern. This is not a trope expressed through the speech, writing and images of ‘third world literature.’ How it displaces itself from impossible perspective to resistant networks as well as super-exploited objects is part of the story,” xi. Thus Spivak’s text considers the “native informant/postcolonial” as impossible, as well as a site of resistance as well as super-exploitation; the ‘native informant’ as trope does not originate in ‘third world literature’ as if such a literature could appear as such. But this does not mean that such a trope is in all appearances the site of void or exploitation. See also “Transnationality and Multiculturalist Ideology: Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak,” Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva in Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva, eds., *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).

⁷⁰⁰ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.*, 308.

in fact Spivak is able to read Bhubaneswari's [sic] case, "and therefore she *has* spoken in some way. Busia is right, of course."⁷⁰² Spivak concedes that Bhubaneswari's resistance emerges in her own "distanced decipherment" in a way that agrees with her statement in the original essay—the silence of the subaltern is contingent on the work of the "female intellectual." But what victory is Spivak relinquishing to Busia? In this revisitation of the question of the status of subaltern speech, Spivak also tells the story of the Rani of Sirmur, of whose very name "we are not sure."⁷⁰³ Her name is uncertain not due to scholarly loss, but due to the fact that it was never had, never recorded in the colonial documents of British India. In a more profound sense, any micrology that would allow for the remembrance of the Rani from "her own point of view" cannot be referenced.

The unknowability of the Rani is nevertheless the means by which "'true' history," that of the East India Company, is articulated. Spivak knows of the Rani only because ("there is not much text in her name in the archives"⁷⁰⁴) the British deposed the Raja of Sirmur, Karam Prakash, perhaps due to illness. Due to a lack of male relatives deemed worthy by the British colonial government, the Rani is herself named by the British as guardian of her son the minor king Fattah Prakash in order to maintain control of the territory. Thus the Rani becomes "only the instrumental agent of the settlement."⁷⁰⁵ However, Spivak articulates here what she can make of two specific acts of the Rani which are recorded. In doing so, she emphasizes the degree to which this articulation, its

⁷⁰¹ Abena Busia, "Silencing Sycorax: On African Colonial Discourse and the Unvoiced Female," *Cultural Critique* 14 (1989-1990).

⁷⁰² Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.*, 309.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

“narrative pathos” is in fact “unscholarly” and “at a great remove from the austere practice of critical philosophy”:

Yet the ... contaminations of absolute alterity (even to utter the words is to differentiate them from some other thing, which should of course be impossible) that allow us to mime responsibility to the other, cannot allow this pathos merely to be faded out. As I approached her house after a long series of detective maneuvers, I was miming the route of an unknowing, a progressive différance, an “experience” of how I could not know her. Nothing unusual here, and therefore never considered worthy of mention, of notice.⁷⁰⁶

This miming of an unknowing turns up only two acts of the Rani, both of which are “recorded because they cost money.”⁷⁰⁷ First, when her husband has been deposed and banished, the Rani requests and is granted the return to her household of his two other wives. They had been sent off to some other place “for fear of intrigue.”⁷⁰⁸ Second, the Rani allocates Rs. 900 for a great-aunt of her husband with whom the latter had quarreled. The Rani reinstitutes a pension for this great-aunt, and Spivak notes that she does so carefully by promising only Rs. 700 at first “because she knows that Auntie will ask for more.”⁷⁰⁹ These financial records would not themselves have been recorded if the Rani had not been “caught thus between patriarchy and imperialism,” managed by the “young white man in her own household”: “Ochterlony writes, ‘It has been necessary for Captain Birch [Geoffrey Birch, assistant agent of governor]...occasionally to interfere with her authoritatively to counteract the facility of the Ranee’s disposition.’”⁷¹⁰ These traces of the Rani, whose disposition Spivak has only in financial and other colonial records, are “the sudden appearance of an alien agent of ‘true’ history in native space.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 241. See also Cornell’s reading of this “miming” as a dramatic representation of the “very problem of representation,” the “ethical significance of what has been lost, fundamentally misunderstood, in the history of the gendered subaltern” in Drucilla Cornell, *Between Women and Generations : Legacies of Dignity* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 78-79.

⁷⁰⁷ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.*, 233.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 233-234.

There is no romance to be found here.... she is in a representative predicament, a woman whose 'exchange,' from 'feudal' to 'modern,' as the agent of her subject-child, will establish historicity."⁷¹¹

When the Rani "suddenly declares her intention to be a *Sati*,"⁷¹² this, too, is reported in a letter penned by Birch. He writes, "This Ranny appears to be completely devoted to her husband." He explains that he tried to talk her out of "her intention of burning herself at his death" and instead "devote herself to the love of her son and live for him." Birch records the Rani's reply, "She said to the effect, that it was so decreed and she must not attend to advice deviating from it: so I conclude, she has resolved upon sacrificing herself." Spivak argues that Geoffrey Birch's account is part of a larger ignorance of the British of the "ideological background" of *Sati*. The British in fact construct the "woman as an *object* of slaughter, the saving of which can mark the moment when not only a civil but a good society is born out of domestic chaos."⁷¹³ As in "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak makes it clear that she is not in favor of widow-sacrifice as a practice, but here she is interested in the situation of the successful effacement of the "free will or agency of the sexed subject as female" "between patriarchal subject-formation and imperialist object-constitution" to which Birch's letter attests. The chastising of the Rani of Sirmur makes legible the colonial history, by means

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 234.

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid., 235.

of which alone her story might be read. The “saving” of the Rani from her own moves toward *Sati* (in which the British were apparently successful) establishes a history that erases her as agent: “She could not be offered the choice to choose freedom. She was asked to live for her son; and she responded from within her patriarchal formation.” As Varadharajan notes, “The irony, of course, is that ‘free will’ meant allowing oneself to be dissuaded by a British officer or choosing death as the signifier of female desire.”⁷¹⁴ The colonial government pledges to use “every means of influence and persuasion... to induce the Ranee to forgoe her supposed determination.”⁷¹⁵ Spivak explains in fact that *sati* or *suttee* as the name for the “rite of widow self-immolation commemorates a grammatical error on the part of the British.” *Sati* is the feminine form of *sat*, the present participle of the verb “to be,” which means “not only being but the True, the Good, the Right. In the sacred texts it is essence, universal spirit.”⁷¹⁶ This “exemplifies the race-class-gender overdeterminations of the situation. It can perhaps be caught even when it is flattened out: white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men, imposed upon those women a great ideological construction by absolutely identifying *within discursive practice* good-wifeness and self-immolation on the husband’s pyre by an ignorant (but sanctioned) synecdoche.⁷¹⁷ This imperialist object-constitution is the simplistic flipside of the Hindu patriarchal subject-constitution. The Rani of Sirmur, caught between them, is marginalia in the archives; the “instrumental woman (the Rani of Sirmur) is not fully written.”⁷¹⁸ And yet *she* (the feminine form of *sat*) is the incidence for the emergence of the archives

⁷¹⁴ Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak.*, 105.

⁷¹⁵ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.*, 236.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 269.

themselves, for the emergence of history.

Here Spivak goes on to rewrite the question of subaltern speech which I began to discuss above. “Busia is right, of course. All speaking, even seemingly most immediate, entails a distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception. That is what speaking is.”⁷¹⁹ And yet Spivak is not content with this concession:

I acknowledge this theoretical point [of Busia], and also acknowledge the practical importance, for oneself and others, of being upbeat about future work. Yet the moot decipherment by another in an academic institution (willy-nilly a knowledge-production factory) many years later must not be too quickly identified with the “speaking” of the subaltern.

“Subaltern” Spivak insists is “reserved for the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space.”⁷²⁰ The subaltern that Spivak’s writings cannot locate raises the question of the possibility of a voice outside of dialectical overdeterminations. Spivak asks rhetorically, “What is at stake when we insist that the subaltern speaks?” What does Busia’s insistence on the accomplishment of the interpretation of Bhubaneswari’s suicide do? Does the possibility of critique hang on the possibility of subaltern speech? Why was it “inadvisable” to argue that the subaltern cannot speak? Does Spivak’s telling of the story of Bhubaneswari, who “therefore... *has* spoken in some way,” now count as subaltern speech? Again, Spivak argues that “the moot decipherment by another in an academic institution (willy-nilly a knowledge-production factory) many years later must not be too quickly identified with the ‘speaking’ of the subaltern.”⁷²¹ Spivak consents to Busia’s concern for “being upbeat about future work,”⁷²² and yet Spivak’s critique of the

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 309.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 310.

⁷²¹ Ibid., 309.

⁷²² Ibid.

“structures of the production of postcolonial reason”⁷²³ articulate the gendered subaltern as the invisible ground of proper history. But the question of subaltern speech searches for a beyond of dialectical thinking in which the Rani must serve as that invisible ground which makes possible the moving forward of history proper. It remains a subtle and valuable concern to point out the differential appearance of race and class wherever feminist discourse is artificially “confined to gender relations.”⁷²⁴ As the question of subaltern speech emphasizes, the dialectical means of doing so only reinstate those dialectical names which reposition alterity as contradiction or negation.

It is not even clear whether those whose lives Spivak has made use of in order to articulate the question of subaltern speech are themselves subaltern. In fact, Spivak points out that neither the Rani nor Bhubaneswari, whose lives furnish the details which allow Spivak to articulate the subaltern, are in fact subaltern. Why not? If subalternity means to be cut off from access to the lines of social mobility, neither Bhubaneswari with access to the “bourgeois movement for Independence” nor the Rani “with her claim to elevated birth”⁷²⁵ can count. Why is it then that Spivak turns to these sites of void? If these are not subalternities, then is Spivak wrong to explore these as moments of misprision? Are they not in fact sites of omission and misrepresentation after all? Spivak would seem to say yes and no. It is for this reason that Mieke Bal interprets Spivak’s writing of Bhubaneswari as the “not-quite and not-quite-not subaltern heroine;”⁷²⁶ insofar as she had some arguable access to lines of social mobility via participation in the Indian independence movement.

⁷²³ Ibid., xi.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 222.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., 308.

⁷²⁶ Mieke Bal, “Three-Way Misreading,” *Diacritics* 30, no. 1 (2000), 16.

Is it not still the case that regardless of whether or not Busia is right to insist that the scholar must attempt to understand the subaltern, there is yet something of the subaltern about these elusive events to which Spivak turns perhaps evidenced precisely in such disputations over the question of representation in these cases? It remains the case that the repeated difficulty in understanding Spivak witnessed at the retelling of Bhubaneswari's suicide cannot be articulated strictly as an articulation of negativity of the "Subject of the West or the West as Subject." The sexed/gendered subaltern as the "shadow of a shadow" does require the challenge of subalternity for critique of both dialectics— European/indigeneity, Man/Woman— into which the "effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject"⁷²⁷ does not enter. In order to articulate the question of the gendered subaltern—not in order to discourage scholarship, but instead to articulate the complex difficulties at issue— what is required is precisely criticism of the concept and of the subject itself and the means by which subjectivity appears. The name gendered subaltern does not accomplish this dialectically as does the name woman or women in Spivak's earlier work, but instead this name articulates a historical void that calls into question the dialectics of man/woman and west/east that are presumed to operate in parallel. Spivak's remarks that her own readings of two sites of gendered subalternity do not actually count as subalternity, I argue, are an articulation of what Adorno means by the negative not being negative enough whenever that negative is purported to be defined. For Adorno, the negative ought to give the lie to the concept. The appearance of negation ought to raise pervasive doubt as to the salience of the concept. However, in the question of gendered subaltern speech, this effort to gesture beyond dialectical (gendered, raced, classed) thinking only returns the conversation to the ways in which these attempts to

⁷²⁷ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 287.

anticipate nonidentity actually must be articulated through dialectical thinking. And as I have discussed dialectical thinking, clearly on Spivak's account, remains indebted to the very names which critique had hoped to maintain as questions.

How does the strange career of the strategic use of the essentialism relate to the question of subaltern speech? My point has been that both in the case of the ambiguity of the strategic use of essentialism and in the case of the ambiguity of the question of gendered subaltern speech Spivak's writings attest to comparable dissatisfaction with both a dialectical reading of woman or the critique of this dialectical reading by the gendered subaltern as well as with a reading of these as voided sites of radical alterity. These fluctuations in the texts suggest negotiation of the feminist aporetic without articulating what is at stake in the forced choice between two unsatisfactory and mutually undermining interpretations: either dialectical naming or critique anticipating radical alterity preempted by dialectics. While the tension remains between making use of "that without which we cannot do anything" despite the "dangerousness" that inheres, the feminist aporia of negativity and alterity is not confronted in these writings as an aporia of the feminist. The question thus remains: why was it that Spivak could not do anything without this very masterword woman which she disguards as dangerous? I argue that this is because dialectics to which Spivak wants not to subscribe are necessary for articulating salient opposition. Spivak is right to point out that such words are also dangerous, but yielding unilaterally to such danger without interrogating it leaves one purportedly without relation to the ubiquitous names woman/ women/she/female. And why is it that the question of gendered subaltern speech deflates upon closer inspection of the location of such speech? It is *not* the story of placeless women to whom Spivak turns in order to

articulate the question of subaltern speech. Both of these stories are the stories of differently gendered, raced, classed women, and yet it is not such locations that Spivak wants to articulate. It was precisely the lack of location and access to social mobility that Spivak hoped to address. But this must be done through gendered, raced, classed stories, stories whose articulations engage in dialectical thinking. I want to suggest that the aporia performed in this reading of Spivak's work with respect to the names woman/women/she/female and the question of the gendered subaltern is one of *the feminist*. The question of feminist subjectivity as question is suggested by these fluctuations in Spivak's oeuvre and yet not raised.

In this final chapter I have suggested that contra Spivak the aporia in question is one of *the feminist*— that which is termed feminist, that which professes to be feminist. Spivak does refer to the conflict between deconstructive feminism, “the right to an impasse” and “the desire to identify with the oppression of woman” an “ethical aporia,”⁷²⁸ what Spivak elsewhere in different context calls an “impossible decision between two opposed decidables with two mutually cancelling sets of consequences.”⁷²⁹ However, this is not a disagreement between two, who have agreed to something prior. Instead it is an open question locating the aporia of the post-Hegelian feminist. Where is the feminist moment? Is it in the possibilities of the negative which preempt alterity? Is it in the possibilities of alterity which undermine the negative? I argue that the strategic use

⁷²⁸ Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 136-137.

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 222. Spivak says this of Salman Rushdie's “cosmopolitan *challenge* to national culture.” In fact the choice between migrant and national in Rushdie's writing is, Spivak speculates, for him more than a challenge; it is an “aporia for him, an impossible decision between two opposed decidables, with two mutually canceling sets of consequences, a decision which gets made, nonetheless, for one set, since life must operate as a passive or active *différance* of death, as we know from our most familiar experiences: “I wanted to write about a thing I felt difficult to admit even to myself, which is the fact that I left home.” Quote taken from a Rushdie interview with Sean French in *File*.

of essentialism might be read as a deployment of the negative, as engaging in critical dialectics for the purposes of feminist critique. I argue this in spite of the fact that Spivak repeatedly insists that this is “anti-sexist,” a “total reduction of feminism,” not yet feminist.⁷³⁰ And I argue that the question of subaltern speech might be read as posing the question of the nonidentical with respect to both dialectics of “masculine-feminine” and “too-easy West-and-the-rest.”⁷³¹ How *can* gendered subaltern speech be voiced? When read together, these moments articulate what Asha Varadharajan has described as Spivak’s project “to explore the contingency of the object as not only the sum of its determinations [negativity], but also their excess [alterity]. Spivak... attempts to reveal the heteronomy of the feminine and ethnic [as] object...,”⁷³² both as a sum of its apparent determinations *and* as excess. These moments cancel each other; and yet Spivak keeps both in play by emphasizing her reading of excess and impasse as the properly feminist enterprise. In other words, here I am interested in Varadharajan’s claim that Spivak’s work is in some respects “an exemplary execution of Adorno’s plans for negative dialectics;” however my work differs from that of Varadharajan in asking how Spivak’s work, though not articulated as aporetic, might provide the occasion for thinking the feminist as aporetic. Feminist subjectivity as negation *and* the feminist as preemptive critique of subjectivity anticipating alterity mingle in one oeuvre, I argue, without quite yielding an interpretation or confrontation with the feminist aporetic.

⁷³⁰ Spivak and Grosz, “Criticism, Feminism and the Institution.”, 184-185. Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine.*, 136.

⁷³¹ Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present.*, 39.

⁷³² Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak.*, 79.

Conclusion

Where is the feminist? What is the theorist to say about the relationship between the feminist and the name women? When I began this project, I was fraught with questions when approaching any feminist project, about how to articulate, how to use, how to invoke the constituency to which I feel myself to belong. Who are “we”? In this dissertation I have tried to keep in sight first of all that “we” are vastly different, and that there is no definition of that “we” that does not enact both the sublation of negativity (as lack which reconstitutes the same) *and* the preemption of alterity. Insisting that some prior “we” has a relationship to the name women that is continuous not only invites violence on both counts. But it would also deny the sense that “I” have (“I” being *the* question) that “I” am not of one opinion about the name women. Particularly as a white academic, I could not decide how to use the name women in my work. What are the implications for the thinking of knowledge, power and ethics of my own uses of the name women? In the early stages of developing the dissertation, I encountered this question absolutely everywhere. And it was painful not only because I found myself intellectually confused, but also because these scholarly questions opened up other questions which were quite personal.

But even if I were not so confused about how to use the name women in my work, *that* would not erase the ethical question of feminist subjectivity. So, again, is the feminist that which projects a feminist subject, augments a subject under construction, a potential subjectivity? Or rather is the feminist precisely the preemption of subjectivity? What should my own relationship to this question of feminist subjectivity be in light of not only my but others’ relationships to this name? What ought I to do, to write— in

response to such questions that stump even the most tentative attempt to write in the feminist? To whom can I turn for answers to such questions— ? As Beauvoir demonstrated, no theorist or philosopher of the feminist can even begin to get around questions of subjectivity. So what then? Articulate the *whys*—from whence do such problems emerge? Might feminist theory and philosophy—as Adorno suggested analogously—suffer from an inadequate understanding of subjectivity? But as I have tried to articulate, this too becomes a stumbling block. Why when I pose the question of feminist subjectivity through negative dialectics do I still encounter discomfort with my own uses of the name women? I discovered that this was precisely due to the inexhaustible salience of the term as rooted in negation, not in a concept. This way of speaking about women is so common in Anglo-American academic feminism; it took me a very long time to understand that in fact even those (Kim Q. Hall, Naomi Zack) who question the “concept” or the “category” women do not mean to insist that there *is something* to be questioned at all. They are in fact uncomfortable with the reversals, the negativity, on which the name women hinges. And so they use this name only with the greatest of caution—in the hope that some new meanings for the name might emerge. For those who insist that there is no such concept, no such invisible subjectivity (Irigaray, Butler, Sedgwick intermittently, Spivak), the important question is then—whether or not such a subjectivity should be invented. As I have argued, the feminist itself is undecided on this matter. A subjectivity in the feminine or a subjectivity as women or as Chicana or as black feminist or womanist promises the power of a *response* where there was before swallowed silence. But from where can this subjectivity or these subjectivities come? From where might a ‘she’ emerge who is not always in some small part the leftovers or

the negation of a Subject, the One? Wasn't at least one goal to get away from such wholes?

If it is the case that this subjectivity is nowhere to be found, then where does that leave me, the feminist hoping not to add my work to American academic silence with respect to *identity-based* social movements which are always more diverse than either identity theories *or* critiques of identity as theory allow. When Judith Butler, as discussed in Chapter Three, claims that she would not dispute the political use of the name women, this comes off as somehow disingenuous. Not because I doubt Butler's commitment to social justice, etc., but because it sounds so strange coming from someone whose own critique of women as a foundation for feminist politics was so influential. I agreed with her *then*. Why does Butler begin to use the name women in her later work? But I do agree with her *now*. What is behind this? I had a similar experience encountering the work of Irigaray for the first time, which I did only in the final months of this project. A subjectivity in the feminine has yet to be imagined; is that not an appropriate feminist effort? And yet as is increasingly discussed, the early work of Butler raises concerns as to why such a subjectivity would be a bad idea due to feminist concerns. However whereas the numerous comparative studies of Irigaray and early Butler⁷³³ seek to reconcile their views, I have been interested here to articulate the lack of continuity between even the very meaning of women in their work.

I have also had in mind throughout this process the retreat to the name female as unproblematic given the spuriousness of the name women. But here again, designating females as those with which the feminist is aligned excludes. There is no common

⁷³³ See for example Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, Alison Stone, *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

denominator according to which the feminist can be articulated. There is no naming of that denominator that will not do violence— but there are also many cases in which especially the names women/she/female represent what Linda Martín Alcoff has called “an opportunity for a broader political understanding.”⁷³⁴ This concern cannot be made consistent with the former. And I have tried to articulate here why the feminist ought not to be made consistent if it is not already. This does not mean that there is no feminist. But instead that the feminist moves in two directions. On the other hand I do not understand this as a glorious wealth of possible programs. Each direction entails violence to which the other is solemnly opposed. The feminist in this sense has no position from which to speak; in bell hooks’ sense, which resists saying *the* movement, movement remains a fitting word.

In the first chapter, *Aporia and the Question of Feminist Subjectivity*, I argued that escalating disagreement over how to regard the name women calls for a reassessment of the feminist; disagreement concerning the name women locates the question of feminist subjectivity. The negotiations of the name women and the feminist demonstrated by the “Whose *Vagina Monologues* ?” panel were shown to be relevant for similar internal disagreements facing numerous feminist theories and philosophies. I argued that because of trenchant disagreement over whether the feminist augments or critiques subjectivity, a closer look at what the reasons for disagreement might be is needed.

In the second chapter, *Negativity and the Nonidentical: Negative Dialectics and Feminist Aporetics*, I presented a reading of Adorno to facilitate this closer look. Negative dialectics’ ambivalent relationship to dialectical thinking demonstrates a multi-faceted mode of appreciating dialectics. For Adorno, dialectical thinking enables

⁷³⁴ *Visible Identities*, 289.

“thinking against thought”; dialectical thinking allows for internal challenges to surface. And yet, such dialectical thinking can only gesture beyond itself; the “beyond” of dialectics can only surface in dialectics. Negative dialectics anticipates the nonidentical, that which exceeds dialectical thinking; however negative dialectics also defends dialectical thinking because this alone allows for challenge to the concept. And yet the feminist in post-Hegelian feminist philosophy and theory is interested I argued not in the concept, the Same, the Absolute, the One, but instead in a rereading of the *negative* which is emblemized in Hegel at a crucial point as Antigone. Adorno is also interested in a rereading of the negative, but his situation as a theorist does not depend so dearly on the status of this negative.

In the third chapter, *Claiming Antigone*: Butler, Zack, Irigaray, a feminist aporetic, offered by reading together mutually undermining interpretations of Antigone, allows for a response to the question of feminist subjectivity. As we saw, these reinterpretations of the negative do not cohere. Thus, in a manner elucidated by my reading of Adorno and of the limitations of his work for feminist interpretations of the negative, I offered the feminist aporetic as a reading of the negative which poses the question of feminist subjectivity; feminist aporetics articulate how Antigone might appear in negative dialectics, as both an interruption and a gesturing beyond the Hegelian dialectic. In turning my attention to Antigone, who represents in different works the negative and that which falls outside of the concept/negativity negative dialectic, I suggested that Antigone’s ambivalence is the ambivalence of the name woman/women/she/female in contemporary post-Hegelian feminist philosophies and theories. Disagreement over the figure of Antigone was read in this chapter as disagreement over the name “women,” a

name which locates the question of feminist subjectivity. Antigone in the work of Zack and Irigaray was interpreted as a rereading of the negative; Antigone in the work of Butler as a mobilizing of the beyond of the negative, the nonidentical or alterity of dialectical thinking. I also demonstrated that are interesting internal disagreements within each of these interpretations of Antigone that are relevant for the themes of the dissertation. Again, the feminist aporetics is not negatively dialectical in Adorno's sense given the location of the moments of post-Hegelian feminist theory and philosophy. Antigone appears in the negative dialectics, in my view, in a way that reorients the negative dialectics, articulating something new. The aporetic moments of woman/women/she/female are not those of the departure of the subject of negative dialectics. Likewise, the departure of discrete subjectivity in negative dialectics can be not the departure of woman/women/she/female.

The fourth chapter, *Erotic Freedom and Woman as Other: Two Themes in Beauvoir*, offered a reading of the feminist as aporetic in the work of Simone de Beauvoir. I argued that disagreement over the feminist import of Beauvoir's work misses the subtlety of the feminist in Beauvoir; her work does not need to be made internally consistent, as some have argued, in order for Beauvoir to be read as a contemporarily relevant thinker of the feminist. Negotiation of dialectical thinking as well as appreciation for that which exceeds dialectical thinking are necessary, because of the mutual undermining of these modes of the feminist. For Beauvoir, exploring the themes of *Woman as Other* is an important mode of the feminist, but it is also the case that in Beauvoir the feminist cannot strictly be articulated under the rubric of Man/Woman.

In the fifth chapter, *Impasse and Aporia: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Tropes of Gender*, I argued that Sedgwick anticipates the feminist aporetic without articulating its import for the very meaning of the feminist and disagreement over the name women. Sedgwick appreciates the impasse of gender definition, closely related to the impasse of homo/heterosexual definition, and this impasse has much in common with the feminist aporetic. However, aporia is not merely impasse; it is a mutual undermining that leaves one actually with no sound position at all rather than with a multitude of sound interpretations on which to elaborate.

In the final chapter, *The Strategic Use of Essentialism and the Question of Subaltern Speech: On Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Living Reading*, I turned to the work of Spivak, which articulates the feminist dialectically in her strategic use of essentialism as well as anticipates its excess with the question of gendered subaltern speech. However, where Sedgwick's response to impasse was to insist on the coexistence of inconsistent interpretations, we saw in this chapter that Spivak argues that dialectical thinking is not properly feminist—it is rather “anti-sexist.” This attempt to reconcile the aporia at the heart of the question of feminist subjectivity was also seen in her substitution of the question of gendered subaltern speech for interpretation of the name “woman.” I argued that neither of these attempts to get around the aporia is free of problems. The strategic use of essentialism, as in the case of Hall's remetaphorization of the vagina with which we began, as in the case of the separatist trope of queer gender in Sedgwick, fails to locate an unproblematic location for dialectical resistance. However the question of subaltern speech on Spivak's account turns out to have no representable constituency; her examples turn out not to be subaltern enough. So, while Spivak's work negotiates the

feminist aporetic, it cannot fully articulate what is at stake in such substitution and negotiation.

When the theorist admits that there can be no assumed meaning of the feminist, then interpretations of the feminist(s) become possible. There is no choice but to interpret the feminist; the feminist requires interpretation. The significance of the feminist and the names woman/women/she/female are not assumed by their own authors, but are worked out differently in each of the texts considered here—by Butler, Zack, Irigaray, Beauvoir, Sedgwick, Spivak. What they mean by the name woman/women/ she/female and what they mean by the feminist must be interpreted. In this dissertation therefore I have called for a reorientation of feminist theories and philosophies with respect to the most fundamental names: not only woman/women/ she/female but also the feminist. I have not felt such a reorientation to place such names at a distance. Though I have been articulating what I mean in saying that there is no unproblematic feminist moment, no unproblematic rendering or erasure of the name women, disengagement is hardly an option. To reorient oneself in such a way as to make available the *question* of feminist subjectivity, and with it the *question* of the feminist, is to feel oneself all the more engaged in struggle with the profound, in struggle not with death, but with death-in-life, the constant social thinking of oneself as (lack of) object.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Critical Models : Interventions and Catchwords, European Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- . *Minima Moralia : Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso, 1978.
- . *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- . “On Subject and Object.” In *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, 245-58. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Adorno, Theodor W., and Brian O'Connor. *The Adorno Reader, Blackwell Readers*. Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín. “Against Post-Ethnic Futures.” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2004): 99-117.
- . *Visible Identities: Race, Gender and the Self*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín, and Eduardo Mendieta, eds. *Identities: A Reader*. Malden: Blackwell, 2002.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Negotiating with the Dead : A Writer on Writing*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Austin, Regina. “Sapphire Bound!” *Wisconsin Law Review*, no. 3 (1989).
- Bahri, Deepika, and Mary Vasudeva, eds. *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.
- Bal, Mieke. “Three-Way Misreading.” *Diacritics* 30, no. 1 (2000): 2-24.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Coming of Age*. Translated by Patrick O'Brien. New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1973.
- . *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. New York, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1948.
- . *Force of Circumstance : The Autobiography of Simone De Beauvoir*. 1st Paragon House ed. New York: Paragon House, 1992.
- . *Le Deuxième Sexe*. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.
- . *Le Deuxième Sexe*. 2 vols. Vol. 2. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.
- . *Pour Une Morale De L'ambiguïté, Suivi De Pyrrhus Et Cinéas, Collection Idées ; V.21*. Paris: Gallimard, 1962.
- . *Pyrrhus Et Cinéas*. Paris: Gallimard, 1944.
- . *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books ed. New York,: Vintage Books, 1989.
- . *The Second Sex*. Translated by H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- Beauvoir, Simone de, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Michel Sicard. “Interferences.” *Obliques* 18-19 (1979).
- Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Benhabib, Seyla, and Drucilla Cornell. *Feminism as Critique : On the Politics of Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Benjamin, Andrew, ed. *The Lyotard Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell 1989.
- Benjamin, Andrew E. *Post-Structuralist Classics, Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1988.
- . *The Problems of Modernity : Adorno and Benjamin, Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1989.

- Benjamin, Jessica. "Authority and the Family: A World without Fathers." *New German Critique* 13 (1978): 35 ???
- . "The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology." *Telos* 32, no. 1977 (1977): 42-64.
- Benjamin, Jessica, and Margaret A. Simons. "Simone De Beauvoir: An Interview." *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 330-45.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. London: NLB, 1977.
- Benjamin, Walter, Gershom Gerhard Scholem, and Theodor W. Adorno. *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Bergoffen, Debra. "Irigaray's Couples." In *Returning to Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy, Politics and the Question of Unity*, edited by Maria Cimitile and Elaine P. Miller. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Bergoffen, Debra B. *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir*. Edited by Jeffner Allen, *Suny Series, Feminist Philosophy*. Albany, NY: State University Of New York Press, 1997.
- . "Simone De Beauvoir: Disrupting the Metonymy of Gender." In *Resistance, Flight, Creation: Feminist Enactments of French Philosophy*, edited by Dorothea Olkowski, 97-112. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Berlant, Lauren, and Michael Warner. "Guest Column: What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?" *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (May 1995): 343-49.
- Bernstein, J. M. *Adorno : Disenchantment and Ethics, Modern European Philosophy*. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Blee, Kathleen M. *Feminism and Antiracism : International Struggles for Justice*. 4New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Boone, Joseph Allen. *Queer Frontiers : Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000.
- Bornstein, Kate. *Gender Outlaw : On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*. 1st Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.
- Burke, Carolyn L., Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford. *Engaging with Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought, Gender and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Busia, Abena. "Silencing Sycorax: On African Colonial Discourse and the Unvoiced Female." *Cultural Critique* 14 (1989-1990): 81-104.
- Butler, Judith. *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- . *Bodies That Matter : On the Discursive Limits Of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- . "Gendering the Body: Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution." In *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

- . *Giving an Account of Oneself*. 1st ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.
- . “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519-31.
- . *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- . “Sex and Gender in Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex*.” *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 35-49.
- . *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Butler, Judith, and Joan W. Scott, eds. *Feminists Theorize the Political*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Calhoun, Cheshire. “Separating Lesbian Theory from Feminist Theory.” In *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, 334-52. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Campbell, Jan. *Arguing with the Phallus : Feminist, Queer, and Postcolonial Theory : A Psychoanalytic Contribution*. London ; New York
New York: Zed Books ;
Distributed in the USA exclusively by St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Chanter, Tina. *Ethics of Eros : Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Cheah, Pheng, Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler, and Drucilla Cornell. “The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell.” *Diacritics* 28, no. 1 (1998): 19-42.
- Cimitile, Maria, and Elaine P. Miller. *Returning to Irigaray : Feminist Philosophy, Politics, and the Question of Unity, Suny Series in Gender Theory*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Cohen, Tom. *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities : A Critical Reader*. Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Cornell, Drucilla. *Between Women and Generations : Legacies of Dignity*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- . *Beyond Accommodation : Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction, and the Law, Thinking Gender*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . *The Philosophy of the Limit*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *Critical Race Theory : The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*. New York: New Press : Distributed by W.W. Norton & Co., 1995.
- Derrida, Jacques. “Fichus: Frankfurt Address.” In *Paper Machine*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- . *Given Time. I, Counterfeit Money*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Deutscher, Penelope. *A Politics of Impossible Difference : The Later Work of Luce Irigaray*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- . *Yielding Gender : Feminism, Deconstruction, and the History of Philosophy*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Duggan, Lisa, and Nan D. Hunter. *Sex Wars : Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*. 10th anniversary ed. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Ellis, Havelock, John Addington Symonds, and Ivan Crozier. *Sexual Inversion : A Critical Edition*. Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

- Eng, David L., Judith Halberstam, and Jose Esteban Munoz. "Introduction: What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005): 1-14.
- Enslar, Eve. *The Vagina Monologues*. Rev. ed. New York: Villard, 2001.
- . *The Vagina Monologues*. New York: Villard, 1998.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men : Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. 1st Perennial ed. New York: Perennial, 2001.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Myths of Gender : Biological Theories About Women and Men*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1992.
- . *Sexing the Body : Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000.
- Feder, Sam, Julie Hollar, and Women Make Movies (Firm). *Boy I Am*. New York: Women Make Movies,, 2007. videorecording.
- Flynn, Thomas R. *A Poststructuralist Mapping of History*. 2 vols. Vol. 2: Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005.
- . *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism : The Test Case of Collective Responsibility*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Foucault, Michel. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice : Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Freud, Sigmund, Anna Freud, and James Strachey. *A Case of Hysteria : Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho- analysis, 1953.
- Fuller, Margaret. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century, Dover Thrift Editions*. Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1999.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Feminist Theory, the Body and the Disabled Figure." In *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Gopinath, Gayatri. "Homo-Economics: Queer Sexualities in a Transnational Frame." In *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity*, edited by Rosemary Marangoly George, 102-24. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.
- Guenther, Lisa. *The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction*. Edited by Tina Chanter, *Suny Series in Gender Theory*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1998.
- . *In a Queer Time and Place : Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives, Sexual Cultures*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
- . "Shame and White Gay Masculinity " *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4 (2005): 220-33.
- Hall, Kim Q. "Queerness, Disability and *the Vagina Monologues* " *Hypatia* 20, no. 1 (2005): 99-119.
- Hammonds, Evelyn. "Black (W)Holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality." In *Feminist Meets Queer Theory*, edited by Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, 136-56. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Heath, Stephen. "Differences." *Screen* 19, no. 3 (1978): 50-112.
- Heberle, Renée. *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno, Re-Reading the Canon*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.

- Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, Arnold V. Miller, and J. N. Findlay. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Heinämaa, Sara. *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference : Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.
- Hewitt, Andrew. "A Feminist Dialectic of the Enlightenment: Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited." *New German Critique* 56 Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno (Spring-Summer 1992): 143-70.
- Hohendahl, Peter U. "Introduction: Adorno Criticism Today." *New German Critique* 56 Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno (Spring-Summer 1992): 3-15.
- Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. *Prismatic Thought : Theodor W. Adorno, Modern German Culture and Literature*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
- Hollibaugh, Amber L. *My Dangerous Desires : A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home, Series Q*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Hooks, Bell. *Yearning : Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. 1st ed. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990.
- Huffer, Lynne. *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures : Nostalgia, Ethics, and the Question of Difference*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- . "'There Is No Gomorrah': Narrative Ethics in Feminist and Queer Theory." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12, no. 3 (2001): 1-32.
- Huhn, Tom. *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Huhn, Tom, and Lambert Zuidervart, eds. *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays in Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997.
- Huntington, Patricia. "Fragmentation, Race, and Gender: Building Solidarity in the Postmodern Era." In *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, edited by Lewis R. Gordon, 185-202. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Hutchings, Kimberly. *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK Malden, MA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Pub. ; Blackwell Pub., 2003.
- Irigaray, Luce. "And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 1 (1981).
- . *Between East and West : From Singularity to Community*. [English ed, *European Perspectives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- . *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- . "The Gesture in Psychoanalysis." In *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Teresa Brennan. London: Routledge, 1989.
- . *I Love to You : Sketch for a Felicity within History*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- . *Key Writings*. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- . *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche, Gender and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- . *Sexes and Genealogies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
- . *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- . *Thinking the Difference : For a Peaceful Revolution*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

- . *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Translated by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Jacobs, Carol. "Dusting Antigone." *MLN* 111, no. 5, Comparative Literature Issue (1996): 889-917.
- Jaggar, Alison M. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1983.
- James, Joy, ed. *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998.
- James, Joy, and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. *The Black Feminist Reader*. Malden, Mass., USA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Late Marxism : Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*. London ; New York: Verso, 1990.
- Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1998.
- Jay, Martin. "Adorno in America." *New German Critique* 31, West German Culture and Politics (Winter 1984): 157-82.
- Kaplan, Caren, Norma Alarcón, and Minoou Moallem. *Between Woman and Nation : Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State*. Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Kauffman, Linda S. *American Feminist Thought at Century's End : A Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993.
- Kessler, Suzanne J. *Lessons from the Intersexed*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Krafft-Ebing, R. von. *Psychopathia Sexualis; a Medico-Forensic Study*. 1st unexpurgated ed. New York: Putnam, 1965.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Translated by Thomas Gara, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- . "Oscillation between Power and Denial." In *New French Feminisms*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. New York: Schocken, 1981.
- . "Psychoanalysis and the Polis." In *The Politics of Interpretation*, edited by W.J.T. Mitchell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- . *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- . "Woman Can Never Be Defined." In *New French Feminisms*, edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtrivon. New York: Schocken, 1981.
- . "Women's Time." In *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, edited by N. Keohane, M. Rosaldo and B. Gelpi. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982.
- Kristeva, Julia, Philippe Petit, and Sylvère Lotringer. *Revolt, She Said, Semiotext(E) Foreign Agents Series*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2002.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1992.
- Le Dœuff, Michèle. *Hipparchia's Choice : An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.* Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991.
- Love, Nancy S. "Epistemology and Exchange: Marx, Nietzsche and Critical Theory." *New German Critique* 41 Special Issue on the Critiques of the Enlightenment, no. Spring-Summer 1987 (1987): 71-94.

- Lundgren-Gothlin, Eva. *Sex and Existence : Simone De Beauvoir's the Second Sex*. [Rev. ed. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.
- Lunn, Eugene. *Marxism and Modernism : An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. "Adorno as Devil." *Telos* 19 (Spring 1974): 28-137.
- . *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele, *Theory and History of Literature, Volume 46*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Reason and Revolution*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1960.
- Martin, Biddy. *Femininity Played Straight : The Significance of Being Lesbian*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- . "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias." *Diacritics* 24, no. 2/3 (1994): 104-21.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1967.
- McKinney, Ronald H. "The Origins of Modern Dialectics." *Journal of the History of Ideas* April (1983).
- Mills, Patricia Jagentowicz. *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel, Re-Reading the Canon*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.
- . *Woman, Nature, and Psyche*. New Haven: Yale university press, 1987.
- Moi, Toril. *Feminist Theory & Simone De Beauvoir*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1989.
- . *Sexual/Textual Politics : Feminist Literary Theory*. London ; New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back : Writings by Radical Women of Color*. 2nd ed. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Nagele, Rainer. "The Scene of the Other: Theodor W. Adorno's Negative Dialectic in the Context of Poststructuralism." *boundary 2* 11, no. 1/2, Engagements: Postmodernism, Marxism, Politics (Autumn 1982-Winter 1983): 59-79.
- Nelson, Cary, and Lawrence Grossberg. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Nestle, Joan. *A Restricted Country*. Ithaca: Firebrand, 1990.
- , ed. *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*. Boston: Alyson, 1991.
- Nicholson, Linda J. *Feminism/Postmodernism, Thinking Gender*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1969.
- Nye, Andrea. *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man*. London: Croom Helm, 1988.
- Oliver, Kelly. *Family Values : Subjects between Nature and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- . *Womanizing Nietzsche : Philosophy's Relation to The "Feminine"*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Osborne, Peter. "A Marxism for the Postmodern?: Jameson's Adorno." *New German Critique* 56 Special Issue on Theodor W. Adorno (Spring-Summer 1992): 171-92.

- Pensky, Max. *The Actuality of Adorno : Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern, Suny Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
- Phelan, Shane. "Interpretation and Domination: Adorno and the Habermas-Lyotard Debate." *Polity* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 597-616.
- Pizer, John. "Jameson's Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Utopian." *New German Critique* 58 (Winter 1993): 127-51.
- Richardson, Diane, Janice McLaughlin, and Mark E. Casey. *Intersections between Feminist and Queer Theory*. Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Riley, Denise. *"Am I That Name?" Feminism and the Category Of "Women" In History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Rooney, Ellen. *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*. Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, and Donald A. Cress. *On the Social Contract ; Discourse on the Origin of Inequality ; Discourse on Political Economy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1983.
- Rubin, Gayle. "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries." In *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, edited by Joan Nestle, 466-82. Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1992.
- . "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, edited by Carole S. Vance. London: Pandora Press, 1989.
- . "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex. ." In *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975.
- Rubin, Gayle, and Judith Butler. "Sexual Traffic. Interview." In *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*, edited by Elizabeth Weed and Naomi Schor, 68-108. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Sade, Austryn Wainhouse, and Richard Seaver. *The Marquis De Sade: The 120 Days of Sodom, and Other Writings*. New York: Grove Press, 1966.
- Sahli, Nancy. "Smashing: Women's Relationships before the Fall." *Chrysalis* 8 (1979): 17-27.
- Sandoval, Chela. *Methodology of the Oppressed, Theory out of Bounds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1953.
- . *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.
- . *Notebooks for an Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Schwarzer, Alice, and Simone de Beauvoir. *After the Second Sex : Conversations with Simone Debeauvoir*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- . *Tendencies, Series Q*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, Raymond Danowski, and Raymond Danowski Poetry Library (Emory University. General Libraries). *Between Men : English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, Gender and Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Simons, Margaret A. *Feminist Interpretations of Simone De Beauvoir*. Edited by Nancy Tuana, *Re-Reading the Canon*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.
- . “The Silencing of Simone De Beauvoir: Guess What's Missing in *the Second Sex?* .” *Women's Studies Newsletter* 6:5, no. 78 (1983): 559-64.
- Sjoholm, Cecilia. *The Antigone Complex: Ethics and the Invention of Feminine Desire*. Edited by Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, *Cultural Memory in the Present*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Caroll. “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America.” *Signs* 1, no. 1 (1975): 1-29.
- Smith, A. J. M. *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse, in English and French*. Toronto, New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Solomon, Robert C. *In the Spirit of Hegel : A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Sophocles. *Antigone*. Translated by David Franklin and John Harrison. Edited by John Harrison and Judith Affleck. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- . *Antigone, the Women of Trachis, Philoctetes and Oedipus at Colonus*. Translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones. Edited by Hugh Lloyd-Jones. Vol. 21. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Spivak, Gayatri. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- . “Displacement and the Discourse of Woman.” In *Displacement: Derrida and After*, edited by Mark Krupnick, 169-95. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- . “Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations.” In *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 121-40. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- . “The Trajectory of the Subaltern in My Work.” Paper presented at the Voices, University of California, Santa Barbara 2004.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason : Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- . *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . “The Rani of Sirmur.” In *Europe and Its Others*, edited by Francis Barker, 128-50. Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, and Tani E. Barlow. “Not Really a Properly Intellectual Response: An Interview with Gayatri Spivak.” *Positions* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 139-63.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Sara Danius, and Stefan Jonsson. “An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.” *boundary 2* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 24-50.

- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, and Elizabeth Grosz. "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution." *Thesis Eleven* 10/11 (1984-1985): 175-88.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Donna Landry, and Gerald M. MacLean. *The Spivak Reader : Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, and Ellen Rooney. "In a Word. Interview." In *The Essential Difference*, edited by Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, 151-84. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Spivak, Gayatri, and Ellen Rooney. "In a Word. Interview." In *The Essential Difference*, edited by Naomi Schor and Elizabeth Weed, 151-84. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Stone, Alison. *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexual Difference*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Sullivan, Michael, and John T. Lysaker. "Between Impotence and Illusion: Adorno's Art of Theory and Practice." *New German Critique* 57 (Autumn 1992): 87-122.
- Trinh, T. Minh-Ha. *Woman, Native, Other : Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Varadharajan, Asha. *Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Veit-Wild, Flora, and Dirk Naguschewski. *Body, Sexuality, and Gender, Matatu ; No. 29-30*. New York, NY: Rodopi, 2005.
- Vlastos, Gregory. *The Philosophy of Socrates; a Collection of Critical Essays*. [1st ed, *Modern Studies in Philosophy*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1971.
- Walker, Alice, and Pratibha Parmar. *Warrior Marks : Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993.
- Wallace, Michele. *Black Macho and the Myth of Superwoman*. London ; New York: Verso, 1990.
- . *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. New York: Dial Press, 1979.
- Walsh, Lisa. "Her Mother Her Self: The Ethics of the Antigone Family Romance." *Hypatia* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 96-125.
- Weed, Elizabeth, and Naomi Schor. *Feminism Meets Queer Theory, Books from Differences*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Wendell, Susan. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Wilke, Sabine. "Adorno and Derrida as Readers of Husserl: Some Reflections on the Historical Context of Modernism and Postmodernism." *boundary 2* 16, no. 2/3 (Spring 1989): 77-90.
- Willett, Cynthia. "Hegel, Antigone, and the Possibility of a Woman's Dialectic." In *Modern Engendering: Critical Feminist Readings in Modern Western Philosophy*, edited by Bat-Ami Bar On. New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- . "Hegel, Antigone, and the Possibility of Ecstatic Dialogue." *Philosophy and Literature* 14, no. 2 (1990): 268-83.
- . *Maternal Ethics and Other Slave Moralities*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- . *The Soul of Justice : Social Bonds and Racial Hubris*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

- Wittig, Monique. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- Young, Iris Marion. "Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective." In *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre*, edited by Julien S. Murphy, 200-28. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.
- . *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Zack, Naomi. *Bachelors of Science: Seventeenth Century Identity, Then and Now*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.
- . *Inclusive Feminism: A Third Wave Theory of Women's Commonality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.
- . "Mixed Black and White Race and Public Policy." In *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: The Big Questions*, edited by et al. Naomi Zack. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- . "Philosophy and Racial Paradigms." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 33 (1999): 299-317.
- . *Philosophy of Science and Race*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- . *Race and Mixed Race*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- . "Race and Philosophic Meaning." In *Race and Racism*, edited by Bernard Boxill. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . *Race/Sex: Their Sameness, Difference and Interplay*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- . "Thinking About Race." Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998.
- . *Women of Color and Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.
- Zack, Naomi, Laurie Shrage, and Crispin Sartwell, eds. *Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality: The Big Questions*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.