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**AFTER POSTSTRUCTURALISM:  
TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS**

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## FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY: COMING OF AGE

Rosi Braidotti

## I. THE MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES OF FEMINIST THOUGHT

Around 1981, as Jane Gallop put it in her homonymous book, the second feminist wave enters officially into the academic curriculum of American universities. The baby-boomers, whose restlessness and egalitarian aspirations shaped the politics and the cultural revolution of the 1970s, come of academic age in the 1980s and go knocking on the doors of academia, demanding reforms of the canonical curriculum that will reflect the concerns and anxieties of their generation. The disciplinary area that is most receptive to the theoretical insights, the political passions and the innovative style of the radical epistemologies of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s is not, predictably enough, philosophy. The academic, institutional practice of philosophy is still quite conservative at the dawn of the 1980s, as argued in this volume by Judith Butler and Braidotti. It tends to resist against the swelling tide of radical philosophies and the social and political turmoil of the period. A crucial element of this hostility is related to the "Franco-American disconnection,"<sup>1</sup> and it underscores the extent to which French poststructuralist thought actually shaped the theoretical concerns of the rebellious generation who entered US academia at the end of the 1970s and was thus well placed to shape the agenda throughout the 1980s.

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1. The term was coined by Domna Stanton in 1980 in "Language and Revolution: The Franco-American Dis-connection," in *The Future of Difference*, Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (eds) (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1980).

This is not to say, however, that the impact of French thought was uncontroversial, or that other traditions within continental philosophy did not impact positively on the development of feminist philosophies through the 1980s.

For instance, the German critical theory school continues to exert a productive influence on feminism, in the astute commentaries provided by a new generation of scholars,<sup>2</sup> but also in original elaborations. For example, Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser provide new insights into democratic analyses of societal institutions and social movements.<sup>3</sup> Drucilla Cornell pursues a different route to radical democracy by combining the methods of deconstruction and psychoanalytic theory to the analysis of social phenomena.<sup>4</sup>

The legacy of phenomenology also endures and grows,<sup>5</sup> for example through Iris Marion Young's illuminating analyses of public policy, race politics, and democratic practices.<sup>6</sup> The phenomenology of race is enriched by the original gender perspectives introduced by Linda Alcoff, while Christine Battersby engages in productive dialogue with both phenomenology and poststructuralism.<sup>7</sup> One of the areas of phenomenology that grows exponentially in the period is the field of "Beauvoir studies," especially after the death of the grand lady in 1986.<sup>8</sup> Deirdre Bair publishes Simone de Beauvoir's official biography in 1990,<sup>9</sup> while critical overviews of Beauvoir's impact on contemporary feminism begin to appear.<sup>10</sup> This field of study will intensify at the end of the century and the start of the new millennium.

2. See, for example, the essays collected in Johanna Meehan (ed.), *Feminists read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

3. See Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (eds), *Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

4. See Drucilla Cornell, *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and *The Imaginary Domain: Abortion, Pornography and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

5. For a useful introduction, see Linda Fisher and Lester Embree (eds), *Feminism and Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996).

6. See Iris M. Young, *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), and *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

7. See for instance Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

8. Nineteen eight-six was the year that *Yale French Studies* devoted a special issue to "Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century."

9. See Deirdre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography* (New York: Summit Books, 1990).

10. See especially Toril Moi, *Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Margaret A. Simons (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Simone de Beauvoir* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). For an overview see Karen Vintges, *Philosophy*

Another field that grows fast in these years is feminist moral philosophy, which reaches greater heights with the theory of an "ethics of care" proposed by the social psychologist Carol Gilligan and developed into a new social theory of citizenship by Joan Tronto.<sup>11</sup> One of the most eminent feminist moral philosophers is Virginia Held, who combines the radical insights of feminist activism with broader ethical concerns.<sup>12</sup> Of great significance is also the work of Martha Nussbaum, who applies universal but situated ethical principles to public policy and urgent global social issues.<sup>13</sup> Analytic philosophy was itself not immune from the contagious creativity of the era.<sup>14</sup> The pace and quality of these new developments is such that it blurs the boundaries between established schools of thought and national traditions.

Nonetheless, French philosophy was clearly the inspirational force that propelled the most innovative theoretical developments for the feminist philosophers of the period throughout Europe and elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Even the more skeptical-minded feminist philosophers have to come to terms with the challenges of difference.<sup>16</sup> French thought is thus the hidden agenda that makes

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*as Passion: The Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996).

11. See, for example, Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
12. See Virginia Held, *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, Politics* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1993), and *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).
13. See, for example, Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
14. The main feminist contributions of the analytic feminist philosophers come much later and is best exemplified by Miranda Fricker and Jennifer Hornsby (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Lynn H. Nelson, *Who Knows: From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1990).
15. The most significant works in this tradition are the Milan Women's Bookstore Collective's elaboration of *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). This was developed into an original critique of the history of philosophy by Adriana Cavarero in *In Spite of Plato*. In German, the significant contributions are Herta Nagl-Docekal and Herlinde Pauer-Studer's edited collection *Denken der Geschlechterdifferenz: Neuen Fragen und Perspektiven des feministische Philosophie*, and Andrea Maihofer's *Geschlecht als Existenzweise: Macht, Moral, Recht und Geschlechterdifferenz*. In Spanish, the pioneering work is done by Celia Amorós in *Hacia una crítica de la razón patriarcal* and by Maria Santa Cruz, Marie-Luisa Femenias, and Anna-Maria Bach on *Mujeres y filosofía* in Latin America.
16. This school, initiated by Janet Radcliffe Richards's *The Skeptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry*, is pursued by Mary Hawksworth's "Knowers, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims to Truth," which is a critical assessment of feminist postmodernism. Susan Hekman's *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of Postmodern Feminism* makes important progress on

traditional philosophers cringe with irritation and mistrust at the sight of new philosophical questions, supported by unfamiliar and foreign sounding terminology: subjectivity, discourse, materiality, and power as restrictive or negative (*potestas*), but also as positive and empowering (*potentia*). The impact of French poststructuralism on feminist theory is an epistemological upheaval: the French imports are clearly the fallout of what could be called "high" poststructuralism, namely the work of Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and their feminist counterparts Kristeva, Cixous, Kofman, Irigaray, and others.<sup>17</sup> This process of theoretical marketing, however, is not even: some texts – notably those of Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva – enter rapidly into what Edward Said aptly labeled as the "travelling theories" mode, while others, notably those of Deleuze and Irigaray, had to wait much longer before being "discovered." The different rhythms of translation of these texts had a significant impact on the influence they exercised on Anglo-American feminism.

The effect of French poststructuralism was nonetheless instant and significant.<sup>18</sup> In the mid-1980s, as American feminism plunges into the "sex-wars" that will divide its radical wing,<sup>19</sup> the notion and the politics of difference move

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materialism, while Anne Phillips's *Democracy and Difference* attempts an interesting dialogue between continental feminism and the British liberal tradition.

17. For a discussion of the work of many of these figures, see the essays in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*. The French feminism phenomenon was analyzed lucidly by Claire Duchén in *Feminism in France: From May '68 to Mitterrand*, and it reads as a textbook case of cultural branding on the part of major English-language publishers. I analyzed the cultural marketing exercise with Jane Weistock in "Herstory as Recourse," in *Hecate*.
18. This movement is led by the linguistically oriented school, inspired by Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes, that was centered in the Yale School of literary theory (for a discussion of the Yale School, see the essay by Jeffrey T. Nealon in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 6*). The main feminist figures of this movement had a lot of influence on feminist philosophy, notably Barbara Johnson in *The Critical Difference* and *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race and Gender*. Shoshana Felman combined psychoanalysis and semiotics in inspiring ways in *What Does a Woman Want? Reading and Sexual Difference*, whereas Marjorie Garber adapted them both to cultural studies in *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. The pioneer of French feminist theory in the US was Domna Stanton, who worked on *The Female Autograph: Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, a women-centered literary canon. Nancy Miller in *The Poetics of Gender*; Alice Jardine with *Gynesis*; Naomi Schor in "Dreaming Dissymmetry"; and Catharina Stimpson in *Where the Meanings Are*, developed radical perspectives on the specificity of the feminist approach to textual criticism. An inspiring deconstructivist like Gayatri Spivak also bases her interventions on the postpsychoanalytic and Derridian understanding of the ontological value of subjectivity and the primacy of the power relations that structure it.
19. The core argument of the "sex wars" was the campaign against pornography, which soon developed into a larger dispute about sexual politics and the understanding of sexual freedom. The influence of Andrea Dworkin and Catharine McKinnon resulted in a prohibitionist approach to sexual practices, which produced both an alliance with the Christian Right and a violent reaction by radical feminists and sexual liberationists. French philosophy provided



center stage.<sup>20</sup> The epicenter of the new philosophical developments stays in Paris, but a widespread diaspora of poststructuralist ideas takes place through the institutional basis for this movement of thought in the US, such as literary theory, comparative literature, cultural studies, and film theory. Philosophy departments place themselves at a clear and explicit distance from these fashionable trends and close ranks. This hostility will continue to grow throughout the 1980s as the "theory wars" rage through American universities under the combined effect of Reaganomics, neoconservatism, and the rise of the religious Christian Right. Poststructuralism did not fare much better on its home turf, especially after the presidential election of Mitterrand in 1981, when a wave of "new philosophers" (André Glucksmann, Bernard-Henri Lévy, etc.), turned its back on the philosophical giants of the previous generation.<sup>21</sup>

By 1995, the game will be over and the counter-offensive against poststructuralism will have won the day. Gayatri Spivak, looking back over this period in 2003, speaks of the death of a discipline to indicate the decline and fall of poststructuralist-driven literary theory and comparative literature in the US academy. Nonetheless, the hegemonic hold that high poststructuralist thought had over the most critical and creative minds of that academic generation endures. Spivak's analysis covers the external pressures of a fast-changing world driven by globalization, technological mediation, cultural hybridization, and the rising economic power of the global South. Spivak also stresses, however, the internal flaws of what she considers an incurably Eurocentric system of thought.<sup>22</sup> Gallop herself, writing in 1997<sup>23</sup> about a controversial lawsuit instigated by her lesbian students, spells out in unequivocal terms the political debacles generated by the rise of identity politics and the extent to which they absorbed the best energies of poststructuralism.

Narrating the course of feminist philosophies in the 1980–95 period means having to take into account this complex political and institutional history. The impact of high poststructuralism is in some ways a specifically American phenomenon, but it is connected to the French and European scene not only historically, but also through conceptual and personal ties: a whole generation of

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a welcome alternative to this narrow and punitive reading of sexuality. For a comprehensive account of this phenomenon, see Carol Vance, *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984).

20. See for instance the influential collection *The Future of Difference*, Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (eds) (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1983). For a philosophical defense see Marilyn Frye, "The Necessity of Differences: Constructing a Positive Category of Women," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 21(4) (1996).

21. See also my essay in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 8*.

22. See, in this regard, the essay by Iain Chambers in this volume.

23. See Jane Gallop, *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

graduate students and junior academics actually studied in Paris or read French theories as part of their often independently chosen curriculum. I was one of them and this personal involvement does not simplify my task in this chapter and increases my accountability accordingly. Because of the diasporic nature of poststructuralist philosophies of difference and subjectivity, however, and as a result of their enormous generative force, feminist philosophies in the 1980–95 period simply explode in an outburst of creativity. So much so that it is daunting to even attempt to account for the successful social and intellectual revolution that marks the coming of age of an entirely new generation of feminist philosophers who grew up with and after high poststructuralism.

The changing historical context also plays its hand in rendering feminist philosophy especially complex in this period. The twin phenomena of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the enlargement of the European Union,<sup>24</sup> as well as the new wave of wars that emerge in the period (the first Gulf War, the Falklands War, and the Yugoslav and Balkans War), have major impact on the development of continental and transnational feminism.<sup>25</sup> The single most important development, however, is the expansion of feminism both east and west of the former border. In the former West, the institutional growth and consolidation of the field results in the creation of new PhD programs in women's studies. On the other side of the border, feminist philosophical voices from former Eastern Europe can now get a wider audience. This phenomenon is so vast and rich that it deserves a fuller treatment than I can grant it here. Suffice it to stress the importance of original political thinkers trained in philosophy, such as Zarana Papić, whose work on nationalism and subjectivity remains fundamental. Dasa Duhacek provides important analytical insights into Eastern European radical feminism as a critique of the patriarchal aspects of the Yugoslav communist state. Rada Iveković challenges narratives that assume the centrality of a Western philosophical perspective by adopting a broadened, antinationalist and postcolonial perspective.

As a consequence of these historical upheavals and intellectual developments, this chapter could not adopt a chronological structure, let alone a linear one. Nonlinearity has been a distinctive trait of feminist theory since the 1980s. In her seminal essay on women's time, also published in 1981, Julia Kristeva

24. See my "On Becoming Europeans," in *Women Migrants from East to West: Gender, Mobility, and Belonging in Contemporary Europe*, Luisa Passerini et al. (eds) (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 23–45.

25. Already at the beginning of the 1990s, feminist theory provides the basis for innovative critiques of globalization. Influential pioneers in this field are the political theorist Cynthia Enloe in *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*, and the work of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan on transnational feminism in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*.

stresses the cyclical, circular nature of female temporality, which she connects both to the specific rhythms of female embodiment and to the social division of labor that assigns women to the most repetitive and unappreciated tasks. Genealogical returns, not chronological continuity, fix the beat of feminist discursive production. The multiple temporalities of feminist philosophy spell patterns of becoming that challenge academic habits of linearity. I will attempt to account for these complex phenomena by drawing a cartography based on a generously broad, yet selective, bibliography of the main sources.

## II. THE "INTERMEDIATE" GENERATION

The feminist philosophers who came after poststructuralism were too young to be real baby-boomers, but at the same time old enough to be eye-witnesses to the world-changing events of the 1970s and 1980s. I call the generation of feminist philosophers between 1981 and 1995 the "intermediate" generation, although what exactly it is intermediate between is open for discussion. At the start, it clearly follows "high poststructuralism," but what succeeds it – be it the third wave or a feminism yet to come – is still an open question. Truly poststructuralist in their desire to apply the great theoretical insights of the previous generation to a variety of social and discursive practices, feminists of the intermediate generation simultaneously pursue the aims of the second feminist wave and lay the foundations for future developments. They are the agents of the "long march through the institutions," which brings an entire new intellectual generation into academic positions, and with it a new theoretical and political agenda for the institutional practice of philosophy.

Although they are the real heiresses of high poststructuralist thought, there is no official testament to ensure the transmission of ideas, and not all of them had direct contact, either as students or colleagues, with the French master-thinkers who shaped that philosophical movement. They function in English and not all of them can read the French texts in the original, but this diasporic mode of thinking in translation, far from being a problem, turns into the strength of this particular generation of thinkers. Within the English language, many of the feminist philosophers of this period are not from the USA: for instance, the great pioneer of feminist philosophy Lorraine Code<sup>26</sup> is based in Canada, whereas under the influence of Genevieve Lloyd,<sup>27</sup> Australian feminist theory blossoms

26. See, for instance, Lorraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Brown University Press, 1987), and *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Constitution of Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

27. Genevieve Lloyd (1941–) studied philosophy at the University of Sydney and then at Somerville College, Oxford. Her DPhil, awarded in 1973, was on time and tense. From 1967

and spreads worldwide.<sup>28</sup> In the US, while many are products of philosophy departments, they tend to gather in interdisciplinary fields – as is the case for Butler, Cornell, and Elizabeth Grosz – although some manage jobs in continental philosophy, like Fraser and Alcoff.

In its diasporic and transnational mode, the intermediate generation of feminist philosophers embraces the concept of difference, but with the explicit aim of making it function differently. They recast feminist theory along a complex line of interrogation that includes race, sexual orientation, and age, and will target the main tenets of equality-minded feminism and question the view of the subject that is implicit in the political program of traditional emancipation in Europe and the liberal feminist politics of equal opportunities in the Anglo-American world. Irigaray's question "Equal to whom?"<sup>29</sup> could be taken as the war cry for the following generation, which refused to take equality as homologation or reduction to Sameness. The crucial idea is that difference functions as a multi-layered concept not only between binaries, but also among diverse groups and more especially within each category. The "difference within" instills a constitutive distance between each concept and the metaphysical illusion of presence. It is a hiatus between the signifier and the signified in which the solidity of all meanings oscillates, stumbles, stutters, and falters. The positivity of difference, that is to say, the potential for radical transformation that is carried by subjects who are both socially and symbolically described as "others," becomes the focal point for both the political struggles and the theoretical debates.<sup>30</sup>

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to 1987 she lectured at the Australian National University, and it was during this period that she developed her most influential ideas and wrote *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*, which was published in 1984. In 1987 she was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy at the University of New South Wales and was the first female professor of philosophy appointed in Australia. She was appointed Emeritus Professor on her retirement. Among her other important publications are *Being in Time: Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature* (1993); *Part of Nature: Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics* (1994); and, with Gatens, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (1999).

28. The Australian phenomenon is worthy of special note for the high quality and the overwhelming quantity of feminist philosophy it produces. Starting from Lloyd's critique of the masculinity of the history of philosophy in *The Man of Reason*, a whole generation is raised in this tradition. I am proud to be one of Lloyd's students. Carol Pateman develops important aspects of feminist political theory, and Elizabeth Grosz very early develops French philosophical insights, as will Moira Gatens. The trend will continue in a more diasporic vein after the period covered in this volume with Penelope Deutscher and Claire Colebrook, both of whom now teach in the US.
29. Luce Irigaray, "Egales à qui?," *Critique: Revue générale des publications Françaises et étrangères* 43(480) (1987); published in English as "Equal to Whom?," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 1(2) (1988).
30. See also my "Sexual Difference Theory," in *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, Alison M. Jaggar and Iris M. Young (eds) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

In terms of the philosophical agenda, the focus shifts accordingly from the humanist individualism of the liberal tradition in the US and the residual humanism of the Marxist traditions in Europe and Latin America to different figurations for the nonunitary structure of subjectivity. Humanist thought assumed a unitary and rational subject in charge of his/her historical endeavors; with the "death of Man" announced by Foucault and the subsequent "death of Woman" predicated by the high poststructuralist feminists, however, this unity is replaced by open structures and an emphasis on processes of subject formation rather than substances. As a consequence, high feminist poststructuralism was antihumanist in that it critiqued from within all the unitary identities because they assumed phallo-logocentric, Eurocentric, white supremacist, anthropocentric, and standardized views of what constitutes the humanist ideal of "Man." This militant antihumanism intersects productively with postcolonial and race perspectives, which critique humanism for its racist connotations and racialized bias and propose instead the critique of universalist white supremacy,<sup>31</sup> and non-Western forms of radical neohumanism.<sup>32</sup>

For all feminists inspired by poststructuralism, "difference," or more specifically, the notion of "otherness," functions through dualistic oppositions that confirm the dominant vision of the subject. In other words, the dominant apparatus of subjectivity is organized along a hierarchical scale that rewards "sameness" by defining the sovereign subject as the zero-degree of difference. By extension it also posits subcategories of difference – through processes of sexualization, racialization, and naturalization – and distributes them along a scale of asymmetrical power relations. Deleuze calls it "the Majority subject" or the Molar center of being, Derrida labels it "phallo-logocentrism," Irigaray calls it "the Same," or the hyper-inflated, falsely universal "He," whereas Hill Collins calls to accountability the white and Eurocentric bias of the subject of humanistic knowledge. The lessons of race and postcolonial theories<sup>33</sup> are of the greatest

31. See, for instance, bell hooks' influential *Yearning* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990).

32. See, for instance, Uma Narayan, "The Project of Feminist Epistemology: Perspectives from a Non-Western Feminist," in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (eds) (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Vandana Shiva, *Bio-piracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997).

33. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Stuart Hall, "What is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?," in *Black Popular Culture*, Gina Dent (ed.) (Seattle, WA: Boy Press, 1992); Gayatri C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992); and Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990).

importance to add a political inflection as well as higher degrees of complexity to this philosophical understanding of difference.

Whereas the generation that came of age philosophically with Beauvoir stressed transcendence and rationality, the difference thinkers stress immanence and a nonessentialist brand of embodiment. From Lacanian psychoanalysis they borrow the notion of the materiality of the linguistic sign and from deconstruction the critique of phallo-logocentrism. But over and above all borrowing, this "intermediate" generation of feminist philosophy rises to the challenge of great theoretical creativity and innovates both on categories of thought and on methods. They progress from the critique of classical dualistic notions of difference to the affirmation of diversity, and from the classical opposition transcendence-immanence to new epistemological schemes that allow more complex understandings of what exactly is the "matter" that post-structuralist materialism or deconstructive materiality are all about. However influenced by poststructuralism, the generation that is operational in the 1980-95 period thinks across borders and in an interdisciplinary manner that actually consolidates the entire field of feminist philosophy in powerful new ways.

### III. GENDERING THE MASTER'S VOICE

The generation of feminists situated between 1980 and 1995 was the first to enjoy the institutional presence of supportive and talented women teachers and supervisors, many of whom were feminists themselves. The effects of the actual, physical presence of women lecturers in philosophy departments starting from the 1970s and 1980s cannot be stressed enough, and the influence of these teachers on the generation of radicalized younger women philosophers emerging from feminism was enormous.

The philosophical underpinnings of feminist teaching became a matter of great concern for the generation that pioneered feminist and women's studies in academic institutions. The premises rest on a number of notions derived from classical historical materialism but enriched by a gender perspective. In this respect, feminist philosophy has much in common with other critical epistemologies such as the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, liberation theology, and postcolonial and race theories. The main philosophical premises are the following: first, that the aim of a philosophical education is to cultivate the multifaceted aspects of the common humanity we share. This humanism stands in stark opposition to more utilitarian definitions of higher education, let alone the narrower functionalism that will spread throughout the 1990s as an effect of neoliberal economics and its academic managers.

Second, the basic unit of reference for a philosophical education is not liberal individualism but a social constructivist notion of the subject as a sociopolitical entity defined by material forces and relations. For feminism, these material social relations are linked to both production and reproduction and thus can be said to be embedded and embodied. This vision of the subject supports the humanist ideal described above in believing that education is a collective civic endeavor whose ultimate aims are freedom and equality of chances through socially enacted networks of solidarity.

Third, the neutrality of scientific knowledge, which follows from the idea of the self-regulating structure of rationality, and the method of dispassionate objective observation are challenged. The grounds for contestation are the same social constructivist notions defined above. The universalistic pretensions of the subject are debunked by an epistemic approach based on Adrienne Rich's idea of "the politics of location."<sup>34</sup> This is both a method and a strategy that makes sense of diversity among women. The category of sexual difference is not only understood as the binary opposite of the dominant phallo-logocentric subject, but also as the virtual potential for multiple differences.

The strategy of the politics of location is coupled with epistemological and political accountability. This is understood as the practice that consists in acknowledging and unveiling the power locations that one inevitably inhabits as the site of one's identity. Because a "location" is not a self-appointed and self-designed subject-position, but rather a collectively shared and constructed space, it refers to a process of consciousness-raising through the intervention of others. "Politics of locations" produce cartographies of power that rest on a form of self-criticism, a critical, genealogical self-narrative, that is relational and outward-bound. It then follows that feminist knowledge is an embodied, interactive process that brings forth complex aspects of our existence, especially our own implication with power. Thus, black women's texts and experiences make white women see the limitations of their locations, truths and discourses. In Deleuzian language, it "de-territorializes" us, that is, it estranges us from the familiar, the intimate, the known, and casts an external light on it. The strategy of estrangement or defamiliarization transforms our knowledge of ourselves and others. This entails a critique of science and a thorough examination of the networks of power that constitute and sustain science as a social practice. In this respect, feminist epistemology shares a great deal with the radical thought of Feyerabend, Kuhn, and Foucault.

Last but not least, feminist genealogies come into operation by adopting the strategy of "thinking back through the women" to draw inspiration from the past. For Virginia Woolf this tactic was also a style of writing and a practice

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34. The chapter is in Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1985).

of citation. Women-centered approaches are highly recommended to all the women who aspire to have a mind of their own and to reconnect with the deeper sources of their creativity. This is a groundbreaking development in itself and it becomes even more striking when read in a historical perspective. The previous generation of feminist philosophers – those who came of age in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s – settled into an ambiguous relationship to the actual institutional practice of philosophy. Beauvoir herself was not allowed to teach in the *Grandes Écoles* that train the French elites. Others, such as Françoise Collin,<sup>35</sup> were pioneer feminist philosophers who deliberately chose to function in self-run collectives or marginal organizations. Owing to the historical context, that generation continued to engage in dialogue more readily with the great male philosophers of the continental tradition than with any living women, let alone cross-referring to their own peer group. The high poststructuralist generation did not fare much better, although they did acknowledge some of the great, dead women intellectuals of the past.<sup>36</sup>

Michelle Le Doeuff,<sup>37</sup> in her work on the philosophical imaginary, was one of the first to raise the question of what she aptly named the *Heloïse complex*: women being devoted head and body to great philosophical masters who tend to take advantage of their love in every possible way. The second feminist wave was to change all this, but the effects on the pedagogical front were slower than the speed of social transformation.

Furthermore, if footnotes and bibliographies are the manifestation of democracy and belonging in a text, there is no question as to the undemocratic and often self-referential nature of a great deal of the feminist texts produced in France in the 1980s by the generation of high poststructuralism, starting from the holy trinity of French feminism itself: Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva. Almost in reaction to it, the intermediate generation made a point of using the scholarly

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35. Françoise Collin is not well known enough in the anglophone world, although she is a pioneer on feminist philosophy in the francophone world. Belgian-born, and a classmate of Luce Irigaray and Jacques Taminiaux at the University of Louvain, she founded the feminist journal *Les Cahiers du Grif* in 1973 and moved the editorial office to Paris in 1981. She wrote a widely acclaimed study of Blanchot, *Maurice Blanchot et la question de l'écriture*, in 1971 (reprinted in 1986), and was the first to write on Hannah Arendt in France. She also coedited the best French anthology on feminist philosophy, *Les Femmes de Platon à Derrida: Anthologie critique* (2000).

36. Julia Kristeva will evolve in this direction with her trilogy on *Female Genius: Hannah Arendt*, Ross Guberman (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); *Melanie Klein*, Ross Guberman (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and *Colette*, Jane Marie Todd (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

37. See Michèle Le Doeuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary*, Colin Gordon (trans.) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), and *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy etc.*, Trista Selous (trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).



apparatus of notes as a genealogical tool. They also took great pedagogical care to empower the critical independence of mind of younger generations of thinkers. This position can be summed up as a healthy disregard of the wholly male lineage in the history of philosophy on the one hand, and a passionate commitment to thinking through female feminist genealogies on the other. The latter implies an explicit recognition of the collective character of most knowledge claims and discursive production as well as the acknowledgment that the politics of citation are textual means by which alternative discursive communities can be constructed and radical democracy implemented.

The new forms of institutionalization also had methodological consequences: footnotes and bibliographies become all important and move to the center of the debates. Cartographies, collections, anthologies, and, after a while, encyclopedias, glossaries, and reference manuals in feminist theory are brought into existence and come into operation. The creation of new journals forms an integral part of these efforts to consolidate and expand the insights of modern-day feminism into philosophy: *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* was founded in 1986 and remains a reference title in the field. Jane Flax<sup>38</sup> argues that a meta-methodological turn takes place in feminist philosophy at this time, which marks the beginning of a shift of paradigm. This is due to the sheer quantitative expansion of feminist practitioners of philosophy, but also to a qualitative leap in thinking: key concepts, accepted methods, and conventional procedures are questioned and redefined in original ways.

Let me illustrate it with some examples. In 1983, Alison Jaggar produced one of the very first taxonomies of feminist philosophy, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. It rests on a system of political classification of the different feminist schools of thought (socialist, Marxist, liberal, and radical). The influence of Marxism is then at its apex, as shown by the works of Angela Davis and Ti-Grace Atkinson.<sup>39</sup> A few years later in 1986, the epistemologist Sandra Harding and the philosopher Jean Grimshaw<sup>40</sup> were already in a position to adopt more specific and original categories of thought to do justice to the theoretical creativity of the feminist movement.<sup>41</sup> Of special significance among them is "standpoint

38. See Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

39. See Ti-Grace Atkinson, *Amazon Odyssey* (New York: Link Books, 1974); Angela Davis, *Women, Race, Class* (London: Women's Press, 1981).

40. See Jean Grimshaw, *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

41. This was also the case for the first comprehensive account of feminist theory, Hester Eisenstein's *Contemporary Feminist Thought*.

feminist theory,"<sup>42</sup> which covers the full range of feminist philosophies of difference by privileging the epistemological insights of marginal subjects. Standpoint theory is also one of the feminist branches that intersect most productively with antiracist thought and links gender issues to race and postcolonial considerations.<sup>43</sup> By 1995, Jaggar and Iris Young had so much original feminist philosophical material at hand that they could edit a fully fledged companion to feminist philosophy, covering every major school and tradition of philosophical thought, all monotheistic and a few other religions, and the different constituencies within feminism itself. This shift and expansion of perspective took barely a decade.<sup>44</sup>

The politics change accordingly. Again, it may be useful to look at the publications to prove the point. In the 1980s very few collections on women and philosophy were available in the academic market. Carol Gould and Marx Wartofsky's *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation* (1976) and Mary Vetterling-Braggin, Frederick Elliston, and Jane English's *Feminism and Philosophy* (1977) are among the first, followed closely by Marilyn Frye's *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* in 1983. Although they make a claim to difference, these early works are in the spirit of equality-minded or emancipatory feminism in that they are focused on the under-representation of women both in philosophy departments and in the male domination of the actual curriculum of the history of philosophy. This is typically the "women and/ in philosophy" phase, which inserted women as an additive to existing philosophical and disciplinary categories, as evidenced by the leading publications of those days.<sup>45</sup>

Adding women to philosophy, however, could not leave the rules of the disciplinary game unchanged. It resulted instead in a frontal attack on the male domination of the philosophical canon and a concerted effort to dislodge the masculine subject from its falsely universal sovereign position. Lloyd's *The Man of Reason*, published in 1984, is the seminal text in this tradition. The feminist revisions of the history of philosophy pursued by Nancy Tuana in a

42. For a useful introduction see Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1986); Nancy C. M. Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," in *Discovering Reality*, Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka (eds) (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983).

43. See Sandra Harding, *The "Racial" Economy of Science* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983).

44. Tina Chanter, writing in *Ethics of Eros* in 1995, could legitimately speak of a feminist rewriting of the philosophers.

45. See, for instance, Jean Elshtain on social and political thought, Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers on moral theory, Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus on political philosophy, Andrea Nye on humanist thought, and Katharina Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy on legal theory.

series of appraisals of key thinkers also contribute significantly to rethinking the canon.<sup>46</sup>

High poststructuralism challenged equality and highlighted the difference that feminist philosophers can make to the actual practice of philosophy. The generation that followed radicalized the concepts and methods and developed entire institutional, pedagogical, and methodological structures that brought the full potential of difference into concrete materialization and actual operation. This was not a flat application of pre-established principles, but rather the active creation of new ways of thinking. In so doing the post-poststructuralists of the intermediate generation ended up altering the very theoretical premises from which they had started, innovating on content and concepts. They also established a firm corpus of feminist scholarship that institutionalized the idea of collective teamwork as a key feminist method.

#### IV. THE INTERDISCIPLINARY FACTOR

The institutionalization process, combined with the emphasis on the positivity of difference, produced a high degree of interdisciplinarity in the philosophical works of this period. Thus, a collection such as Linda Nicholson's *Feminism/Postmodernism*, although not strictly philosophical in itself, was influential across a broad academic field and affected the philosophical debates of the times. Considering the fact that many of the feminist philosophers of the poststructuralist generation found jobs outside academic philosophy, an accurate cartography of the period should therefore exceed the institutional boundaries of the discipline and include an interdisciplinary range of contributions.

Comparative literature, cultural, and film studies are of great importance, as I indicated above, especially volumes such as Teresa de Lauretis's *Technologies of Gender* and Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury, and Jackie Stacey's *Off-centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies*. Once again the impact of race and postcolonial theory is of crucial philosophical importance, with texts such as Spivak's *In Other Worlds*, Hill Collins's seminal *Black Feminist Thought*, and the growing influence of Chandra Mohanty.<sup>47</sup> Feminist legal theory provides new insights especially

46. Also significant in this vein are the writings of Linda Zerilli on high liberalism, Robin Schott on Kantianism, and especially Susan Bordo on Descartes. In France see Sarah Kofman, *Le Respect des femmes* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1982); Cathérine Chalier, *Figures du féminin: Lecture d'Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris: La nuit surveillée, 1982); Elisabeth de Fontenay, *Diderot ou le matérialisme enchanté* (Paris: Grasset, 1981).

47. See for instance, Chandra Mohanty et al. (eds), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse," *Boundary 2* 12(3)/13(1) (1984).

through the invention of the method of intersectionality<sup>48</sup> and the poststructuralist critical theory of the law of Drucilla Cornell. Ecofeminism also comes of philosophical age with the early Donna Haraway and the pioneer work of Val Plumwood.<sup>49</sup>

The interdisciplinary approach provides new themes for feminist philosophy. Lesbian theory, diversified by the impact of postmodernism, evolves through two spearheads: one is Rich's theory of the lesbian continuum, which locates the lesbian experience within a continuum of female sexuality defined in terms of constant woman bonding. As a result of this nondisruptive positioning of lesbian desire, Rich can defend lesbian motherhood in the key text *Of Woman Born*. Rich then goes on to develop woman-centered perspectives in art, culture, and science in seminal texts such as *Of Lies, Secrets and Silence* and *Blood, Bread and Poetry*. The other spearhead is Monique Wittig, who takes the antithetical viewpoint that a lesbian is not a woman, but a "third sex" who escapes the gender dichotomy and refuses to be defined by it. This will prove influential for queer theory throughout the 1990s.

An inspiring discipline for philosophy was feminist theology, which, with towering figures such as Mary Daly<sup>50</sup> leading a new movement of thought as well as practice, challenges Christian monotheistic logocentrism, just as Muslim feminists such as Fatima Mernissi<sup>51</sup> question Islam. Interest in mystical thinkers of previous generations such as Simone Weil<sup>52</sup> intensifies and the vast cluster of feminist spirituality will grow throughout the 1990s, producing what will become known as a postsecular turn in feminist theory.<sup>53</sup>

Psychoanalysis and film theory exercise huge influence, in spite of great feminist resistances to the idea of the unconscious as a principle of nonclosure of the subject. Key figures such as Jane Flax straddle the shaky ground between philosophy and the discourse of the unconscious by being practicing psychoanalysts. While Irigaray and Kristeva evolve respectively into the left wing and right wing of post-Lacanian psychoanalysis, Juliet Mitchell<sup>54</sup> is by far the most

48. See Kimberle W. Crenshaw et al. (eds), *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995).

49. See especially Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

50. See Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Meta-Ethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978).

51. See Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (London: AlSaqi Books, 1985).

52. See Simone Weil, *La Présenteur et la grâce* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

53. See on this issue my "In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25 (2008).

54. See Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1974).

important influence in psychoanalytic thinking for an entire generation of English-speaking Lacanians. Teresa Brennan<sup>55</sup> is heiress to this tradition and pursues it in an original manner, while Jessica Benjamin<sup>56</sup> brilliantly bridges the gap between Lacanian and object-relation psychoanalytic theory.

The single most significant interdisciplinary coalition of the 1980s, however, is the new galaxy formed by women, gender, and feminist studies departments and programs, which grow from self-run classes into a strong academic movement that aims at reforming the curriculum and forces a revision of what counts as scientifically acceptable knowledge. The leading journal in feminist theory, *Signs: a Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, was founded in 1975. In Europe, the institutional rise of women's studies occurs later, as argued by Griffin and myself in *Thinking Differently*, but the theoretical creativity of feminist philosophies is strong from the start. Feminism in Europe draws inspiration from a political genealogy that takes the great women philosophers of European history as major points of reference and claims them as political leaders of the movement. Thus, a pedigree is created that runs from Mary Wollstonecraft to Simone de Beauvoir, to Rosa Luxemburg, and Hannah Arendt, with the historical event that is the women's movement as a central junction. From the 1960s on, this genealogy diversifies into a number of branches, all of which confirm the discursive privilege and prestige accorded by the feminist movement to its key women philosophers – to their critical skills as well as their visionary spirit. What is especially innovative about feminist philosophy, in fact, is the courage with which it turns critique into affirmation. As Joan Kelly argued,<sup>57</sup> feminism carries a double-edged vision that combines oppositional consciousness with deep empowering creativity. The affirmative element within the feminist recomposition of knowledge is one of this generation's most lasting theoretical legacies.

Women's studies, and gender and feminist studies, bring a necessary dose of supplementary knowledge to the academic practice of the discipline of philosophy. It is no coincidence that so much focus falls, in this period, on epistemological studies of the power structures that affect scientific knowledge production.<sup>58</sup> Discourse as power is such a foundational idea in the 1980s that feminist theory

55. See, for instance, Teresa Brennan (ed.), *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1989), and *History after Lacan* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

56. See Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

57. See Joan Kelly, "The Double-edged Vision of Feminist Theory," *Feminist Studies* 5(1) (1979).

58. See Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (eds), *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Alison M. Jaggar and Susan Bordo (eds), *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

is almost equated with the critique of epistemology. Sandra Harding<sup>59</sup> provides a canonical classification system of feminist thought, whereas feminists with a scientific background, notably Evelyn Fox Keller, Donna Haraway and Elizabeth Spelman, play a key role in this first wave of feminist epistemology.<sup>60</sup> Isabelle Stengers strikes a singular note of her own, pleading for a more systematic conceptual dialogue between feminism and science.<sup>61</sup> Linda Alcoff produces systematically the best cartographies of feminist philosophy and epistemology.<sup>62</sup>

The main epistemological debate of this era takes place between Harding and Haraway on the issue of the alleged relativism of postmodernist feminism. Harding privileges the claims to difference made by standpoint theory and is initially dismissive of poststructuralist critiques of reason. Haraway provides a strong rebuke of this position in 1988 in her seminal essay "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives." By the early 1990s a new consensus is forged in the feminist epistemic community on the need for a revised but "robust" notion of objectivity that avoids both universalism and relativism in the pursuit of alternative ways of grounding feminist knowledge claims.

#### V. FROM CORPO-REALITY TO MATTER-REALISM

Looking back over the intellectual development of the generation of feminist philosophers within and after poststructuralism, what strikes me is the original brand of embodiment and bodily materialism they developed, in a variety of different but interrelated conceptual ways. This materialist line of thought is different from the more linguistically oriented branch of poststructuralism mentioned (see note 18). They develop together, not so much in opposition as alongside each other, in constant dialogue and often in loving antagonism.<sup>63</sup>

In the last section of this essay, I will consequently concentrate on the concept of bodily materialism and how it developed throughout the 1990s. Feminist

59. See Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism, and Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

60. See Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), and *A Feeling for the Organism* (New York: Freeman, 1985); Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1988).

61. See Isabelle Stengers, *D'une science à l'autre: Des concepts nomades* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), and *Power and Invention: Situating Science*, Paul Bains (trans.) (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

62. See, for instance, Linda M. Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (eds), *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

63. I am grateful to Judy Butler for this felicitous formulation.

philosophy in this period combines in innovative ways phenomenological theories of embodiment with Marxist and psychoanalytic elaborations of the complex social and symbolic interaction between bodies and power. This approach grants an ontological value to the embodied roots of the subject, while resisting essentialism,<sup>64</sup> and hence it also upgrades the issues of subjectivity and of sexuality to a greater degree of complexity than the high poststructuralist generation itself. The notion of the body is transformed from a substance dualistically opposed to the mind, to a dynamic process of embodied interactions: relationality becomes a keyword. The intermediate generation coins the term "corpo-reality" to designate the form of dynamic bodily neomaterialism that they read back into high poststructuralism.

What is characteristic of the thinkers of this generation is that, inspired by Spinoza's monistic political ontology, they adopt a different political ontology from the Hegelian-Marxist generations that preceded them. They differ, in other words, from social constructivist oppositions between selves and society, because they either do not assume or openly challenge an exterior and prior grid of codification of meanings or master-signifiers that would somehow imprint social codes on the embodied subjects. They are, so to speak, less structuralist than the post-structuralists. In the work of Grosz, Gatens, Butler, or myself, one finds attempts to account for bodies as material and symbolic formations that are always already immersed in strategic conditions and relations of power. Because power, after Foucault, is not only or necessarily conceived in negative terms, however, its effects are perceived as multiple, contradictory, and productive. Power produces, among others, forms of active resistance to the very conditions it engenders.

Thus, the scheme of dialectical opposition is abandoned in favor of more complexity in accounting for the codes and the sociosymbolic processes that constitute the subject as a bounded field of relations to multiple others. The emphasis falls on relational processes of transformation and also on the contradictory power effects that constitute embodied subjects. The political ideal is as transformative as the ethics that sustains it: how to actualize empowering alternative technologies of self-other relations by experimenting with new ways of relating to a multiplicity of others. A sort of neoasceticism will emerge from this,<sup>65</sup> although reformulations of political agency in the period include also, alternatively or in combination: transnational feminist forms of micropolitical action on a global scale; a radical adaptation of Foucaultian politics of

64. The best discussion on poststructuralism and essentialism is in Diane Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

65. For further commentary on this point see my *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006); Benjamin Noys, "The End of the Monarchy of Sex: Sexuality and Contemporary Nihilism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(5) (2008).

resistance; the politics of melancholia and the politics of affirmation. This is the neomaterialist punch of feminist politics after high poststructuralism.

The materialist corpo-reality branch of feminist philosophy is sociopolitical in orientation and draws inspiration from Foucault and Deleuze, although they are equally attentive to Derrida and the material effects of language on the world. It emphasizes the crucial notion that sexuality is an integral part of the embodied structure of the subject: one is always already sexed. Sexuality is conceptualized, especially in Romance languages like French,<sup>66</sup> as a general life force that cannot be adequately contained within the dichotomous view of gender defined as the social construction of differences between the sexes. Social constructivism meets its limitations when confronted by the ontological shift to sexuality as life itself. Whereas high poststructuralist feminist theory is solidly ensconced in social constructivist methods and political strategies, thinkers of the next generation affirm and explore the ontological aspects of sexuality and sexual difference, and not only its constructed elements.

As a consequence, it is not so much the case that sexuality is caught in the sex-gender binary, but rather that it enjoys more transversal, structural, and vital connotations. Sexuality as life-force provides a nonessentialist ontological structure for the organization of human affectivity and desire. This notion clearly opposes the position of the linguistic mediation school, which argues that the discursive structure of gender functions as a coercive grid that constructs social relations and identities. The counterargument is that sexuality is a constitutive force that is always already present and hence prior to gender, although it intersects with it in constructing functional subjects in the social regime of biopolitical governmentality.

The early work of Foucault stresses the central importance of sexuality as a constitutive force that is targeted by social technologies of control, discipline, and punishment. The feminist commentators on Foucault<sup>67</sup> are aware of the specific brand of bodily materialism that is at stake here. Butler's appropriation of Foucault for queer theory in *Gender Trouble* is especially significant as it acquires a paradigmatic status especially in US feminism. All these thinkers

66. For more details on this issue see my "The Uses and Abuses of the Sex/Gender Distinction in European Feminist Practices," in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies*, Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (eds) (London: Zed Books, 2002).

67. See my *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds), *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1988); Moira Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991); Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).



deal with corpo-reality and provide different answers to the question of how to disengage sexuality from the dominant masculinist, logocentric, ethnocentric, heterosexist, and anthropocentric codes of representation. The latter is taken in the double sense of cultural mediation and political intervention, as Spivak argues in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" As a result, how to disentangle sexuality from identity politics and the formulation of flat countersexual identities – even within feminism – is more than ever the question.

Deleuze-inspired feminists advocate a vision of the body as a sexually preconstituted, dynamic bundle of relations that is especially interesting. In opposition to the linguistic school – whose leading feminist thinkers opposed Deleuze's vitalist materialism vigorously<sup>68</sup> – Deleuzian feminists develop the notion of the materialist roots of embodied subjectivity and explore the transformative potential of a different concept of the political. They stress that the political advantage of this monistic and vital approach is that it provides a more adequate understanding of the fluid and complex workings of power in advanced capitalism and hence can devise more suitable forms of resistance.<sup>69</sup>

The long-term result of these explorations of corpo-reality or embedded and embodied materialism is a serious reconsideration of what counts as the "matter" for materialist feminist thought. Radical emphasis on a Spinozist monistic ontology results in overcoming the classical opposition "materialism/idealism" and move towards a dynamic, nonessentialist and relational brand of materialist vitalism. "Matter-realism" designates the contemporary form of radical neomaterialism that emerges from corpo-reality and will also become known as vital politics or posthuman feminism.<sup>70</sup>

By the early 1990s, the biogenetic and information technologies revolution provide the historical backdrop for some significant shifts. The change of

68. This is especially the case for Alice Jardine in *Gynesis* and Judith Butler in *Subjects of Desire*.

69. See, for instance, my *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994); Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

70. On "vital politics," see, for instance, Mariam Fraser et al. *Inventive Life: Approaches to the New Vitalism* (London: Sage, 2005). On "posthuman feminism," see, for instance, Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium. FemaleMan<sup>o</sup>\_Meets\_Oncomouse*; *Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Katherine N. Hayles, *How we Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

focus is deliberate and comes in response to fast-shifting global changes<sup>71</sup> and technological innovations. Mostly thanks to Haraway's agenda-setting work on cyborg-feminism,<sup>72</sup> a younger generation of scholars gets inspired by an empiricist form of matter-realism, which combines realism with a twenty-first-century understanding of "matter" as a self-organizing principle. This generation of philosophers drops the endless critiques of representation that had become the trademark of high poststructuralism in the linguistic branch, to turn with renewed interest to ontological and epistemological questions. Claire Colebrook<sup>73</sup> is a notable example: resting on Deleuzian premises, she explores the potential of vitalist thought and argues for feminist reappraisals of contemporary technoscientific culture in a nondeterministic frame. What matters about this matter-realism, in other words, is the concept of "matter" itself: the switch to a monistic political ontology stresses processes, vital politics and nondeterministic evolutionary theories<sup>74</sup> as exemplified by Karen Barad's work on "agential realism."<sup>75</sup> Feminist epistemology and science studies replace cultural studies as priority research areas and comparative literature ceases to be the main arena for these debates, as Spivak noted in *Death of a Discipline*.

One of the main implications of this shift of perspective is that matter-realist feminists return again to sexuality, rather than the sex-gender distinction, to explore more specifically the notion of sexuality beyond gender. The polymorphous perversity of sexuality as an ontological force is emphasized, in opposition to a majoritarian or dominant line that privileges heterosexual reproductive sex. An important question that can be raised – after the making of Dolly the sheep in 1996 and the poststructuralist critiques of phallo-logocentrism – is: what happens to gender if sexuality is not based on oppositional terms? What

71. For a more detailed analysis, see my "A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-postmodernism," *Australian Feminist Studies* 20(47) (July 2005).

72. Donna J. Haraway (1944–) is an American feminist and professor in the History of Consciousness Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She earned a degree in zoology and philosophy at Colorado College and received her PhD in the Department of Biology at Yale in 1972. She wrote her dissertation on the functions of metaphor in shaping research in developmental biology in the twentieth century. She writes on biology, technoscience and feminism. Among her main texts are *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (1989), *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), and *Modest Witness@Second Millenium. FemaleMan<sup>o</sup>\_Meets\_Oncomouse<sup>o</sup>: Feminism and Technoscience* (1997).

73. The work of Claire Colebrook on Deleuze's philosophy of immanence is of great importance here. See for instance *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (coedited with Ian Buchanan [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000]) and "Postmodernism is a Humanism: Deleuze and Equivocity," *Women: A Cultural Review* 15 (2004).

74. Indicative of this trend is Elizabeth Grosz's *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*.

75. See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Half Way* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

happens when there is sexuality without the possibility of either heterosexual or homosexual union? Patricia MacCormack<sup>76</sup> rests on Deleuze and Guattari's idea of radical empiricism and on Irigaray's emphasis on the sensible transcendental, to stress that corporeal becoming or transformations are open-ended and not necessarily contained by sociosymbolic forms, such as phallo-logocentrism or established categories. The ethics of becoming is rather an ethology of the forces that propel the subject to become by overcoming both forms and categories, deterritorializing all identity formations. By extension, this means that sexuality is a force, or constitutive element, that is capable of destabilizing gender identity and institutions: sexuality beyond gender. Another example of the same tendency is Luciana Parisi's innovative adaptation of Guattari and Lynn Margulis<sup>77</sup> to produce a schizo-genesis of sexual difference and of endosymbiosis as an organic variable of autopoiesis.<sup>78</sup> The new matter-realism stresses the self-organizational capacity of matter, which results in questioning any ontological foundation for difference while avoiding social constructivism. Sexuality beyond gender is the epistemological but also political side of contemporary vitalist matter-realism. It consolidates a philosophical genealogy that includes creative deterritorializations, intensive and hybrid crossfertilizations and generative encounters with multiple and nonhuman others.

## VI. CONCLUSION

A cartographic account cannot be concluded, but it must end. In this essay I have tried to steer a collective-minded course among a multiplicity of productive, innovative, radical developments in feminist philosophy that were inspired by French poststructuralist theories but thrived mostly in exile and in the diaspora. I have tried to show that the multiple temporalities of feminist theory and the essentially nonlinear character of feminist philosophy came to a greater degree of critical focus after high poststructuralism. The degree and quality of the scholarship produced in the period under review is such as to warrant the claim of a genuine "coming of age" of feminist philosophy. Central to the success of what I also referred to as the "intermediate" generation is the loyalty it shows to feminist theoretical and political genealogies. This non-oedipal and hence productive relationship to preceding generations of women philosophers

76. See Patricia MacCormack, *Cinesexuality* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

77. See Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, *What is Life?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

78. See Luciana Parisi, *Abstract Sex: Philosophy, Bio-Technology and the Mutations of Desire* (London: Continuum, 2004), and the strong influence of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972).

is strengthened by the fact that many of these were the actual teachers of this generation of scholars, and so they are connected by ties of gratitude and respect. This certainly describes my own position as both a member of this generation and the cartographer of this chapter, a position for which I hold myself accountable by making both my own and my colleagues' work visible for inspection as explicitly as possible.

If one keeps in mind furthermore that one of the main effects of the fast-growing process of institutionalization of feminist knowledge initiated by my generation was to produce a higher level of continuity in feminist thinking than we are historically used to, it follows that the question of the temporalities of feminist thought becomes even more complex as both a concept and as a practice. It results, for instance, in an acceleration of consciousness that produces a more acute sense of feminist intergenerational justice toward the future generations who will inherit and hopefully pursue this great tradition of scholarship. The so-called feminist third wave<sup>79</sup> is closely linked to the "intermediate" generation that built on the legacy of high poststructuralism and moved beyond.

A cartographer is no prophet. The impressive scholarship produced in feminist philosophy in this period is still very much ongoing and in the making and there is no telling which new directions it will take. I have tried, wherever possible, to indicate the points of convergence and divergence both within this generation and between this and the high poststructuralist generation that preceded it, especially on questions of difference, sexuality, embodiment, and materialism. At present one of the most promising lines of development is the one that challenges the deeply seated anthropocentrism that lurks beneath even the most self-assured feminist antihumanism inherited from high poststructuralism.<sup>80</sup> The nonhuman – animal, technological, ecological, and planetary – "others" are raising new questions that may trace new interconnections between feminism and animal rights, technology studies, disability, and ecological issues in the frame of the complex political economy of the globally connected world we now inhabit. Feminist philosophers confront the third millennium of Western philosophical history fully aware that they are historically relative newcomers in this discipline and have only just started to play an active role in it. They have also learned from postcolonial and race studies the need to decenter Western hegemony and look beyond ethnocentric boundaries, in a transnational perspective that refuses to equate continental philosophy with the continent of

79. See Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

80. Beside the work of Donna Haraway see also Elisabeth de Fontenay, *Le Silence des bêtes: La Philosophie à l'épreuve de l'animalité* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

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Europe. Feminist philosophers pursue this critical line of inquiry, more sharply than ever, with acquired maturity and renewed vitality and inspiration.

### MAJOR WORKS

Having noted the importance of bibliographies and the citation of sources, it is incumbent on me to include some of the major feminist texts that played a significant role in the period 1980–95.

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