Chapter 5

From Difference to Differences:

Postmodernism, Ethnicity, Race, and Intersectionality

 In 1988 Elizabeth Spelman's book, Inessential Woman, advanced a thesis that, ten years earlier, would have been heresy in feminist theory: that we should abandon the unitary definition of "woman" that has been at the center of the feminist movement since its inception. Spelman's argument was both practical and theoretical. "Woman," she claimed, inevitably leads to a hierarchy among women; a fixed definition of "woman" entails that some women are more "woman" than others. More specifically the concept privileges white, middle class, heterosexual women and relegates other women to the margins as "different." Spelman's challenge was a radical one: abandon the concept "woman," what she called the "Trojan Horse" of feminist theory, and embrace "women" in all their diversity. Spelman was fully aware that, for many feminists, such a move was almost unthinkable. It seemed obvious that a feminist politics without "woman" was inconceivable. In an effort to allay these fears Spelman argued that we don't know that emphasizing difference is dangerous unless we try it.

 By the time Spelman's book was published her argument, far from being heresy, was well on its way to being orthodoxy among feminists. Discontent with "woman" came from many sources: women of color who found that they had no place in feminist theory and practice; the rise of identity politics with its emphasis on multiple sources of identity; and postmodern/poststructuralist philosophy. Difference, in seemed, was suddenly everywhere. Moving from an emphasis on the difference between men and women to an emphasis on the differences among women constituted a sea change in feminist thought that profoundly changed feminism. It also produced a sea change in feminist conceptions of the subject. Feminists began the difficult process of trying to define the multiplicity of women's identities and placing that conception at the center of feminism.

I. Postmodernism.

 To say that postmodernism overwhelmed the feminist community is an understatement. Whether feminists saw postmodernism as the perfect partner for feminism or as its most dangerous opponent, grappling with the approach was unavoidable. To those who espoused a postmodern feminism the commonalities of the two approaches were compelling. Both attack the fundamental roots of western thought, arguing that this philosophy is misconceived. Both assert that this tradition must be displaced and a radically different approach embraced. And both approaches, most notably, attack the centerpiece of the western tradition: the subject "man." As postmodern feminism evolved it became clear that the reasons for these challenges to western thought varied significantly between postmoderns and feminists. The similarities of the challenges, however, are hard to ignore.

 Another way of characterizing this affinity is from a Beauvorian perspective. Beauvoir claimed that "woman" does not fit into the Western tradition and that women must seek a radical alternative to that tradition. On the face of it it seems that postmodernism is the perfect vehicle for that transformation. If all aspects of western thought are found wanting because they define women as Other, then a philosophy that radically "deconstructs" that tradition seems to be precisely what feminism requires. As the story of postmodern feminism unfolds it will become clear that this perspective is too simplistic. But at the outset it appealed to many feminists.

 It would be foolhardy to attempt to characterize postmodernism as a whole or to identify who, really, is or is not a postmodern. What I will do instead is to focus on one central aspect of postmodern thought that is particularly germane both to feminism as a whole and to the evolution of the feminine subject. Perhaps the most radical element of postmodern thought is what has come to be called "the death of the subject/man." For Michel Foucault and Jacque Derrida the linchpin of western thought is the autonomous, Cartesian subject. The deconstruction of this subject as the source of all knowledge and truth is fundamental to the postmodern critique (if, indeed, postmodernism can be said to have a center). The postmoderns moved beyond one of the pillars of feminist thought, the socially constructed subject to the position that the subject is quite literally constituted through discourse. For the postmoderns the subject is not, as the social constructionists understand it, a product of social influences imposed on an already existing subject. Rather, as one commentator famously put it, "there is no there there." There is no doer behind the deed (Nietzsche): it is all discourse.

 The postmodern conception of subjectivity epitomizes both the attraction of postmodernism for feminists and the conflicts between them. The postmodern subject is consistent with Beauvoir's insight that woman is made, not born, but takes that insight further into the realm of the discursive. For postmodern feminist the discourse of "woman" both constitutes and subjugates women. This postmodern perspective has been immensely useful to feminists in their attempt to explore the sources of the inferiority of women. But the death of man is also problematic for feminism. Feminism has been and must be about resistance and change. But how does the subject that is wholly constituted by discourse resist that constitution? How can we understand agency in the constituted subject? These questions have haunted feminists since the advent of a postmodern feminism.

 If the postmodern deconstruction of the subject eliminates "man," then all the issues that Beauvoir analyses under the heading of woman as "Other" disappear as well. As Donna Haraway puts it, it took the politico-epistemological terrain of postmodernism to be able to insist on a co-text to Beauvoir: one is not born an organism. Organisms are made - they are constructs of a world-changing kind (1991SC:208). The postmodern feminist subject goes beyond Beauvoir by deconstructing the nature/culture dichotomy. For Beauvoir women are "made" on the bodies of organisms - women. Haraway and the postmoderns take this a step further by asserting that both women and organisms are discursively constituted. Haraway's concept of the cyborg encapsulates this postmodern insight. For Haraway the cyborg is "a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings" (1990:191). "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code" (1990:205). And, finally, "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (1990:223).

 Haraway occupies an anomalous place in the discussion of postmodern feminism. On one hand she is one of the earliest and most enthusiastic proponents of the usefulness of postmodernism in defining the feminine subject. But she will eventually find that subject wanting and move into different territory. Her work becomes a kind of cautionary tale as feminism's enthusiasm for postmodernism evolves.

 There is little question about who has come to be most closely associated with the postmodern subject. Judith Butler and particularly her work in Gender Trouble (1990) is iconic. Although it would be an exaggeration to say that Butler’s work single-handedly set feminism down the path of postmodernism, it is not an exaggeration to say that Gender Trouble took the feminist community by storm and became the dominant influence in feminist theory in the 1990’s. Even today the influence of this book remains if only as the necessary starting point for counter arguments.

 At the beginning of my study I asked whether there was any utility in analyzing, yet again, the work of Beauvoir. The same question could be asked with regard to Butler, particularly her position in GT. There are two ways of answering this question. First, whether we agree with her or not, Butler’s position has had a profound effect on the evolution of the feminine subject. Ignoring her position on the grounds that it has been superseded would be foolhardy; many contemporary positions are rooted in her conceptions. Second, Butler’s position has evolved in very fruitful ways. Her present position, which has much in common with material feminism, builds on the foundation articulated in GT. This alone constitutes a significant reason to return to that work.

 In 1999 Gender Trouble was re-issued with a new introduction. In it, as one would expect, Butler tries to deal with the barrage of criticisms of her work by explaining her intent in the book. It is easy to dismiss this as an ex post facto re-interpretation of the work that distorts the original in order to refute her critics. I do not think this is the case. On the contrary, I think that many of the criticisms of GT are distorted. A careful reading of GT reveals that Butler addresses the key issues that were at the forefront of the critiques of her work: the subject, agency, and resistance. Far from ignoring these issues she offers cogent arguments in defense of her position.

 Butler begins the new introduction by asserting that the mode of the book is in the tradition of immanent critique that seeks to provoke critical examination of the basic vocabulary of the movement of thought to which it belongs (1999:vii). The aim of her text, she claims, is to open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which possibilities might be realized. Central to Butler’s argument is the presupposition that feminists should not restrict the meaning of gender, thus producing new forms of exclusion and hierarchy. By bringing poststructuralist theory to bear on US theories of gender, Butler sought to explore how an epistemic/ontological regime can be brought into question (1999:viii-xi). Her goal, she claims, was to initiate a radical inquiry into the political constitution and regulation of identity, to investigate the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause those identity categories that are the effects of certain practices (1999:xxi-xxii).

One of the key criticisms of postmodern feminism in general and Butler in particular is that it precludes the possibility of a feminist politics of resistance. Yet here Butler is asserting that the whole purpose of her book is resistance – initiating a radical inquiry into the political constitution and regulation of identity with the aim of opening up new possibilities in the definition of gender. Her objection to the concept of “woman” as the subject of feminism is informed by this conviction: “woman” cannot provide the emancipation it promises because it is discursively constituted by the political system from which it seeks emancipation (1999:3). It is clear from this that Butler’s famous/infamous attack on the concept “woman” is motivated not by the desire to eradicate “woman” but by her goal of political resistance. Feminist critique, she asserts, must understand how the category “woman” is produced and restrained by the structures of power through which emancipation is sought (1999:4).

It follows that since the category “woman” reifies gender relations what we need is a feminist genealogy of the concept “woman.” To begin this genealogy Butler takes on one of the sacred cows of feminist theory: the sex/gender distinction. She asserts that

gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is the discursive/cultural means by which “sexed nature” or a “natural sex” is produced and established as “prediscursive,” prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts. (1999:10)

Butler’s goal is to open up the category of gender by exploring gender identity that fails to conform to cultural norms. In order to accomplish this we need to abandon the notion that there is a subject who pre-exists the doing of gender:

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. (1999:34).

And, once again, the theme is resistance: if the regulatory fictions of sex and gender are multiply contested sets of meaning, then their multiplicity holds out the possibility of their disruption (1999:44).

 To buttress her position Butler then launches into an extensive discussion of Lacan, Freud, Irigaray, Wittig, and Kristeva. What Butler emphasizes in these discussions is that gender is a becoming, not a being. It follows that if to be a woman is to become a woman, then this process is not fixed and it is possible to become a being whom neither man nor woman describes (1999:173). This leads Butler to a discussion of how we might destabilize the categories of gender and open up new possibilities, in other words, how we might foster political resistance. Her first suggestion is drag: drag reveals the imitative structure of gender as well as its contingency. Her second is pastiche which goes one step further by mocking the very notion of an original (1999:187-8).

 Identifying drag and pastiche as the basis for a feminist politics of resistance was, to put it mildly, unsatisfactory to many of Butler’s critics. It seemed a frivolous departure from what might be termed the real world of politics. Critics were equally dissatisfied with her approach to a closely related issue: agency. For many of Butler’s critics it was hard to imagine the discursively constituted subject possessing agency because they assumed that agency can only be established through recourse to a prediscursive “I.” To answer this critique Butler refers again to the “necessary failure” of the production of gender identity. These failures produce the possibility of a “complex reconfiguration of redeployment” of gender. There is not a transcendental subject that enables action in this deployment, but, rather, “There is only taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very ‘taking up’ is enabled by the tool lying there” (1999:199). And, even more forcefully:

Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible. (1999:201)

 Where, then, does this leave the possibility of resistance? If there is no possibility of agency outside of discursive practices, then our task is to engage in a radical proliferation of gender in order to displace the gender norms that enable repetition (1999:202-3). The deconstruction of identity is thus not on Butler’s view the deconstruction of politics, but the establishment as political the terms through which identity is established and the proliferation of new configurations of gender. What this comes to is that Butler is indeed calling for political resistance but it is a politics that radically changes the definition of the political. It is wrong to claim that Butler obviates a feminist politics of resistance but the “politics” she calls for is not recognizable to many of her critics; for them it is not a politics that is “real.”

 The appeal to the real – the reality of women’s bodies – was a second major criticism of Butler’s position in GT. This criticism led, at least indirectly, to Butler’s 1993 book, Bodies That Matter. In the introduction to the book Butler addresses the real head on: “I began writing this book by trying to consider the materiality of the body only to find that the thought of materiality invariably moved me into other domains…I could not fix bodies as simple objects of thought” (1993:ix).

 At the root of all of these questions about her work – the materiality of bodies, the reality of politics, and the possibility of agency – is the issue of construction. And Butler’s answer to all of these questions is that we must not define construction as leading inexorably to cultural determinism. To claim that sexual differences are indissociable from discursive demarcations is not to claim that discourse causes sexual difference. The regulatory norms of sex work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, to naturalize sexual difference (1993:2). What we need is not to bring back the transcendental subject but to foster a collective disidentification that can facilitate a reconceptualization of which bodies matter. To claim that the subject is constituted by gender norms does not do away with the subject or the possibility of resistance but allows us to examine the conditions under which it emerges (1993:7).

 Rethinking construction will lead to a rethinking of subjects, agency, and bodies. All are constituted by discourse by not wholly determined by it. Two themes are emphasized here that were present in GT but now come to the foreground: performativity and the abject. Gender norms are constituted by their performance; destabilizing those norms can be effected by denying the performance. Gender norms determine what is and is not a valuable body. Bodies that are not valuable – the abject- can only be recognized if we expand what counts as a valuable body through a radical rearticulation of the symbolic horizon (1993:10-23.

The task is to refigure this necessary ‘outside’ as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome. (1993:53)

Central to Butler’s argument is her claim that the iterability of performance is not determined in advance. Drag reveals the performativity of gender, but also the anxiety of heterosexual performatively (1993:128). If gender is established through performance then our best strategy is not to fix identity, but to reveal the political power of the performance and deploy a multitude of identities. Performativity allows us to turn power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power. The key question, however, is “How will we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose.” We are in power even as we oppose it. The incalculable effects of action are as much a part of their subversive promise as those that we plan in advance (1993:241).

 Thus, finally, it all comes back to the subject: we need a new way of thinking about subjects and their agency, a way that begins with discursive constitution: “The subject is neither a ground nor a product, but the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process” and “To take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject; to deconstruct the subject is not to negate or throw away the concept” (1995:47-9).

 I think that it is fair to say that, on the whole, Butler’s critics could simply not accept the radical nature of this formulation.[[1]](#footnote-1) To say that subjects could be both constituted and agentic seemed an impossibility for many feminists. But there is a sense in which what Butler is doing here is precisely what Beauvoir prescribed. “Woman,” Beauvoir argued, was a dead-end for women; she doesn’t fit into our conceptual schemes; she is forever the inferior Other. Butler displaces this by redefining subjectivity and deconstructing the conceptual schemes that ground the subject. Without “man” there is no Other – woman – and we can rethink everything accordingly.

 Although Butler’s work dominated the 1990’s discussion of postmodernism/poststructuralism and its relation to feminism, she was not the only defender of the alliance. The reaction to postmodernism among feminists was polarized between those who heartily embraced the approach and those who saw it as a danger to the very existence of feminism. Although there was no middle ground in these discussions there was an agreement that, somehow, feminists had to react to the onslaught of postmodernism. [[2]](#footnote-2) Toward the end of the 1980’s a spate of books and articles appeared embracing the new approach and proclaiming its usefulness for feminism. Many of these works focused on Foucault and specifically on the possibilities of resistance in his work. Most of the authors of a collection of articles by Diamond and Quinby that appeared in 1988 argued that Foucault’s work was useful for feminist analysis while acknowledging the tensions between feminism and postmodernism. In their introduction Diamond and Quinby identify the convergences between feminism and Foucault in terms of their common emphasis on the body as a site of power, the local and intimate sources of power, the critical role of discourse, and the critique of western humanism (1988:x). Jana Sawicki (1991) likewise focuses on the possibilities of resistance in Foucault’s work. The aim of her book, she declares, is to flesh out Foucault’s underdeveloped remarks about resistance and struggle in order to show how his discourses can be used to support specific libertory political struggles (1991:8).Chris Weedon’s emphasis is on power rather than resistance. Feminist poststructuralism, she asserts, is a mode of knowledge production that uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity and power to understand existing power relations and to identify strategies for change (1987:40).

 I argued above that Butler’s redefinition of the subject is consistent with Beauvoir’s rejection of “Woman.” Another defender of a feminist postmodernism also writes in this Beauviorian spirit. In Thinking Fragments (1990) Jane Flax identifies feminism, psychoanalysis, and postmodernism as “transitional” modes of thinking that are, together, transforming our ways of thinking: each approach tries to understand the self, gender, knowledge, social relations and cultural change without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking. Although she acknowledges the ambiguous origins of feminism, Flax nevertheless maintains that feminist notions of self, knowledge, and truth are too contradictory to the Enlightenment to be contained within its categories. She asserts:

If we do our work well, “reality” will appear even more unstable, complex, and disorderly than it does now. In this sense perhaps Freud was right when he declared that women are the enemies of civilization. (1990:183)

Although in TF Flax admits some skepticism about the postmodern subject, in her next book she seems to have overcome these hesitations: “I believe a unitary self is unnecessary, impossible, and a dangerous illusion” (1993:93).

 In her defense of a postmodern approach to feminism Shildrick argues that the openness of postmodernism should not be interpreted as a weakness but as the courage to refuse broad categories and a unidirectional fixed vision (1997:3). But it was precisely this openness and lack of vision that became the focus of feminist critiques of postmodernism. Losing “woman” was more than some feminists were willing to accept. It seemed obvious to many critics that without “woman” feminism, and particularly a feminist politics, is impossible. Nancy Hartsock found the timing of this questioning of “woman,” furthermore, to be especially ironic:

Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? (1990:163)

What we need to do, Hartsock insists, is not to get rid of the subject and subjectivity, but to engage in the historical, political and theoretical process of constituting ourselves as subjects as well as objects of history (1990:170).

 Christine Di Stefano echoes this critique in her striking image of the “incredible shrinking woman” (1990). How, she asks, can fractured identities be the basis for politics (1990:76)? In a similar vein Seyla Benhabib argues that the postmodern subject leads to incoherence, not politics or emancipation (1995:21). Susan Bordo takes the theme of incoherence to the methodological level. Feminist postmoderns want us to see identity as a tapestry and to examine the many aspects of women’s identity. But, she asks, “how many axes can one include and still preserve analytic focus or argument” (1990:139)? We are so afraid of falling into essentialism, she concludes, that we have become methodologically paralyzed.

 It should not be surprising that the most vociferous criticisms of postmodernism come from theorists who identify themselves in Marxist terms. A number of related issues emanate from these critiques but they revolve around three key concerns: materiality, systemic social criticism, and emancipation. Because of its exclusive emphasis on discourse and difference, it is claimed, postmoderns “lose” the material world, the world in which the exploitation of women takes place.

Hartsock, again, is the most eloquent: “For those of us who want to understand the world systematically in order to change it, postmodern theories at their best give little guidance” (1990:159). The Marxist orientation of this statement is obvious, but its challenge is specifically feminist. The whole point of feminism, Hartsock argues, is to understand the world so we can change it; emancipation is the goal of feminism just as it is for Marxism. Postmodernism, on her reading, is not only not a help, but is actually a hindrance. Benhabib, speaking from a Habermasian perspective, concurs: “Can feminist theory be postmodernist and still retain an interest in emancipation?” she asks (1995:24). The answer for her, as it is for Hartsock, is obvious.

 Perhaps the most forceful, if not vituperative, attack on postmodernism from at least a quasi-Marxist perspective is Teresa Ebert’s Ludic Feminism (1996). From Ebert’s perspective in the mid-1990’s postmodernism had become the dominant force in feminist theory. Hence her critique has an added urgency. On her reading it is necessary not only to reveal the errors of postmodern feminism but to dislodge it from its dominant position by offering an alternative. Her way of doing so is to divide postmodernism into ludic and resistance postmodernism. For Ebert ludic feminism encompasses most of what is commonly identified as postmodern feminism. Her argument is that ludic feminism has abandoned the problems of class and exploitation and their relation to gender, sexuality, difference, desire and subjectivity (1996:ix). Ludic feminism denies the possibility of reliable knowledge, replacing it with a concept of theory as play. Like Hartsock she argues that this obviates the possibility of a coherent understanding of patriarchy and capitalism and also the possibility of changing these institutions (1996:5,17). By rewriting the social as discursive, ludic feminism fails to provide the basis for a coherent feminism.

 Resistance postmodernism on Ebert’s definition is a strange hybrid. On the surface it looks very much like historical materialism. It is defined in terms of a historical materialist understanding of changing socio-cultural conditions and a new articulation of the relations of production. The historical materialist practice that it articulates identifies difference within a material system of exploitation. Ebert claims that resistance postmodernism constitutes a radical intervention in the relations of production and the superstructure (1996:133, 148, 182). The difference between resistance postmodernism and classical historical materialism thus appears to be that its subject matter is the postmodern world of advanced capitalism. It is, in other words, the postmodern translation of Marx’s theory. This, Ebert claims, should be the future direction of feminist theory rather than the ludic variety that has prevailed.

 These criticisms of postmodern feminism are far from frivolous. The postmoderns’ radical critique deconstructs not only the basis of Enlightenment thought, but also the historical and epistemological basis of feminism. As Christine Di Stefano points out, feminism is thoroughly if ambivalently modern (1990). The critics of postmodern feminism are right: we do need a subject as well as knowledge, agency, and politics. The problem with these critiques is that they assume that it necessarily follows that we retain modernist concepts to achieve these goals. But we do not have to accept this assumption. What postmodernism has revealed is that the challenge, rather, is to recast these concepts in light of what we have learned from discursive analysis. Postmodernism does not, despite its critics, entail the death of the subject, but instead the death of the modernist subject, man. This death is a triumph for feminism and consistent with the project that Beauvoir initiated. What feminists need to do is to construct a new way of defining subjects, agency, politics and knowledge in the wake of the death of man.

 It is possible to argue that this is precisely what material feminism has done and continues to do. But material feminism did not, in a sense, emerge full blown from the criticisms of postmodernism. In the 1990’s several feminist theorists made important contributions to the definition of the feminine subject that were informed by postmodernism and pointed to material feminism. Drucilla Cornell and Rosi Braidotti in particular advanced our understanding of feminist theory in the wake of the postmodern/discursive turn. Their work is important not only in clarifying the path that the postmoderns articulated but also in pointing toward what was to follow.

 In Beyond Accommodation (1999) and several other works Cornell takes up the challenge that postmodernism poses to feminism. If there is to be a feminism at all, she asserts, we must rely on a feminine voice and feminine reality that can be identified as such and correlated with the lives of actual women. And we must do so in a way that does not deny the differences between women (1999:3). The strategy she proposes to accomplish this is mimesis: the affirmation of the feminine as performance that can be restylized (1999:19). Mimesis, she claims, allows us to move within the gender hierarchy to give it new meaning (1999:148). Our goal cannot be to dethrone the myth of woman and create a neutral person. Beauvoir has shown that to be impossible. Our only option is to work within myth to reinterpret it (1999:196). And, finally,

Ontology of gender identity, then, has been deconstructed not just to expose the normative injunction that lies at its base, but to protect the possibility of a different destiny. (1999:205)

 Rosi Braidotti takes on the key issue of contention in postmodern feminism directly and offers an innovative theoretical position. The death of the subject, she asserts, far from being a metaphor for the void, is a sign of irrepressible theoretical vitality (1991:2). In Patterns of Dissonance she links what she calls the discourse of crisis in contemporary thought and new feminist reflections on subjectivity. The conception of the subject that she proposes is an immensely fruitful one: the nomadic subject. Her argument is that the void left by the exhaustion of the classical version of subjectivity is not an absence or a death but the historical opportunity to assert the incompleteness and partiality of thought in a positive manner – to open up a new set of possibilities (1991:140). Central to Braidotti’s argument is her thesis that it is no accident that the philosophical crisis of legitimacy arises at the same time as the emergence of the women’s movement. But, she asserts, women have different goals than those of the philosophers. Most importantly women seek to give their struggles a sex specific character (1991:211). Feminism has intensified the crisis but is not synonymous with it.

 Braidotti fleshes out these themes in her 1994 book, Nomadic Subjects. “Nomadic consciousness is an epistemological and political imperative for critical thought at the end of this millennium” (1991:2). Significantly, Braidotti argues that the starting point for feminist reflections on subjectivity is a new form of materialism that emphasizes embodiment and the sexually differentiated structure of the speaking subject. This constitutes the epistemological project of nomadism. The nomad is a situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated subject, a myth, a political fiction that allows us to move across the established categories (1994:4).

 Braidotti’s nomadic subject is consonant with many of the themes of Butler’s work but fleshes out the parameters of the subject that they both espouse. The nomad is a postmetaphysical, intensive, multiple entity functioning in a net of interconnectedness (1994:36). It is situated and embodied. Braidotti’s nomadic subject, furthermore, addresses an issue that was problematic for Butler: politics. Braidotti argues that one need not be settled in a substantive vision of the subject in order to be political (1994:35). Echoing Butler, Braidotti argues for a politics of parody in which subjectivity can be explored (1994:7). Foundations are not required for political agency and can often be a hindrance to flights of nomadic consciousness (1994:35). The key question for feminism, Braidotti argues, is how to reassemble a vision of female subjectivity after the certainties of gender dualism have collapsed (1994:99). Her answer is a new kind of female embodied materialism working along lines of a multiplicity of variables of definition of female subjectivity: race, class, age, sexual preference and lifestyle (1994:156).[[3]](#footnote-3)

 Although this was not her intent in 1994, Braidotti’s vision is a blueprint for two movements in feminist understandings of the subject that are on the horizon: intersectionality and material feminism. But this is not accidental. Postmodernism, although flawed in many of the ways its critics enumerate, was nonetheless an important step in the evolution of the feminine subject. It brings to the forefront the constitutive force of discourse in defining subjects and the reality they inhabit. And it is consistent with Beauvoir’s injunction to transcend previous ways of thought and construct a new feminist approach to knowledge and the subject. The postmoderns provided an important stepping stone in the history of the evolution of the feminine subject. But, like all the conceptions that preceded it, the postmodern feminine subject also left some questions unanswered. It is these questions that would b e the spring-board to the next conceptions.

II. Race and Ethnicity

 In 1988 I was teaching a class in feminist theory at the University of Washington. Almost as an afterthought I had added a reading about black feminist thought to the syllabus with the intention of devoting one class period to the discussion of race and gender before continuing with the “regular” subject of the class. As the discussion began a black woman in the class stood up and declared angrily that my way of dealing with the issue of race and gender was totally unacceptable. Race, she claimed, and the differences it entails, changes everything. My strategy of discussing race for one class and then moving on did not take account of the radical changes entailed by introducing racial difference into feminist theory. She angrily stalked out of class.

 The young woman’s disruption of my classroom certainly got my attention: these sorts of events do not normally occur in the course of my teaching. But most importantly it brought home to me the revolutionary nature of introducing race into feminist theory. My student was right: race changes everything; feminist theory, and, most importantly our understanding of the subject, must be radically rethought. This rethinking first arose in the political arena with the claim by women of color that the feminist movement was dominated by white, middle-class women. Subsequently this political protest came to affect theoretical discussions as well. Women of color have claimed that feminist theory is about white, middle-class women and that their own voices have been silenced in both theory and practice.

 In the 1980’s a spate of books and articles emerged that challenged the hegemony of white feminist thought. Emblematic of these discussions are bell hooks’s Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center (1989) and Patricia Hill Collins’s Black Feminist Thought (1990). Hooks claimed that feminism in the US did not emerge from the women most victimized by sexist oppression. The one-dimensional perspective of the feminist movement, she declared, must be corrected with a counter-hegemony. Collins argued that we must place Black women’s experiences at the center of analysis without privileging those experiences. Other groups of women took up the challenge as well. Chicanas focused on their unique perspective as both non-white and culturally other. Gloria Anzaldua’s concept of the borderland brought home the special status of Chicanas in – and out of – the feminist movement (1999). This discussion also spread beyond US borders. Feminists challenged the unitary characterization of “woman” that informed Western feminists’ discussion of “Third World women.” Chandra Mohanty argued that we need to counter the assumption of woman as a coherent group with identical interests without an understanding of contradictions inherent in women’s location in various structures (1991).

The discussions of race and ethnicity and its place in feminism intersect with many of the discussions surrounding the role of postmodernism in feminism. Attention to difference dominate both approaches but the appropriate relationship between these discussions remains contentious.While some feminist theorists have claimed that postmodern theories are particularly suited to issues of race and ethnicity, feminist theorists of color have countered that the adoption of such theories is yet another form of colonization, one more effort to subsume women of color under a white male discourse.

The stage was set for the discussion of the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in feminist theory by Edward Said's path­breaking Orientalism (1978). Although Said is discussing the European "invention" of the Orient, the terms of his discourse are directly relevant to theorizing about women in general and women of color in particular. Said's thesis is that Orientalism is a created body of theory and practice that is parasitic on the cultural hegemony of the West. In this discourse the West is the actor, the Orient the passive reactor; as such, the Orient is identified as feminine, silent, and supine (1978: 138). Said explicitly links the concept of the Orient with concepts identified as "Other" in the hegemonic discourse: women, the insane, the poor (1978: 207). His point is that there is no "essence" of the Orient, but that it is both a discursive construct and a necessary product of the hegemony of the West.

Said's thesis both illuminates and complicates the current feminist dispute about women of color and feminist theory, especially as it relates to postmodernism. On the one hand, Said reveals that the "otherness" of women of color is a constructed, not an essential, cat­egory and that it is parasitic both on the hegemonic discourse of white society and on the discourse of white feminist theorists, The very term “women of color” makes no sense without the corresponding concept of "white women." One of the conclusions that seems to follow from this insight is that it would be in the interests of women of color to deconstruct the discourse that marginalizes them, to displace the dis­course of center and periphery, self and other. Thus, it would seem that postmodern theories are uniquely applicable to the situation of women of color, women who have been doubly marginalized: by white males in the larger society and white women in the feminist movement. The problem with this neat solution, however, is that in order to effect this displacement, women of color would have to rely on the theoretical constructs of the white European males who created postmodernism. Many women of color find this option unacceptable.

For women of color their situation is both simple and complex. It is clear that they have been the “Other” in feminist theory – marginalized as different and to a large extent ignored. It has also seemed clear to at least some women of color that it is necessary for them to go their own way rather than attempting to find a place in white feminist theory. Audre Lorde's famous statement: "The *master's tools* will *never* dismantle *the* master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (1981: 99) applies to white feminist theory as well. This sentiment has been frequently reiterated. Cherrie Moraga states: "No one can or will speak for us. We must be the ones to define the parameters of what it means to be female and mestizo" (1983:139). Similarly, Lugones and Spelman (1983) argue that women of color do not recognize themselves in the theories of white feminists. They argue that women with different racial and ethnic identities should not try to fit themselves into these theories but, rather, should work together with white women to jointly create feminist theory. Barbara Christian (1987) takes this line specifi­cally in relation to literary criticism. She claims that the literary world has been taken over by Western philosophers, who have changed liter­ary criticism to suit their own purposes, devaluing and disprivileging those who do not follow in their footsteps. As a result, black and Third World critics have been co-opted "into speaking a language and defining their discussion in terms alien to and opposed to our own needs and orientation” (1987:52). She argues that women of color can and must theorize, but asserts, like Moraga, that it must be in ways that are specific to them:

For people of color have always theorized – but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic. And I am inclined to say that our theorizing…is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking. (1987:52).

She concludes that what will emerge from this process will not be a “set” theory, a black feminist literary criticism,” but a language that arises from black feminist texts themselves.

 Christian’s target is theory in general, but other feminist theorists concerned with questions of race and ethnicity have attacked postmodern and poststructuralist theories in particular. Paula Gunn Allen (1986), in her work on the American Indian tradition, specifically criticizes the use of postmodern literary theory in American Indian literary criticism. She claims that American Indians’ rejection of Western theory is distinct from that of postmodernism, because the former does not constitute a reaction against Western tropes. Thus, in the “surrealism” of American Indian literature, dreams and visions do not represent departures from Western rationality but are an integral part of a separate oral tradition (1986: 81-91). Likewise, Joyce Joyce (1987), in an argument with Henry Louis Gates on the use of poststructuralism in black literary criticism, argues that treating blackness as a metaphor violates the integrity of black literary criticism. She argues instead that black reactive art is an act of love that sustains the black community.

 But there are also theorists concerned with race and ethnicity who see an affinity between discursive, postmodern approaches and theories of race and ethnicity. Henry Louis Gates makes a strong case for the convergence of postmodernism and black literary theory. In 1985 Gates, like many black critics, argued that blacks must turn to the black tradition itself in order to develop theories of literature indigenous to black culture (1985:13). But in his influential Figures in Black (1987a) he espouses a method that he labels “critical bricolage,” which borrows heavily from postmodernism. Addressing the question of whether black literary critics should be theoretical, he argues strongly for the creation of text-specific theories arising from the particularities of black literature. He urges black literary critics to invent their own theories, to name indigenous black principles of criticism, to explicate the black tradition in detail (1987a:xviii-xxii). But Gates makes it clear that in the process of inventing, the goal is not to define the “essence” of blackness; for “’Blackness’ is not a material object, an absolute, or an event, but a trope; it does not have an ‘essence’ as such but is defined by a network of relations that form a particular aesthetic unity” (1987a:40).

 In his argument with Joyce, Gates makes his position more explicit. He defends theory in general, and postmodernism in particular, as appropriate to black literary criticism. He contends that it is only through critical activity that the literary profession in general can redefine itself away from a Eurocentric, male canon and sustain a pluralistic notion of literature. Where he most takes issue with Joyce, however, is in his claim that literature cannot be approached *without* a theory (1987b:351). Although he recognizes that the notion of a black “essence” is a “healthy political gesture,” he nevertheless rejects it (1987a:53). In the end he argues for a kind of middle ground: “The challenge of the critic of comparative black literature is to allow contemporary theoretical developments to inform his or her own readings of discrete black texts but also to generate his or her own theories from the black idiom itself” (1987a:58).

 Feminist women of color have a particular stake in this dispute. On the face of it, rejection of the hegemonic discourse informing postmodernism would seem to be a welcome theoretical refuge for marginalized groups. This is precisely what Jana Sawicki, a (white) postmodern feminist argues. Sawicki’s view is that Foucault’s politics of difference is particularly applicable to women of color and lesbians because he assumes that difference is not an obstacle to effective resistance (1986:32). Mae Henderson (1992) argues the Bakhtin’s dialogism is an appropriate model for understanding black women’s writing, because it defines each group as speaking in its own “social dialect,” its own language, values, perspectives, and norms. Gayatri Spivak is perhaps the best-known theorist to unite postmodernism and ethnicity. Despite her advocacy of postmodernism, however, Spivak is ambivalent about the convergence of postmodernism and theorizing ethnicity. In her analysis of the Subaltern Studies Collective (1987:197-221) she acknowledges an affinity between the imperialist subject and the humanist subject and hence the relvance of the critique of humanism for subaltern studies. Yet she qualifies this by adding that subaltern studies mixes discourse theory with traces of essentialism. What her position comes down to is another version of Gates’s “cultural bricolage.”

 Bell hooks offers one of the most positive arguments for uniting postmodernism and theories of ethnicity. Although in her early work she is not explicitly postmodern, in Yearning she embraces postmodernism because of its “polyphonic vocality” and its critique of essentialism (1990:228). In the book she explicitly addresses the charge that postmodernism does not relate to the realities of the lives of black people. Although she concedes that postmodernism unfortunately directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience, she nevertheless insists that it is also the contemporary discourse that speaks most directly to questions of heterogeneity and difference. Avoiding theory altogether, she claims, will simply result in the perpetuation of racism. She advocates the employment of postmodern techniques while at the same time conceding that postmodernism lacks a political program. In the course of presenting her position, she outlines how postmodernism might be employed to address the marginality of black women. Staying on the margins, she argues, nourishes one’s will to resist:

This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonizer/colonized. Marginality as a site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators. (1990:152)

 One of the virtues of hooks’s work is that she brings her discussion of postmodernism, ethnicity, and feminism to bear on the discussions of the feminine subject. The issues here are complex. If Said is correct, then it is modernist theories of the subject that have constituted the “otherness” of racial identity by constructing the marginalized other as inferior. Thus it would seem that embracing racial/ethnic identity, declaring that there is an essential subject that is, for example, black, Native American, or Chicana, will perpetuate rather than defeat the modernist hegemony of self and other. But the postmodern move of deconstructing identity has its dangers as well. What is left, many theorists ask, if we deconstruct the otherness of the other? Isn’t it necessary to posit a concrete identity on which to build identity politics?

 Hooks argues that this is a danger that can be met and overcome. Like Spivak, she connects essentialist concepts of the self with racism and looks to postmodernism to deconstruct these notions. She argues that the postmodern critique of essentialism provides possibilities for the construction of self and agency that avoid the strictures of essentialism. Furthermore, postmodernism can help define black subjectivity as not unitary but plural (1990:28-9). In Talking Back (1989) hooks illustrates her thesis by describing how she came to be “bell hooks.” She explains that as a child she rejected the good little black girl she was supposed to be and, instead, adopted the persona of her outspoken and rebellious great-grandmother, bell hooks. What is significant here is that hooks does not argue that she “discovered” her “real” or “authentic” self in taking on the identity of “bell hooks” but, rather, that she used the elements of subjectivity available to her in her cultural setting. Gates expresses a similar attitude toward subjectivity in his attack on the notion of a transcendent black subject. He maintains that the assumption of an “unassailable integral black self” is false to the black experience (1987a:115-16). Like hooks, he argues that we must deconstruct this essential self.

 Although she wants to claim that there is no essence to black subjectivity, hooks nevertheless argues that the construction of the black subject is distinctive. This in itself is an important point. It means that abandoning the concept of essence and arguing for a discursively constituted identity do not necessarily entail abandoning a distinctive definition of identity. Hooks asserts that the sense of self in black community is a self in relation, a self dependent on other (1989:30-1). This thesis is echoed in the work of several other black writers. Patricia Collins alleges that, for black women, “Self is not defined as increased autonomy gained by separating oneself from others. Instead, self is found in the context of family and community” (1990:103). She maintains that black women have fashioned an independent standpoint regarding the meaning of black womanhood, a standpoint that arises out of their common experience. In discussing Afro-American autobiographical writing, Selwyn Cudjoe argues that it avoids “excessive subjectivism and mindless egoism” (1984:9). She concludes that “the Afro-American autobiographical statement emerges as a *public* rather than a *private* gesture, *me-ism* gives way to *our-ism* and superficial concerns about the *individual subject* usually give way to the *collective subject* of the group” (1984:10).

 Discussions of race and ethnicity as it relates to gender have brought questions of identity to the forefront. There appear to be advantages, particularly in politics, to defining the subject in essentialist terms: an essentialist subject can be opposed to the hegemonic subject of the dominant discourse. But these writers make a persuasive case that the disadvantages of this move outweigh the advantages. First, positing an essentialist subject denies the multiplicity of subjects that are constructed by the different experiences of nonwhite women. The experiences of nonwhite women, “women of color,” are not monolithic: many differences divide them; they are subject to different kinds of oppression. Subsuming all nonwhite women under one concept of identity would deny the specificity of their oppression and impede the political process of overcoming it (Moraga 1981). Second, an essentialist subject is parasitic on the hegemonic discourse that defines “women of color” as “Other” (Minh-ha 1989:99); it constructs identity using the master’s tools. What these writers are suggesting is that identity need not be abandoned if difference is embraced. Rather, as Elizabeth Meese puts it, wholeness and identity require continual negotiations in the field of difference (1990:48). Difference does not annul identity but, rather, is beyond and alongside it (Minh-ha 1989:104).

 The key issue in this dispute over identity is politics. Feminist women of color seek to posit a subject that can resist the hegemony of the white, middle-class subject, both masculine and feminine. Spivak expresses a common fear in her rejection of the “disappearing subject” of postmodernism on the grounds of political inadequacy (1987:209). Hooks, Meese, and Minh-ha, however, argue that defining subjects as differently constructed does not negate identity but, rather, fosters it. They assert that recognizing that subjects are differently constructed by race, class, and gender does not preclude the movement to end oppression (hooks 1989:23). Instead, it recognizes that there are different *kinds* of oppression, as well as different subjects that are oppressed. What is required is a “differential consciousness” (Sandoval 1991) that can transform the dominant discourse.

 This differential consciousness was, in fact, in the process of emerging when these authors wrote. Discussions of race and ethnicity and how it relates to gender raised the issue that would dominate subsequent feminist discussions: intersecting oppressions. In the second edition of Black Feminist Thought Patricia Hill Collins makes this explicit. Intersectional paradigms, she asserts, remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one type of oppression and that we must work together to create justice (2009:21). The focus on intersectional paradigms captured the attention of many feminists as feminist theory moved into the 21st century. Most specifically, defining the self as the point of intersection of structures of oppression became the center of feminist discussions.

III. Intersectionality

 In her comments on the rise of intersectionality in feminist theory Mary Hawkesworth defines intersectionality as an analytic tool developed by feminists of color in their struggle to correct the omissions and distortions of feminist analysis caused by the failure to investigate the structuring power of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and nationality (2006:207). Since the 19th century, she notes, black women have been analyzing and writing about the intimate interplay of race, gender, class and sexuality that structure their lives with multiple vectors of power (2006:208). Patricia Hill Collins makes this connection between feminists’ concern with race and gender and the rise of intersectionality specific in the second edition of her Black Feminist Thought (2009). Women of color brought to our attention the multiple sources of oppression by revealing that focusing on gender oppression alone was inadequate. The focus on multiple sources of oppression is at the center of intersectional analysis. Intersectional analysts argue that oppression cannot be reduced to one type and that oppressions work together to create injustice (Collins 2009:2). Collins notes: “In a context of intersecting oppressions Black feminism requires searching for justice not only for U.S. Black women, but for everyone” (2009:48). She goes on to argue that because Black women are one of the few groups negatively affected by multiple forms of oppression, they are in a better position to see their interrelationship (2009:233).

 Leslie Mc Call boldly states the “intersectionality is the most important theoretical construction that women’s studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far” (2005:1771). Although most contemporary feminist theorists would probably not go quite this far, there is a consensus among feminists that intersectionality is immensely useful and insightful (Lykke 2010:50). There is not agreement, however, on how to define the approach and how to articulate a specifically intersectional method. In her work on intersectionality Lykke tries to make up for this omission:

Intersectionality is a methodological and theoretical tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power and/or constraining normativity based on discursively, institutionally, and/or structurally constructed socio-cultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, disability, nationality, Mother tongue and so on interact and in doing so produce different kinds of social inequalities and social relations. (2010:50)

She goes on to argue that intersectionality entails the analysis of how individual subjects negotiate the power-laden social conditions in which they are embedded (2010:51).

 As every discussion of intersectionality notes, it was Kimberle Crenshaw’s 1989 article that first introduced the term into feminist theory. The focus of her article is Black women and the intersecting vectors of power that subordinate them that came to the forefront in a case of discussions involving Black women. Her thesis is that single-axis analysis erases Black women. The operative conceptions of race and sex utilized represent only one subset of a more complex phenomenon (1989:140). The complexity of this phenomenon came to be realized as intersectional analysis spread beyond its origins in the intersection of race and gender. It soon became obvious that this intersection was only the tip of the iceberg, that many other vectors of domination were also operative. And, thus, a whole new theoretical vista opened up. As did a new politics. Crenshaw notes:

Through an awareness of intersectionality we can both acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics. (1995:377)

 Much like postmodernism in the 1990’s, intersectional analysis has taken feminist theory by storm. Routledge has launched a new series to accommodate this popularity: Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality. It is tempting to conclude from this title that “feminist studies” and “intersectionality” have in effect merged, a conclusion with which many feminist would concur. In an article published in 2008 Kathy Davis tries to explain the phenomenal rise of intersectional analysis. She notes that any scholar today who neglects differences runs the risk of having her work viewed as theoretically misguided, politically irrelevant, or simply fantastical. But she also notes that despite its popularity there is confusion over whether intersectionality is a theory, a heuristic device, or a research strategy. The main purpose of her argument, however, is not to answer this question but to examine how a theory that is so vague could be so successful. Her conclusion is that intersectionality’s focus on difference brings together two strands of feminist thought: understanding the effects of race, class, gender and women’s identity and experience and analyzing how these factors intersect to produce and transform relations of power (2008:71). It follows that intersectionality offers a reason to do feminist theory today and assuages our fear that, in an era of differences, theory is superfluous (2008:72).

 The question of what is unique both methodologically and theoretically in intersectional analysis is a central concern in the discussions of the approach. Collins suggest that it entails a “transversal politics:” with the assumption of transversalism participants bring with them a rooting in their own position but realize that to engage in dialogue across multiple markers of difference they must shift from their own centers (2009:265). She argues that this results in an understanding of the “matrix of domination” to which subjects are subjected (2009:246). The theme of multiplicity comes up in many accounts. Jonasdottir, Bryson, and Jones argue that any adequate theory of gender and sexuality requires multiple methods of investigation and interpretive analysis (2011:4). This entails, they claim, a shift beyond intersectionalties to transsectionalities (2011:6); Lykke also emphasizes the transformative power of intersectional analysis. It describes forces, she claims, that intra-act rather than interact. Interaction is between discrete phenomena; intra-action transforms the phenomena through interpenetration (2010:51). The theme of these comments is clear: intersectionality takes the next step in feminist analysis. It goes beyond: it makes visible processes of marginalization that mainstream accounts omit (Hawkesworth 2006:210); it asks the “other question” (Matsuda 1991:1189).

 Lykke argues that at any given time it is important for feminist analysis to have a nodal point (2010:86). I think most feminists would agree that, in the early 21st century, that nodal point is intersectionality. There is little that I could say here that would add anything significant to the voluminous literature on intersectionalisy and I will not attempt to do so. But I think it is worth asking at this point what we have gained from the approach. As Lykke herself points out, we have been doing intersectionality for a long time. It is not a stunning insight that identities are complex, that not only gender but race, sexuality, and myriad other factors constitute identity (Sojourner Truth told us this). What intersectionality has done is to bring this insight to the fore and give it a name. Which is in itself a positive move for feminist theory. It is also valuable that in terms of feminist analysis intersectionality has spawned what seem like an endless array of case studies. This should come as no surprise. Since the varieties of identities are multiple, their intersections are an exponential function of the multiplicity. Almost any aspect of identity can be analyzed in terms of another aspect: the possibilities of analyses are incalculable.

 A less fortunate result of intersectional analysis is the creation of a whole new array of categories in feminist theory. Mc Call discusses intersectionality in terms of anticategorical complexity, intercategorical categorical complexity and intra-categorical complexity. Other theorists refer to transsectionality and transversal politics; other categories abound. This tendency has little to recommend it. The last thing that feminism needs today is more categories into which we much fit our analysis. It does not aid our analysis to create even more complicated terms to describe; it obfuscates rather than reveals. Yet this seems to be a distinctive mark of the approach in recent years.

 Intersectionality is not without its critics (Hindman 2011). But, as Davis points out, its sweep is very broad; those who deviate from it can even be accused of “fantastical analysis.” I think this is unfortunate on two levels. First, establishing any approach as orthodoxy cuts off exploration of alternative viewpoints. Feminism should not be about finding the “right” approach but, rather, with experimenting with multiple approaches in an open environment. For all its virtues, intersectional analysis is not the end point of feminist theory. It is another step along the way. Second, as several of its proponents have themselves admitted, there is nothing very new here on a theoretical level. We have known for a long time that identities are complex and open-ended. Intersectionality adds little or nothing to our understanding of the feminist subject that we did not already know. Perhaps the most revealing perspective on intersectionality is that offered by Thomas Kuhn’s study of paradigms. Kuhn argues that one of the principal reasons that new paradigms become dominant is that they offer rich opportunities for research. This is an apt description of intersectionality. There is no limit to case studies that could be pursued in the name of intersectionality. And, finally, this may be its most valuable legacy.

 Is the move from difference to differences an advantage or a disadvantage for feminism? This is an impossible question to answer. The “discovery” of differences between women along with the realization that ignoring those differences privileges a particular group of women has changed feminism. We cannot go back to the era of difference; the change is irrevocable. But the move to differences need not be seen as a repudiation of the era of difference. Rather, emphasizing differences can be seen as expanding our understanding of the subject form a feminist perspective. Since Beauvoir’s bold assertion that women are made, not born, feminists have been struggling to define “woman” outside the parameters of Western thought. Every iteration of that radical redefinition can be seen as another addition to our understanding of “woman.” Each new definition does not erase previous conceptions. Nor does it, finally, get woman “right.” Rather, we should interpret our attempts to define “woman” as an on-going project that continues to demand our attention.

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1. See the criticisms in “Merely Cultural” (1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A possible exception is Fraser and Nicholson (1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See also de Laurentis’s eccentric subjects. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)