

1-1-1996

The politics of experience : constructing a non-identitarian feminism for theory and practice.

Renée Heberle
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1

Recommended Citation

Heberle, Renée, "The politics of experience : constructing a non-identitarian feminism for theory and practice." (1996). *Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014*. 1958.
<https://doi.org/10.7275/eb7t-1322> https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_1/1958

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations 1896 - February 2014 by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

312066013390065

THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE: CONSTRUCTING A NON-IDENTITARIAN
FEMINISM FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

A Dissertation Presented

by

RENEE J. HEBERLE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 1996

Department of Political Science

© Copyright by Renee J. Heberle 1996
All Rights Reserved

THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE: CONSTRUCTING A NON-IDENTITARIAN
FEMINISM FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

A Dissertation Presented

by

RENEE J. HEBERLE

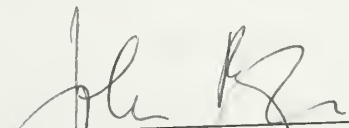
Approved as to style and content by:



Ann Ferguson, Chair



Joan Cocks, Member



John Brigham, Member



Eric Einhorn, Department Head
Political Science

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I call my committee the "saviour committee." They all came on late in the process after a series of crises no one could have predicted. In spite of her extraordinarily busy schedule, Ann Ferguson agreed to take on the responsibilities of Chair in the middle of the process. I thank her for her commitment to the project and for consistently pointing out the big political questions that my work tends to beg. John Brigham provided critical institutional and intellectual support. Joan Cocks read my work with critical but respectful consideration for the ideas and a remarkable eye for sloppy articulation.

The experience and challenge of teaching in the Social Thought and Political Economy Program sustained me through the process of putting together a dissertation. I owe the students of STPEC a special thanks for their curiosity about politics, their enthusiasm, their kindness and their company. And I owe a special thanks to Sara Lennox for hiring me in the first place and helping keep the various crises in STPEC and in my classroom in perspective. STPEC was truly an academic and political home to me.

Marc Belanger's intellectual and personal friendship sustained me through the difficult early years. Sharing an office with Marc and subsequently with Marsha Marotta made life in Thompson Tower almost enjoyable. I will not forget office #410 and the friendships developed there.

Beyond the Political Science department, Patricia Moreno's demanding humanism and active political commitment helped me remember who and what I was writing for. Jackie Humphreys' life and work and friendship were an inspiration. Patricia Hanrahan has been a source of strength--though I will never be able to structure my life so well as she does hers!

Thanks to my parents and all my sisters for emotional and financial support. We're still learning to 'talk theory' (and politics) together.

And thank you to Bill. He never gave up on me in spite of my best efforts to convince him it was all over. Among Bill, Lena, Blue and our most recent addition to the family, Charlie, my dissertation was destined to be completed.

ABSTRACT

THE POLITICS OF EXPERIENCE: CONSTRUCTING A NON-IDENTITARIAN FEMINISM FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

FEBRUARY 1996

RENEE HEBERLE, B.A., BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

Ph.D, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Ann Ferguson

In my dissertation I appropriate the insights of Theodor Adorno to critique identity logic in feminist theories of knowledge and representation. I do not argue we can "escape" identity or that we should reject it as a salient moment of cognition that shapes our political and sentient life. Rather, I question the privileged place of identity logic in feminism and elaborate a dialectical theory of experience and interpretation using Adorno's theory of negative dialectics.

Adorno anticipates post-modern critiques of identity logic and theories of representation while sustaining a normative commitment to the quality of experience in the social world. Negative Dialectics elaborates a method of interpretation that contributes to realizing new forms for self-other relations in modernity. It is a resource feminism can draw upon to intervene in epistemological and post-modern arguments about identity and representation in modernity.

In his philosophy, Adorno shows us that modes of representation and historical social relations interact in a negative dialectic that never allows us to realize, much less to tell, the final truth of experience. The relationship between form (representation) and substance (experience) is complexly mediated through the object world as are inter-subjective relations. In light of his insights, I critique the work of materialist feminists who assert that material experience offers epistemological privilege. I argue they obscure the contradictory effects of representation and the remainders left by efforts to conceptualize difference (in material experience) in modernity. I also explore the work of post-modern feminists who argue that because the "truth" cannot be told we must focus only on the politics of representation. I argue they defer attention to the qualities of experience that drive oppositional political struggle. Adorno's philosophy of experience and negative dialectics guides me in these readings and critiques of contemporary feminisms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
Chapter	
I. IDENTITY THEORY IN FEMINISM	1
II. FEMINIST KNOWLEDGES: HOW CAN WE KNOW WHO THE WE IS?	22
III. ADORNO AND THE CRITIQUE OF IDENTITY	65
IV. PERFORMATIVITY AND THE HABITUAL SUBJECT	131
V. "WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO IS SPEAKING?" THE POLITICS OF RE-PRESENTING EXPERIENCE	182
IV. CONCLUSION	227
BIBLIOGRAPHY	261

CHAPTER I

IDENTITY THEORY IN FEMINISM

The historical contests over the social and material conditions of women's lives are often driven by disputes about women's properly sexed and gendered identity(ies). Conservative suspicions about how many genders are implied in the UN Document that emerged from the Beijing Conference on Women of 1995 illustrate only one of the more farcical examples of the pressure brought to bear on women to make final decisions about "just who (and what) they are going to be." A veritable moral panic was stirred up by how the term "gender" is used in the document. Conservative critics charged that the document implies the possibility of five genders, and complained that "gender" is used to modify demands like "education." This was said to be anti-family because "gender education" implies that women may learn they are not naturally or divinely inspired to be mothers and wives. These critics of the document want "gender" to be explicitly stated to equal "male and female." Thus those who defend the notion that there are two natural, essentially different, and supplementary genders rallied as they began to suspect the impact historical and widespread debates about identity in feminism and among scholars of gender had on the document.

The conflicts over identity in feminism have generated an extraordinary number of possibilities for who and what 'women' are and can be. The possibilities for the "meaning" of woman and women's identities are wide open in the feminist imagination, even if they remain profoundly limited in most women's historical realities. As feminists render women's lives visible and demand subject status for women, they make hugely divergent arguments about women's identity. (Snitow, 1988) Efforts to "create" the subject of feminism in the identity of "women" have not led to any fundamental agreements among women. Even within feminism assertions about identity tend to generate critique and resistance from those who find themselves at the margins or outside of various descriptive and theoretical limits. The intensity of conflicts show the significance of identity claims for feminist politics. The calls for alternatives to universalizing claims to identity in such historical manifestos as the Combahee River Collective Statement of 1974 and Bernice Johnson Reagon's speech, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century" of 1981, shift feminist discourse from the discovery of comfortable grounds for sisterhood to asserting differences constructed around race, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Furthermore, arguments within the lesbian community about sexual politics and whether woman-identified relationships challenge a heterosexist social order inspire deconstructive moves

directed at "gender" as an organizing concept for feminist discourse.

These debates are a critical aspect of the dynamics of feminism. However, I think they slide toward a reliance on static forms of identity politics, thereby precluding feminist attention to the relationship between experience and identity. This dissertation is an attempt to revitalize a dialectical notion of experience for a feminist politics of social transformation.

I came to feminist theory out of a general interest in the politics and the politicization of experience and because feminism, as a political discourse, privileges experiential knowledge. However, I found myself caught up in debates about identity which I have come to think reflect a specifically modern pressure to organize and conceptualize experience. There appears to be an unreconcilable tension between feminist attention to gender as experience and gender as identity. I turned to Theodor Adorno's philosophical inquiries into identity and modernity to try to understand this tension. Adorno never lapses into either acceptance of the tension between experience and identity nor into theorizing a reconciled state. His work is driven by a critical (self)consciousness of the pressures brought to bear through modern forms of politics and knowledge to identify oneself and others in the name of conceptual order. Most importantly for my purposes, Adorno articulates a

dialectical theory of experience that can inform a non-identitarian feminism.

Gender as experience is rarely addressed as an issue in itself for feminist politics, though it is clear that it drives many of the conflicting claims about gender as identity. I argue that "differences" among women are constituted in and through experience and that identity-based politics tend to obscure the significance of those conflicts in favor of conceptual order. Feminism must persistently loosen the ties that bind experience and identity within and outside of feminist discourse and practice. However, we should neither assume we can step outside of the terms of identity nor abandon experience as a moment in social critique. Adorno's theory of non-identity offers a resource for recapturing experience as a critical force which persistently defies identity without denying the relevance of identity to our ability to act in the world. He shows that taking positions for or against identity is a false choice.

My notion of experience is informed by Adorno and Horkheimer's interpretation of the Odyssey in Dialectic of Enlightenment and by Adorno's Negative Dialectics. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that enlightenment imprisons nature in history, denying its autonomy as a moment in the dialectic. According to Adorno and Horkheimer's critique, Enlightenment philosophy says experience is the imprint of nature on the

mind and soul of man. As man becomes self-conscious as a modern individual, his desiring and active relation to nature will become progressively controlled through rational consciousness. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that Enlightenment succeeds as a colonizing, controlling myth which produces an individual ideologically bound through the repression of his own desiring impulses and of that which threatens his perceived autonomy as patriarch. Adorno sustains this idea in Negative Dialectics where he immanently critiques various forms of Enlightenment knowledge. He argues for the critical redemption of the moment of non-identity in experience that is lost as knowledge is rationalized into instrumental and conceptual identity forms in modernity.

Adopting these insights of critical theory, my question became: "what happens to experience as it is projected into the world as a collectivizing, justice-seeking moment of reference? Can feminism sustain experience as a critical moment in the dialectical movement of history rather than rationalizing it through identitarian categories?" In my dissertation, I look at what materialist feminisms have made of experience politically. I consider the relationship between experience and identity in these frameworks. I argue Adorno's theory, as articulated in Negative Dialectics, could inform a materialist feminist approach which does not negate the potentially disruptive qualities

of experience. Adorno's Negative Dialectics offers me a resource for thinking about how feminism might conceive of this relationship as dialectical rather than allowing the potentially disruptive quality of experience to be subdued by identity politics.

Feminist theorists have staked out various positions for and against identity and identity politics. For example, Wendy Brown argues that identity-based claims do not challenge the terms of representation within a liberal state founded in a static differentiation between the abstract, universalist 'we' and the demands of the particularist 'I'. (Brown, 1993:390) For Brown, the 'choice' between minimalizing or maximalizing one's difference in order to achieve political recognition by the liberal state accepts the terms the state has always already set up for appropriate forms of participation and representation. From a socialist-feminist perspective, Jenny Bourne (1987) excoriates those who struggle about the meaning of their identity in the world for diffusing political struggle against structural dominance and material forms of exploitation. For Bourne identity politics constitutes a peculiar form of subjectivized narcissism which ignores structural injustices. Nanci Caraway (1991), on the other hand, has attempted to reclaim identity as a necessary means of empowerment that must and will occur prior to political engagement with structures of dominance.

Caraway refers to the critical positioning of oneself as a subject, drawing on Minnie Bruce Pratt, Bernice Johnson Reagon and some post-structuralist feminisms to suggest that identity politics is a form of strategic, self-conscious empowerment for those historically and structurally disempowered. These feminists stake out their positions vis-a-vis historically particular forms that identity politics take against particular forms of domination practiced by the liberal state, capitalism, white supremacist culture, etc. No one of them offers a comprehensive account of how identity works within the terms of modernity. Rather, each account is based upon a particular reading of how dominance works and each illuminates particular kinds of "identity thinking". I do not claim to have developed a comprehensive account in my discussions, but I try to elaborate how, in all modern contexts, the politics of experience exists in a dialectical and sometimes productive tension with the social force of identity. I critique the embrace of identity as a political strategy, but argue that identity as a historical, social force cannot be either transcended or rejected because that transcendence or rejection would ultimately be ideological and dismissive, not material and historical.

To begin, I look at how 'standpoint feminists' theorize the material links between knowledge and women's experiential life. Standpoint feminism lays critical

theoretical foundations for asserting the legitimacy and political relevance of knowledge that emerges from subordinate groups in social systems of domination and for a specifically feminist perspective on the relationship between the subject and object of knowledge. I take up the argument that subjective (sometimes read as experiential) proximity to the object offers better knowledge than, for example, distancing strategies which authorize empiricist and positivist epistemologies. Standpoint feminists argue that the removal of the self from knowledge creation is ideological and obscures the situatedness of knowers in historical social relations. They simultaneously adopt a normative commitment to subjugated knowledges and a materialist analysis of why they offer a truer version of reality. According to Nancy Hartsock, for example, feminist attention to women's relationship to the material world, to her reproductive, nurturing and/or caring work offers feminism a truer, potentially universalizable, perspective on how social relations work.

I begin my work by exploring feminist epistemology because it takes a non-ontological stance toward women as subjects, locating women's position historically and moving from there. I think standpoint theory, as useful as it is in challenging knowledge forms that abstract from experience and in shifting our attention from the historically Eurocentric, masculine subject of knowledge, abandons

dialectical thinking in an effort to affirm women's subject positions as epistemologically superior and therefore beyond political challenge. There is in standpoint feminism a tendency to affirm abstract principles that transcend attention to the particular, or to differences within diverse, socially constructed, gendered experiences. For example, the fact that women mother (or do not mother) in significantly different ways and even for different reasons may be more significant for critical feminist knowledge than the commonalities Hartsock argues are potentially universalizable. Univocal standpoints or strategic positionings remove experience from political contest and categorize it for politics rather than assuming that it may provoke politics. Feminist knowledge has been driven by an ethical imperative to attend to women's experiences, which is as it should be. But this precludes feminism from expressing a univocal truth. Feminist modes of representation will remain in a historical and dialectical tension with difference as they are challenged by those who remain beyond their terms of reference. I argue that in the effort to change the terms on which knowledge is produced and valued, standpoint epistemologists do not challenge the political primacy of the subject. This leaves the mediating forces of the object world little autonomy as constitutive agents of knowledge. For feminist epistemologists, a

subject's experience exists in a confluence rather than in a dialectical tension with the object world.

Adorno's theory of non-identity challenges the impulse to organize experience into identity forms because, while he sustains a modernist commitment to theorizing the mediated quality of inter-subjective life, he shifts the debate away from locating the 'subject of the creator' and argues that truths may emerge through our interpretive relationship to the particulars of the object world (experience). Adorno does not think it possible to finally render the moment of experience transparent to the social world; but his theory of interpretation sustains that moment as critically disruptive of abstract knowledge forms. In Adorno's view, the "whole is untrue." The concept will never fully represent the object. Critical theory therefore should not pursue universalizing forms of knowledge.

My critique of standpoint feminism and my adoption of Adorno's theory of non-identity invites comparison with post-structuralist theories of representation and interpretation. Post-structuralist theorists have argued that what standpoint theory has in common with Enlightenment notions of the subject and identity may undermine rather than further its critical claims. They argue that standpoint feminists' commitments to 'creating the subject of feminism' as a coherent and stable subject actually

perpetuate the regulation and reification of those gender relations they profess to be challenging.

Post-structuralist feminists associate anti-ontological approaches to politics with anti-identitarian approaches. Judith Butler's work is quite clear on this point. She rejects identity politics as necessarily exclusionary -- as repeating the terms of representation feminism professes to be challenging. Butler says the self-stabilizing effects of identity shut down political possibilities rather than illuminate them -- and are therefore always suspect as a political project. For Butler, if we argue we are 'outside' the terms of systems of domination we assume an ontology of otherness rather than a performative positioning that is always potentially reinventing otherness on subversive terms. Appeals to the realities of women's lives run the risk of stabilizing the terms on which that reality is constituted whereas parody and performative acts destabilize the grounds of naturalized reality. While I agree with her critique of identity, I am critical of Butler's work because in rejecting identity she precludes recognition of experience and its social effects. She thinks of experience as a text rather than recognizing its historical and material significance as a dialectical moment of resistance to the modes of representation she critiques.

I argue that feminist politics should be driven by experience--not the experience that is a property of the

self, but by the experience that is a sentient relationship to the object (social) world. I argue for a notion of experience which privileges it as signifying differences in and among women as feminine subjects and as therefore always potentially disruptive of the apparently seamless effects of systems of identity. The articulation of experience in the public realm will always be a contested and political project. The tension immanent to the relationship between experience and the representation of experience should be acknowledged as political rather than denied in a gesture of authorization or rationalization.

Adorno warns us to take note of the contradictions embedded in the process of conceptualizing experience. He argues that the non-identical qualities of experience remain a critical force in what he calls the 'administered world'. Against modern epistemologies, he theorizes a non-identitarian relationship between subject and object, between self and other. Against standpoint theory, Adorno argues that distancing the self through contemplative and deliberative interpretations of experience does not necessarily lead to false abstractions. Distancing the self, in his view, means offering the object a form of autonomy necessary to allow its qualities to emerge outside of the control of subjective determinants. In other words, it may point towards an inter-subjective relationship of recognition which does not obscure or negate the unique

qualities of what is other to the self in any given historical moment. Adorno thus remains well within the materialist tradition of reconfiguring self-other relations through attention to our interdependence in the object world, even while he critiques the overly determinist aspects of that tradition.

One of the central conflicts in contemporary feminist debates is whether and what manner of coherence and stability are necessary backdrops for political commitment and effective change. Post-structuralist feminists criticize calls for stability--often articulated through assertions that there is in fact a 'pre-discursive reality' or a subject who can speak the truth about their reality--as a depoliticizing move. Gayatri Spivak responds with the notion of strategic essentialism. (Spivak, 1988) She argues that subjects are positioned through discourse, but that the constructedness of those positions should not preclude specific attention to the histories and knowledge of the subaltern. For Spivak, the politics of representation as constituted through Western hegemony persistently defeat efforts of subalterns to speak in their own voices, putting aside any question about the 'authenticity' of those voices. Therefore, it is not a question of epistemological truth claims, but of an ethical and political decision as to where we look for critical knowledge forms. Bat-Ami Bar On (1993) makes a similar argument about the ethical imperative to

attend to voices marginalized by structures of dominance. However, this argument does not fully respond to post-structuralist critique, which challenges even the strategic epistemological privileging of subjectivity as reflecting the metaphysics of Western systems of knowledge that produce subaltern figures in the first place. Making political claims on the basis of victimization or subaltern status may participate in naturalizing, in the name of critiquing systems of dominance, the prior positioning of marginal others.

I argue for the privileging of experience as an object of interpretation that renders feminist critique coherent while recognizing the contingencies of time and place. The political project of interpreting experience allows us to expose the dominative qualities of organized social life without assuming their totalizing effects prior to engagement. This invites engagement with identity politics but always resists naming the 'who' or using universalizing arguments about experience as a means to establish, once and for all, the legitimacy of feminist critique.

A non-identitarian feminist critique politicizes aspects of social experience previously relegated to the margins of political life. Feminists need not agree on the political significance of experiences out of a prior, given interest. Experiences take on a politics through and within feminism. The public world is transformed through the

politicization of sexuality, the 'family,' 'the community,' the organization of everyday life, and other previously privatized spheres of life. Thus feminism works against the grain of a social order determined to relegate particular experiences to the margins. This feminism advances within the tension produced by attempts to politicize experiences without creating new unjust structures of privilege.

In my final chapter, I consider the movement against sexual violence as potentially illustrative of this theory of feminist movement. Feminist struggle has had to overcome the historical tendency to understand sexuality and sexual violence as pre-political--or even anti-political--questions. But feminist success depends in part upon how it takes up the challenge of creating alternative fields of political representation for experience. Some feminist approaches to theorizing women's suffering reinscribe the figure of woman or of the feminine as essentially defined through and by her sexual vulnerability. If spoken by women, stories of suffering are assumed to render transparent the experience of suffering and to communicate the truth about gender dominance generally. I argue that representations of experience are never only innocent reporters of facts or reality. Otherwise, for example, Anita Hill could not have been reconstructed in the public imagination within a matter of hours from a dignified, conservative law professor into an insecure, sex-starved,

sexually resentful Black female--in other words, into the very picture of black female sexuality as it has historically taken form in the racist white male imagination.

I argue that the movement against violence against women should assume that representations of suffering, in the various institutional settings in which women become involved as they seek justice and support, are performative and will change the construction of the feminine. Representations of experience are slippery--we take risks as we speak as public figures. Even if the sentient quality of suffering drives us to speak, and even when (perhaps particularly when) it is about the most raw and immediate data of pain, our speech will not come across as uncontested "reality" to others. Representations of experience come to life and are reorganized through the sphere of the social. They will be conceptualized and organized on the terms of identity even if driven by the sphere of the concrete and material.

In light of these observations, I suggest an approach to sexual violence that focuses on women's differences as a means to demobilize male power rather focussing on the common qualities of suffering which affirm male power as a monolithic entity to which women can only react from a position of subordination. We should be wary of the impulse to render the movement coherent through appeals to the

common qualities of women's suffering. Appeals made on the grounds of common suffering have not successfully inspired an unencumbered sisterhood in the struggle against sexual violence and may even collude with social narratives that place women in the position of being undifferentiated victims, ignoring racism and class as structuring the terms on which sexual violence does its damage. ¹

Sexual violence is simultaneously at the center and at the margins of masculinist dominance. However, placing it at the center of women's lives as a defining factor is to collude with the goals of patriarchy in buttressing an otherwise unstable edifice of masculinist power and to obscure the significance of various strategies women have used to comprehend and to resist sexual violence. Sexual violence is so prevalent and takes so many forms that we can safely assume patriarchy depends upon it as a means of social control over the terms of gender relations and as a concrete means to affirm masculinist power. But simultaneously, it signifies the material limits of and historical fissures in gendered relations of dominance while sustaining the fiction of a seamless masculinist power.

Feminism should not understand the project of representing the experience of sexual violence as expressing a settled reality but as a means to disrupt and transform the social terrain on which sexual violence thrives and does its damage. The political terrain on which feminism works

does not hold still. A non-identitarian approach encourages practices that demobilize masculinist power through exposing its fictions. It moves feminist struggles against sexual violence forward through differences among women. It responds to the articulation of concrete experiences without constraining feminism to the grounds of prior assumptions about the sexual identity of women as vulnerable.

Teresa DeLauretis argues that feminist discourses, from Sojourner Truth to Catharine MacKinnon, might be conceptualized as signifying the excesses of patriarchal/capitalist structures of dominance. (DeLauretis, 1990) The figure of the feminine represents, for DeLauretis, that which can never be fully represented within masculinist discourse. Therein lies the power of the threat. Feminism signifies patriarchy at its limits as a representative system. I read feminism a little differently. DeLauretis' argument implies that differences among feminisms are less significant than their common situatedness at the limits of patriarchy. I think the differences are far more significant than she implies. I look at feminism as an interpretive practice, which in exposing women's experiences of the diverse dominative strategies of men also exposes to public scrutiny and contest, the specific strategies necessary to uphold patriarchal systems. I've argued that, in representing experience, we are not expressing a settled reality but

participating in the reconstitution and transformation of the social order.

Efforts to theorize the metanarrative of feminism are insightful and helpful as historical and cultural markers. However, feminism will never succeed in constructing agreed upon boundaries around itself. I have described feminism as a series of contingent practices whose political terrain never holds still. For example, the terrain of the struggle against sexual violence has been complicated by the institutionalization of various aspects of its demands, from policing strategies, to state funding for shelters, to the dependence upon the welfare state for material support for women escaping violence. Feminism has the historical and theoretical resources to move beyond the limits imposed by the institutionalization of the movement. However, I don't think identity politics is the direction we should move. My final chapter addresses the specificity of suffering in the context of sexual violence and the terms on which it does its damage to women's bodies and to women's lives. An approach that encourages practices of demobilization of masculinist power can take feminist struggles against sexual violence forward through differences rather than constraining us on the grounds of prior identities.

Bernice Johnson Reagon's ground-breaking speech at the Women's Music Festival in 1981 (referred to above) expresses the urgency but also the risks involved in a feminist

project of specifying the differences of and among women and makes explicit arguments for their political significance. She tells her feminist audience they are going to fail if they don't figure out a way to persevere in coalition building "even when it feels like death" as they take apart or open up the identitarian spaces they have carved out in the world. She makes clear there will be no comfort in the process, that every move entails a risk, but that 'if you don't feel like you are about to die, you aren't doing any coalescing.' She tells women to stop looking for safety in sameness and to start looking for justice in and for difference. The antagonisms she alludes to in her speech, the contests over the dominative qualities of relations among women, and more generally, among the personal/political relations among those who struggle on the grounds of identity politics, will necessarily be a part of feminist struggle because of the feminist respect for the particular, for experience and the sentient qualities of everyday life. Conflicts about how the "personal" and the "political" should be defined and the appropriate relationship between the two have driven feminist politics as have conflicts about whose voices and experiences count in feminist interpretations of the political world. In the course of this struggle, however, the politics of experience are too often subdued by the politics of identity in the feminist search for affirmative or 'positive' collective

knowledge and action. This dissertation is an effort to redeem a political notion of experience that contributes to reconfiguring the relationship between experience and identity for critical social theory and action.

CHAPTER II

FEMINIST KNOWLEDGES: HOW CAN WE KNOW

WHO THE "WE" IS?

Standpoint epistemology has been an extremely influential area of feminist theorizing for the last fifteen years. The efforts of feminist standpoint theorists to render specifically feminist knowledges have informed and even inspired many of the arguments in feminism over identity and politics. In the tradition of Marxian critical theory, and attentive to critiques of identity as an ideal form or substance that exists prior to historical construction, standpoint feminists place claims about feminist knowledge in the context of women's everyday life and activity. This undermines positivist and empiricist epistemological claims about neutrality, objectivity and truth-seeking. Standpoint theorists' attention to particularity and the partiality of knowledge claims have sustained the materialist tradition within feminist theory but also have invited comparisons and dialogue with post-structuralist theory.

The differences in the positions taken by standpoint theorists and post-structuralist feminist theorists are significant, but not totally polarized. Standpoint theorists situate knowledge claims while steadfastly resisting the final step of abandoning the project of theorizing knowledge and the relationship to politics

through appealing to identity. (Haraway 1991) Post-structuralist feminists are aware of the need to argue the political significance of their positions in light of their critique of identity theory. (Butler and Scott, et.al. 1993) Exploring the fault lines between standpoint feminists and post-structuralist feminists profiles the state of the feminist subject and highlights questions about the politics of interpretation and representation in feminism. I suggest that an examination of the political fault lines between standpoint theorists and post-structuralists regarding identity and identity politics, affirms the need to reconsider the dialectics of experience and representation in feminist theory.

Standpoint feminism offers valuable insights into differences among women and the value of subjugated knowledges to creating a more adequate and critical map of social relations of domination. Standpoint feminists are most closely associated with the tradition of socialist feminism. In arguing the specificity of women's oppression, socialist feminists theorize the historical relationship between class and gender systems. In the 1970's, as socialist feminists developed an identifiable movement and theoretical framework, they differentiated themselves from radical feminists because they located women's oppression in the historical intersections between patriarchy and capitalism. Radical feminists structured theory around the

discovery of generalizable facts and effects of patriarchal power. They argued that patriarchal domination is independent of capitalism and, in fact may shape its terms of existence. Socialist feminists theorized the relationship between the two systems of capitalism and patriarchy as determining the possibilities of women's lives. (Sargeant, ed.1982; Philipson and Hanson, 1990) They did not wish to 'add' or substitute women in an otherwise Marxist analysis of exploitation and production but to identify how differing historical roles in production and reproduction (work and sex) affect male and female power in the public/political world.

The common thread still running through socialist feminist work is the materialist correspondence of human activity to knowledge and power. They refer to the commonly experienced realities of womens' lives as source material for theory. Thus, for socialist feminisms, material and experiential markers of identity are placed in a causal relationship to political knowledge and perspective. In the epistemological traditions of Marxian and critical theory, the analysis of the material and social constructedness of identity remains central to creating emancipatory theory. Women's political knowledges and perspectives will emerge out of the quality of gendered experience but consolidate into feminist politics only through collective struggles over consciousness. Thus, feminist knowledges emerge from

women's historically constructed, gendered roles and it is said to be an ethical and political imperative to privilege these perspectives for theory. ²

Socialist feminists argue for the sustained value of a sense of self and location in the world which will encourage moments of critical reflexivity as one enters into political struggle. For socialist feminists, coming to consciousness means learning to express an identity which is no less foundational politically for being historically constructed. This learning empowers subjects to move politically. This work reflects the epistemological arguments developed in standpoint theory. Socialist feminists developed theory about a huge range of issues relating to the oppression of women including sexual oppression and exploitation, reproductive rights, and the complex relationship between capitalism and patriarchy as mutually constitutive systems. The work assumes that women's activity in the world will forge her political perspectives. I am interested in this area of feminist theory because it has, over time, tried to take differences among women into account at the start of theory, rather than layering 'differences' on as afterthoughts once the foundations for analysis have been laid in the cement of gender difference. Socialist feminism is founded in a critique of Marxist and radical feminist theories that ignore the historical relationships and

tensions between class and gender systems in favor of collapsing one into the other.

Standpoint feminisms have subsequently argued for privileging the complex knowledges immanent in women's material lives in order to advance that multi-layered approach. Standpoint feminist theory reflects explicitly on the relationship between being in the world and knowledge, between subject and object and between experience and feminist identity. This work argues it is imperative for feminism to create epistemological models that challenge the colonizing or exclusionary effects of idealist and positivist epistemologies.

Feminist standpoint theory, through the different forms it has taken, constitutes a link among the various arguments in feminism about identity. It is the terrain on which feminist social critique attempts to authorize itself in the context of a fragmented, uncertain world. Socialist feminisms grounded in standpoint theory argue that the consciousness of commonalities in concrete experience is a radical counter to the otherwise abstracted ideals that motivate modern political involvement and commitment. The authenticity and radical quality of political commitment is thus connected to social identity. Political struggle will be for and about particularly identified, concrete subjects rather than for abstract, formal, political ideals. Thus identity is linked to political knowledge and commitment in

socialist feminism. With reference to power in the context of oppression identity becomes like a substance, a thing to be searched for and developed in order to sustain the solidarity necessary to act effectively. This connection between identity and politics is a way of sorting out 'authentic' forms of feminist commitment founded in common experiences from liberal commitments based on abstractions which are distanced from material life.

Standpoint feminism continues the task Lukacs set out for philosophy, that of "creating the subject of the creator" who will be positioned to overcome relations of domination (Lukacs, 1967). Lukacs theorized the 'standpoint' of the proletariat as a way of conceptualizing their emergence as historical actors who expose and contest the terms of a reified, commodified world. Feminist standpoint theory adapts his insights about particularly situated actors in history to argue that women's knowledges are potentially revolutionary in relation to patriarchal ideologies and beliefs. Standpoint feminism is about the relationship between social being and the necessary partiality of perspective and knowledge. However, it avoids relativism because it argues explicitly for a reformulation of the standards of objectivity of knowledge claims. It argues that feminist knowledges are more objective than traditional knowledges because they map the world from subjugated spaces rather claiming a 'God's eye view' or

distance and impartiality as do traditional positivist or empiricist epistemologies.

Standpoint feminisms have thus affirmed the lives of women as offering privileged access to objective knowledge. This encourages the general recognition of otherwise historically marginalized voices and redefines the standard of 'objectivity' as including an acknowledgement of the particularity, or interested nature, of any claim to knowledge. (Alcoff and Potter, et al; 1993) Adapting insights from Lukacs, standpoint theory shows us that the powerful, those with a vested interest in the status quo, have reason not to see the boundaries or limits of their own positioning in the world. Making those boundaries visible from the perspective of the subjugated may illuminate the processes by which relations of domination become rationalized in the social world, exposing them to a crisis of legitimacy.

Standpoint feminism sets out to authorize feminist knowledge, arguing that women's life activity in the world offers superior ways of understanding social power especially in the fragmented and alienated world of modernity. Broadening the Marxist understanding of 'work' as activity that creates the social product, standpoint feminism grounds itself in the daily lives of women, their roles as reproducers and the relationships they develop in their daily lives as material organizers of family and

community survival and well-being. These relationships are said to shape, if not determine, the interests of women and therefore the parameters of feminism. Women's particular experiences as gendered subjects are placed in a necessary relationship to what they will know and do as political subjects. The relationship of woman to the body, to necessity and to the object world grounds her epistemological perspective.

I return to Lukacs for a moment to show how his essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" sets up present political debates about the subject in history and the relationship of this history to nature. Lukacs was a controversial figure in Marxian thought because he argued changes in late capitalist systems and culture to be determined by changes not only in productive capacities, but in the organizational and cultural imperatives of the exchange system.

Lukacs was a major influence on twentieth century Marxian and critical theory generally. He was acutely aware of the difficulty in creating a democratic, Marxist theory of consciousness in the age of modern bureaucracy and capitalist organization. Though he allied himself politically with some very anti-democratic figures (including Stalin), Lukacs showed radical democratic tendencies as a philosopher. (Jay, 1984) It is this aspect of his work that has had an (often unacknowledged) influence

on contemporary attempts to 'locate' the subject of history. His contributions to aesthetic debates about socialist realism and avant garde art of the early twentieth century and his book History and Class Consciousness profoundly influenced the work of the Frankfurt School, Althusserian Marxism and the Critical Cultural Studies movement. He was a major figure in the reconfiguration of debates about culture and the role of theory in Marxism.

In opposition to Leninist vanguardism, Lukacs developed an argument about the revolutionary quality of working class consciousness. According to Lukacs: "...the task [of philosophy] is to deduce the unity--which is not given--of this disintegrating creation [the object world] and to prove that it is the product of a creating subject. In the final analysis then: to create the subject of the 'creator'."

(Lukacs, 1967:140) Lukacs shows how idealist philosophers attempt to create this subject through categories of the mind, arguing that their categories dissolve in the 'real' world when confronted with the reified totality which continues to stand in dominance over and actively fragment the subject.

Lukacs draws a distinction between the contemplative subject of the 'classical philosophy' that inspires the attitude of early entrepreneurship in capitalism, and the active subject of Marxism. The former seeks to understand how the social world works without staining his knowledge

with intervention. He looks for how the laws of movement in society\nature might function to serve his particular interest. This is the attitude of a proper capitalist. No one person or project can fully determine outcomes and each should refrain from striving for increased control or organization of the whole for that leads to monopolies and defeats the individualist premises and promises of bourgeois life.

What is important is to recognize clearly that all human relations (viewed as the objects of social activity) assume increasingly the objective forms of the abstract elements of the conceptual systems of natural science and of the abstract substrata of the laws of nature. And also, the subject of this 'action' likewise assumes increasingly the attitude of the pure observer of these--artificially abstract--processes, the attitude of the experimenter. (Lukacs, 1967:131)

Early capitalism was thus characterized by an attitude of experimentation, of passive observation and interventions limited to the service of self-interest. This attitude intensified over time in light of the increasingly reified object world. That which is historical, ie. the movement of capital and exchange of commodities, became a thing of nature. Nature, then, developed in two different forms for bourgeois consciousness; it became that which is the stuff, the raw material necessary for production but it also became those social effects that are removed from historical contexts and thus out of reach of human agency. The imperatives of human interaction itself are said to be 'natural' by bourgeois thinkers.

Lukacs turns to Hegel for the method by which the subject-object of history can be identified in this reified, commodified world. For Lukacs, the objective attitude toward the world must be universalizable and emerge not through mind, but through the dialectic of sensuous activity, of work and reflection in the world. "The genesis, the creation of the creator of knowledge, the dissolution of the irrationality of the thing-in-itself, the resurrection of man from his grave, all these issues become concentrated henceforth on the question of dialectical method." (Lukacs, 1967:141)

Lukacs comes to the conclusion that the proletariat becomes the subject-object of history in a time when the fragmentation of the bourgeois subject of history is increasingly apparent. This fragmentation is signified first by a commitment to merely experimental knowledge forms and the removal of self from historical laws of movement. At the same time, the subject and object come to penetrate one another in the reality of workers lives, if not yet in their consciousness. The subjectivity of the worker is constituted through the necessity of selling his labor-power (his essence--that which is most his) as a commodity. The worker is both a subject in and an object of history. His position constitutes a privileged standpoint from which to view totality and to understand concretely, not only in the

realm of ideas, reification as a totalizing constituent of social life.

Lukacs pulls together the fragmented subject of modernity into the being of the worker because the essence of the worker is his labor-power. "Inasmuch as he is incapable in practice of raising himself above the role of object his consciousness is the self-consciousness of the commodity; or in other words it is the self-knowledge, the self-revelation of the capitalist society founded upon the production and exchange of commodities." (Lukacs, 1967:168) It is in the worker's critical perspective of himself as an object who is also a subject in the reified world that will begin to subvert the naturalized categories of that world.

Reification for Lukacs is the "immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society." Reification is the oppressive social condition that needs overturning, that needs to be exposed as contingent rather than necessary, man-made rather than natural. Reification is defined in the essay as the universalization of the commodity form:

[O]bjectively, in so far as the commodity form facilitates the equal exchange of qualitatively different objects, it can only exist if that formal equality is in fact recognized--at any rate in this relation, which indeed confers upon them their commodity nature. Subjectively, this formal equality of human labor in the abstract is not only the common factor to which the various commodities are reduced; it also becomes the real principle governing the actual production of commodities. (Lukacs, 1967:87)

Lukacs argued for the privileging of the standpoint of the proletariat because that subject position constitutes, as no other can in capitalism, the subject-object of history.

Lukacs remains relevant to critical and feminist theory because similar attempts to 'pull together the subject of history' are still central and considered necessary for politics. As self-conscious as this project is, subsequent to Nietzsche's anti-Hegelian argument for the demise of the slave-subject and Foucault's historicization of the subject, it remains central to feminist discourses about politics. The question, "who is the 'we' of feminism?" remains central to the possibility of feminist critique just as the defining 'we' of class theory has been central to the possibility of socialist critique. Standpoint feminists still found the political legitimacy of feminism in the project of creating the subject of the creator. Lukacs argues:

To put it more concretely: the objective reality of social existence *is in its immediacy* 'the same' for both proletariat and bourgeoisie. But this does not prevent the *specific categories of mediation* by means of which both classes raise this immediacy to the level of consciousness, by means of which the merely immediate reality becomes for both the authentically objective reality, from being fundamentally different, thanks to the different position occupied by the two classes within the "same" economic process. (Lukacs, 1967:150)

Lukacs understood the project of philosophy to be to locate the subject/object of history through a dialectical analysis of the relationships and social processes created for and by capitalism. Capitalist development fragments the

world. It creates historically alienated selves in the capitalist and the worker alike; but the consciousness of the worker, constituted by his dis-interested and subjugated subject position, is better equipped to recognize the limits and injustices of the social contract of capitalism. Standpoint-feminists expand this insight for differently situated subjectivities.

Standpoint feminism invests value in women's daily lives as potentially critical sites of knowledge production. It redefines the boundaries around who can and should describe conditions of "reality." In addition, as mentioned above, feminist standpoint theory attends to the epistemological question of the specificity and legitimacy of feminist social critique. It theorizes the relationship between social identity and knowledge, arguing that the world becomes more transparent to some historically positioned subjects than to others.

Standpoint feminism responds to a number of epistemological positions said to reflect patriarchal and exchange perspectives and values. Proximity to the object, (of experience, of work, of knowledge) becomes a key to developing an emancipatory perspective on the social world.

Nancy Hartsock's discussion of standpoint feminism offers something like a foundational statement of purpose. In Money, Sex and Power, Hartsock characterizes the project as a:

transformation [which] can be accomplished by a relocation of theory onto the epistemological terrain defined by women's lives. ...whereas Marx relocated power onto the epistemological ground of production, I argue that women's lives provide a related but more adequate epistemological terrain for understanding power. ...I suggest that, like the lives of proletarians vis-a-vis capital, women's lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point not only on the power relations between women and men but on power relations more generally. The construction of a more complete and adequate account of power relations on the basis of women's perspectives requires the articulation of an epistemology that grows from women's life activity. (Hartsock, 1983:151-152)

Drawing on Marxian historical materialism but also on the object-relations theories of Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976), Hartsock argues that women's lives and experiences are essentially and structurally defined by gendered dualities and hierarchies which organize the productive and reproductive sites of social life. Women's experience for Hartsock, is fundamentally marked by the oppressive devaluation of her work and social role in the division of labor. Yet it is also marked by essential qualities which can overturn the patriarchal social order. She argues that feminism must re-value and recharacterize women as representative of and as inhabitants of the truly human sphere of reproductive, caring labor. In doing this work, women engage in the most creative relationships possible given the oppressive, alienated quality of life in Western capitalist social orders.

For Hartsock, women's closer proximity to nature, to the body, to the concrete sphere of reproducing human life--

in other words, to those projects necessary to but devalued in a world organized by meritocratic and competitive principles and abstract values-- is not merely an accident or work of nature, but a necessary fact of Western political and social life. Women's reproductive capacity and men's lack thereof is not a matter of choice but of nature.

However, the roles attached to that 'natural' difference are social and mark patriarchal domination. There is nothing 'natural' about woman being the primary care-giver.

However, having argued this, Hartsock goes on to argue that women can look to their socialized roles, those deeply structured meanings attached to their capacity to reproduce, to understand their future as emancipatory subjects in history.

Because of the longevity and depth of this structuring of gendered roles, she argues that the "[u]nity of mental and manual labor, and the directly sensuous nature of much of women's world" informs women's experiences and knowledges and leads to "[a] more profound unity of mental and manual labor, social and natural worlds, than is experienced by the male worker in capitalism." Here her difference from a Lukacsian perspective is clear. He looked at the dialectic of nature and history as moving the worker to the consciousness of himself as subject-object of history. Hartsock moves "woman" to the position of subject-object of history through her immediate, naturalized identity vis-a-

vis reproduction. (Hartsock, 1983:118-122) Hartsock's standpoint theory relies on a materialist analysis of women's positioning within the sexual division of labor in reproduction. It is with respect to the moment of women's participation in reproduction that Hartsock sees a feminist materialist standpoint to be possible. The moment of reproduction centers knowledge. She argues that for Marx, alienation is not so much connected to the reification of the object in the process of exchange as it is to the removal of that which is most the worker's eg. his labor. Hartsock then removes the worker from the epistemological center and replaces him with woman to show how she is in a better position, vis-a-vis her relation to nature and the production of human life, to create a different, less alienated future.

While Hartsock argues that this particular division of labor exists only in the West, it becomes clear that she considers patriarchy (defined as the hierarchical, dualistic structuring of gendered divisions of labor that privileges male experience) to be a universalizable concept. Shifts or differences in forms and meanings of gender relations are less relevant for theory than the continuity of the patriarchal ordering of the reproduction of social life across time and cultures. Women's proximity to her objects of concern is always already closer than men's proximity to his objects of concern. For Hartsock, gendered relations of

reproduction are more fundamental to understanding oppression before and in capitalism than any other structuring or cultural conditions of human life, including, of course, those conditions which facilitate the production of goods and commodities.

Women's construction of self in relation to others leads in an opposite direction [than the Hegelian relation to the other which is defined by a death struggle and competition] -- toward opposition to dualism of any sort; valuation of concrete, everyday life; a sense of a variety of connectednesses and continuities both with other persons and with the natural world. (Hartsock, 1983:242)

I am suspicious of the proximity to the object she argues renders feminist knowledge superior. Does feminism want to argue women "know better" because they exist in a world of relatedness or naturalized connectedness and thereby reiterate the necessity of that connectedness? Hartsock argues that this is a socially constructed pattern, this gendered division of labor. It does not necessarily follow from women's capacity to conceive and give birth that they become the primary caregivers. It is a patriarchal norm constructed and variable in history. However, it is this norm that becomes, nonetheless, definitional of what it means to be "woman." And the close proximity "woman" has to her patriarchally determined object of concern, the material relations of reproduction, makes her, as opposed to the male worker in capitalism, the potentially critical subject-object of history.

Finally, the unity of mental and manual labor and the directly sensuous nature of much of women's work leads to a more profound unity of mental and manual labor, social and natural worlds, than is experienced by the male worker in capitalism. This unity grows from the fact that women's bodies, unlike men's, can be themselves instruments of production: In pregnancy, giving birth, or lactation, arguments about a division of mental from manual labor are fundamentally foreign. (243)

On the one hand Hartsock leaves the political outcomes of the relationship between experience and knowledge somewhat open as she argues, "[t]he liberatory possibilities present in women's experience must be, in a sense, read out and developed. Thus a feminist standpoint may be present on the basis of the commonalities within women's experience, but it is neither self-evident nor obvious." (Hartsock, 1983:246) On the other hand, in the above quotations she identifies "woman" with her life activity, reproduction and motherhood. She leaves no distance between the woman as a subject and her object. The relationship collapses her into her social role. This lack of distance from the object is compelling if one thinks the only alternative is the abstraction or absolute separation of subject and object offered by Enlightenment theories of knowledge. Hartsock claims that women represent the subject-object of history because they can be shown to be one with the external world in which they are embedded. However, this image is claustrophobic because it argues no distance, no space, no autonomy for a knowing subject and the object of her life

activity. Feminists are always already (at least potentially) Mothers and thus emancipatory knowers.

It is also exclusionary because Hartsock centers a particular kind of female subject as representative of patriarchal norms and therefore as representative of what the feminist standpoint is be vis-a-vis relations of power and domination:

The organization of motherhood as an institution in which a woman is alone with ther children, the isolation of women from each other in domestic labor, the female pathology of loss of self in service to others--all mark the transformation of life into death, the distortion of what could have been creative and communal activity into oppressive toil, and the destruction of the possibility of community present in women's relational self-definition. The ruling gender and class's interest in maintaining social relations such as these is evidenced by the fact that when women set up other structures in which the mother is not alone with the children, isolated from others, as is frequently the case in working-class communities or the communities of people of color, these arrangements are described as pathological deviations. (Hartsock, 1983:245)

She centers a middle-class, white subject of motherhood as representative of the truth about patriarchal oppression, rendering the meaning of other experiences of families she mentions at the end marginal to the definition of patriarchy. They may be looked to as somehow outside patriarchal norms for models of a better quality of life, but are not critical positionings in and of themselves vis-a-vis patriarchy. In Hartsock's work, the historically ontological status of women's place in the sexual division of labor is privileged over the interpretation of meanings

which circulate around different women's work and reproductive roles in different cultural and historical milieus. Because of her undifferentiated use of the concept of patriarchy, her theory identifies women's experience through only one lens, pulling together the subject of history through a process of elimination of other meanings attached to feminine and masculine roles. This renders historical differences across variously acculturated relations of reproduction insignificant for purposes of emancipatory theory.

Thus, on the one hand, Hartsock argues for the concrete, sensuous, material quality of knowledge, while on the other hand, she abstracts a representative experience to describe the cultural conditioning that offers a feminist perspective on patriarchal norms for all women. She argues that we should privilege the sensuous experience of motherhood, while moving towards the abstraction of that experience as defining the horizons of women's identity. She privileges the ideological images of white, middle-class Motherhood over the irreducibly different experiences and understandings different women have of mothering.

To summarize: because Hartsock allows for no distance between the subject and the object of concern in her theory of "womanness," she leaves no space for differences to be articulated. The subject-object of history is constituted through (the material reality and desired image of) white

middle-class motherhood; those mothers come to define the political objectives of feminism.

The universalizing of the standpoint produced through patriarchal desire and subsequent arguments about how women are positioned vis-a-vis patriarchy has not been adequately addressed in Hartsock's later work. She argues that the "we" she deploys in reference to marginalized peoples only exists as an artifice of a totalizing, Eurocentric, masculine discourse of the Enlightenment. She says, as if amending the above quotation, "I do not mean to suggest that white Western women share the material situation of colonized peoples, but rather that we share similar positions in the ideology of the Enlightenment." (Hartsock, 1989:191) Hartsock thus inscribes a globalizing we and an oppressed they in advance, perpetuating the tendency for a particular critique to be rendered universally effective for understanding patriarchal domination. If subjects are socially constructed through material and ideological conditions of life, the structural differences between and among white Western women and colonized Third-world peoples (even if we recognize each of them as artificial construction) may be far more relevant to theories and strategies of emancipation than their similar situatedness in relation to a monolithic ideological construct. She offers up extraordinary powers to the imaginary body of the Enlightenment thinker to proscribe

emancipatory knowledge, defeating her own claim to value specificity and particularity as sources of truth-telling.

We see a similar problem in Rosemarie Hennessey's recent work. Although she offers a creative approach to developing a non-essentialist theory of gender for feminism, we will see that she does not respond to the question of how theorizing patriarchy, even as a thoroughly discursive regime of power, necessarily abstracts from particularity. The chain of meaning Hennessey sets up across experiences to argue the coherent, discursive totality of patriarchy does not improve upon Hartsock's pulling together of the representative subject (the white, bourgeois mother) of history. She too speaks of the horizons of possibilities and constraints on women in order to avoid charges of being a determinist.

Rosemarie Hennessey makes an argument for a materialist theory of feminist knowledge, but with an Althusserian twist. For Hennessey, a materialist feminism should employ discourse theory to show how gender identities are enacted through language. However, she tries to sustain the analytical link to systems of domination functioning in the world which make those discourses historically operational. Hennessey offers a theory of history which places the logics or systems of domination as the horizons or limits on how the subject can act in the world. She argues that feminists must locate themselves in the counter-hegemonic gaps between

and among the discourses which condition the horizon of our knowledges about ourselves and others.

Hennessey argues that feminism can "people" the discursive gaps in hegemonic truths, the excesses of masculinist ideologies, which are never totalizing but always in process. While displacing value from objects to discourses which create meaning and possibilities for identification (and dis-identification) avoids the apparent essentialism of Hartsock's theory of subject-object relations, Hennessey relies on the essentially feminized subject as the ontological grounds for emancipatory knowledge. That subject becomes historical through choosing to enter into battle with discursive regimes rather than as a 'result' of her identity. But the how and why of the entry is still determined by ideological structuring of possibilities determined by patriarchy. She echoes Hartsock's theory of oppressed people's sharing space within the colonizing ideological structures of Western patriarchy.

The construction of the colonial male in terms of feminine sexual excess is only one example that what counts as the 'feminine' subject is not always merely a matter of empirical sex difference. However, while the ideological boundaries of the feminine are not limited by an essential female body, the construction of woman's reproductive capacity and sexuality as property to which masculine subject can lay claim has been the cornerstone of a patriarchal social order whose genealogy precedes imperialist conquest and the emergence of sexuality as a discourse. The particular articulations of this reproductive/alienated female body and the interests they serve are, nonetheless,

historically variable. (Hennessey, 1993:79
emphasis mine)

Hennessey argues that feminism should be understood as a critical, discursive practice which retains its own specificity only through its concrete task of "disarticulating" the construction of the feminine in patriarchy in all its variable forms. However, in her concurrent attempt to develop the systemic analysis she believes feminism needs in order to sustain its specificity, she has to resort in the "last instance" to the monolith of patriarchy as its defining other. Feminism is understood as an "entry point" to the interdiscourses that constitute patriarchy. Feminism is thus a perpetual practice of critique on the one hand, but dependent upon an assumed hegemonic meaning of patriarchy on the other.

Hennessey incorporates post-modern moves to "affinity" or "articulated connections" as the basis for a feminist politics. The terms of these politics are temporary and not to be assumed prior to articulating the grounds for engagement. I do not think however, that she escapes identitarian thinking. Hennessey argues that differences in experience and meaning can be shown to operate within a hegemonic discursive regime of the patriarchal ordering of gender identity. But is she right? Can "differences in experience" be justly represented or recognized within the given horizons she argues are constitutive of patriarchal order? Does feminism need a unified, systemic theory of

patriarchy to exist as a critical discourse? If not, what might feminist social theory look like? This is a question both Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway explore. They offer similar normative conclusions as to the potential for feminist critique once the monolithic other of patriarchy is deconstructed, but come to different conclusions about the historical present of feminism and the timing of such a project.

In her formulation of the feminist standpoint for science, Sandra Harding argues that women's knowledge is, at present, qualitatively superior to men's because it is historically constructed to be partial. Women's knowledge emerges from the concrete sphere of the reproduction of human social life and is therefore more objective or reflective of reality than knowledges that emanate from disembodied or abstracted knowers. These disembodied knowers make claims to legitimacy based on disengagement or distance. This argument about the political difference between disembodied knowers and embodied knowers hinges in part on the politics of sustaining distance from an object in order to better know it. Standpoint feminists argue that the embodied knower\subject should admit its investment or proximity to the object. The positivist criteria for better knowledge demands impartiality on the part of the knower. Standpoint theory argues this is impossible. All knowledge can be shown to be contingent upon subject positioning in

the world. For standpoint feminists the close proximity to the object of knowledge, the willingness, even material necessity, women are subject to in admitting their investment in the object of knowledge makes their knowledge more representative of reality than masculinist abstractions. "They have made the move from declaiming as a problem, or acknowledging as an inevitable fact, to theorizing as a systematically accessible resource for maximizing objectivity the inescapable social situatedness of knowledge claims." (Harding; 1993,69) She argues that the politics of knowledge claims are partially pre-determined by the location of the objects of study.

Harding discusses the conjunctures between standpoint and post-structuralist theory and is sympathetic to the decentering and anti-essentialist force of post-structuralism as theory. In fact, she argues that standpoint theory is a prototype for post-modern theory in that it historicizes and therefore decenters abstracted claims about truth and knowledge in the material world. "Fragmented identities" are richer places to look for knowledge about the world than abstractly disinterested, modern knowers. However, she argues it is not yet time to give up on what she calls the better objectivity of the "successor sciences" developed from the standpoint of subjugated subjects. It is fine to theorize the possibilities of the post-modern historical condition, but

even if "we" as knowers may be decentered or "multiple" in our commitments and loyalties, political power and the making of public policy remains profoundly centralized and controlled. Harding thinks we should pick and choose from strands of post-modern thinking in order to find what will be useful to drive feminist politics forward into more robust and non-dominative forms of solidarity politics that can confront that centralized power.

However, her discussion lacks a specific consideration of power as a relationship constitutive of subject positions. This is developed in the work of Michel Foucault. If Harding reflected more specifically on what post-structuralists said about power, she may find that her assertions about whether political and material conditions are "ripe" for a post-modern politics to make sense as liberatory theory, would disintegrate. This is one example of the many disjunctures between the theoretical and political commitments of standpoint epistemology and post-structuralist theory which make it difficult to argue, as Harding does, a linear historical movement from one to the other as respectively appropriate to identifiable, temporally bounded epochs. Like Hartsock, Harding argues women (and other subjugated subjects) presently are in a superior position, vis-a-vis men or other representative figures of imperialist patriarchy, to make sense of the world and to see relations of domination from the

"underside." Women will therefore be more invested in transforming relations of domination, of all kinds, in the world. However, this position of better knowledge, while respecting the presence of different knowers, does not adequately acknowledge the object (the world) as an active, agent in the relationship. Harding's work, which reiterates the primacy of the subject as knower, does not displace the dualism of traditional theories of knowledge and cannot avoid reinscribing new hierarchies of privilege among subjects. The argument remains defined by the question of rendering subjectivity transparent in knowledge, even in its fragmented state. Harding thinks about power and its relationship to knowledge as something to which we, as subjects, can say yes or no. ³

The disjunctures between post-structuralist theory and standpoint theory become more sharply apparent in Donna Haraway's work because 1) she argues we do exist in post-modern historical conditions and 2) it is still possible, indeed necessary, to develop an epistemological perspective on politics and relations of solidarity with others.

Haraway remains within the standpoint feminist rubric of analysis, sharing many of their assumptions about women's oppression, identity and knowledge, even as she makes use of post-modern historical imagery to frame the possibilities of what she calls situated knowledges. Haraway argues that "feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated

knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object." In this she allies herself with the tradition of standpoint feminisms. As pointed out above, standpoint feminism is about the partiality of perspective and knowledge. It argues that women's knowledges are preferred because they map the world from subjugated spaces. For standpoint theorists, properly feminist knowledge should involve neither distancing nor the perpetual deferral of claims to subjective authorship of knowledge claims. One's perspective is always informed if not determined by where one is looking from.

Haraway agrees with this general principle but approaches it through the differentiated pathways of what she calls an "informatics of domination." Haraway sets up the terms of a post-modern age in contrast to the terms through which we understood the world as modern or Enlightenment subjects. Through this imaging of the contemporary social world, Haraway displaces the subject/object hierarchies of traditional epistemology. While she does not assert any necessarily emancipatory quality to her post-modern historical references, it is clear that she recognizes a potential in them for asserting an affirmative, inclusive, political project. She critiques the way some standpoint theorists have characterized epistemological possibilities as exhausted by the dichotomy, feminist empiricism vs. the disinterested, God's eye view.

Each repeats particular assumptions about the subject's control over the world through their ability to know the world. Haraway says this polarized debate should not continue to hold us in thrall. Each argument contains an implicit positivist commitment to scientific vision which acts as a conquering gaze, a gaze that properly (even in some standpoint theories) sustains limited or no particularity.

Haraway describes the conditions of possibility for a post-modern "cyborg" feminism which we, as ironically modern subjects or, "situated knowers," may engage in. She advances the value of these ironically situated knowledges. Haraway's theory of situated knowledges demands attention to the constitutive nature of the object of knowledge. Because she diagnoses the world as post-modern, her situated subject or knower is multiple and not so transparent as Harding implies. The boundaries of the object are contestable and unstable. The object is an active agent in Haraway's techno-epistemology. For example, we cannot reject technology, nor can we revert to a world of nature untouched by human subjectivity. Rather, because of the constitutive nature of the object world, we must reconceptualize the subject\object relationship as one that neither necessitates human control of nature and technology nor human victimization by their own creations.

Haraway suggests a doctrine of embodied objectivity. "We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate colour and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name." (Haraway, 1991; 190) Her metaphor of the connection between the knower and the world is the prosthetic device, the scanner, the eye that does not have a necessary essence guiding its judgement but is certainly invested in the world in particular, identifiable ways. Thus, while sympathetic to post-modern claims about differencing and the decentered subject, Haraway sustains a more structured social map than post-modern theorists. She claims that there does exist something like 'the view from below' as a difference that matters in social analysis. She therefore argues for an embodied vision, but a vision that sees its own boundaries and in its reflexive knowledge production sees a value in its partiality rather than a limit or a deficit. With other standpoint theorists she argues that partial knowledge is not somehow less real but actually a better representation of how the world works, especially in post-modern historical conditions. For her, partial connections are always more honest than those that assume total knowledge.

Haraway argues for the superiority of subjugated knowledges but not without qualification. "'Subjugated'

standpoints are preferred because they seem to promise more adequate, sustained, objective, transforming accounts of the world. But how to see from below is a problem requiring at least as much skill with bodies and language, with the mediations of visions, as the 'highest' techno-scientific visualizations." (Haraway, 1991; 191) Haraway situates the actively knowing body in a conflicted, often duplicitous site of knowledge production. For her better knowledge may be a goal of feminist objectivity, but truth claims are better left to those defending hegemonic privilege.

Haraway categorizes her knowers by arguing on the one hand that subjugated knowers are more likely to reject identitarian, God's eye knowledge and that the patriarchal, white male defends abstract, authorial, disembodied knowledges. She adopts aspects of Hartsock's work to ground this claim. However, Haraway renders the claim less foundational as she argues that "[s]ubjugation is not grounds for an ontology; it might be a visual clue. Vision requires instruments of vision; an optics is a politics of positioning. Instruments of vision mediate standpoints; there is no immediate vision from the standpoints of the subjugated." (Haraway, 1991:193) Her work has a more experimental quality to it than that of other standpoint theorists and thus advances the arguments of standpoint theory. Her emphasis on the non-innocence of any knower as they engage with the otherness of the world defeats the

standpoint feminists' implicit claim that some subjects may stand outside of participation in or investment in the relationships of domination whose terms they articulate through their material existence. However, it remains unclear whether Haraway's techno-epistemology and theory of affinity avoids the questions of representation raised by any project whose goal is to pull together the subject of history in the fragmented world.

Haraway's theory of the subject/object relation explicitly stops short of relying on dialectical theory. Even as she acknowledges the agency of the object of knowledge, Haraway rejects dialectical thinking because she claims that in its Hegelian/Marxian form, it ultimately posits the 'slave' side of the dialectic as unique and authorial. "Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of 'objective' knowledge." (Haraway, 1991:198) As she makes this move away from dialectical thinking, Haraway does not theorize what emerges in the interstices of the subject\object relationship. "A map of tensions and resonances between the fixed ends of a charged dichotomy better represents the potent politics and epistemologies of embodied, therefore accountable objectivity." (Haraway, 1991:194) The image of 'mapping' displaces dialectical,

relational knowledge production. Haraway leaves us with the subject and object separated, albeit a separation that witnesses agency on both ends.

Haraway has been critiqued by post-modern theorists and by standpoint\socialist feminists. The latter critics point to her move away from systemic analysis of how the various subjugated knowers she celebrates come to be as they are. For example, Rosemarie Hennessey argues that while Haraway defies modernist commitments to disembodied objectivity, she disembodies her knowers in a different way in that they become situated within post-modern plays of difference. This implies that subjects simply are in the world with no systemic logics of domination structuring the conditions of possibility of existence. However, Haraway argues that "Some differences are playful; some are poles of world historical systems of domination. 'Epistemology' is about knowing the difference." (Haraway, 1991:161) Haraway's work is more closely aligned to the tradition of standpoint feminism and a materialist perspective than Hennessey recognizes. She explicitly acknowledges the tension between standpoint theory which focuses on the situatedness and limits of identity and post-modern theory which rejects the project of situating identities and instead finds difference everywhere (thus locating itself in a theoretical nowhere).

Joan Scott critiques another aspect of Haraway's argument. (Scott, 1989) She argues that Haraway's example of 'women of color' as an identity which opposes imperialist markings of otherness repeats the "old/new left's" tendency to romanticize or reify the struggles of "the most oppressed" as if they represent something truer than other struggles. I agree that this reflects a well-worn tendency to romanticize the given condition of otherness thereby avoiding responsibility for complicity\participation in setting the terms of struggle (through action or inaction). However, Haraway's refers to women of color because their self-identified multiple affinities and multiple loyalties defeat any notion of the unified political subject of feminism. Feminism has long relied on the uniformly gendered subject whose gaze is on the 'horizons of patriarchy'. Haraway refers to women of color as a materialist counter to the essentializing tendencies of white feminists who forget their multiply situated (at least partially dominative selves) in favor of assuming the role of essentially oppressed gendered subjects. So Haraway does not fetishize 'women of color' in any simple way as unified subjects (others) in the world who can tell 'us' (subjects too embedded in imperialist knowledges to see ourselves) the truth. Instead she invokes the concept to argue against the unified, always primarily gendered, subject of feminism. Haraway cites the example of women of color as an identity

forged through affinity rather than through monocausal relationships to the material world. 'Women of color' represents affinity because it is created through multiple forms of resistance to the othering strategies of the Eurocentric, patriarchal, capitalist, global order. It is a non-foundationalist, but no less situated, subjectivity. I agree with Haraway's discussion of how the notion of women of color came about, ie. through a series of oppositional positionings vis-a-vis the differentiated forms systems dominance assume. However, once it becomes a political identity or reference for better knowledge claims it is collapsed into an identity politics which may obscure as much about the differences among women of color as it illuminates about their material conditions.

The above developments in standpoint feminisms advance awareness of the constitutive limits of the situated self and the horizons of feminist identity, both temporally and spatially. But these approaches do not adequately explore the possibilities of the dialectical theory that is the backdrop to their work. Hartsock assumes a static relationship between being and knowing which approaches synthesis, as does Harding. Haraway, on the other hand, explicitly rejects dialectics. Her critique references the Hegelian dialectical tradition, but rejects its telos in favor of the multiplicity of post-modern identity forms. In addition, her futurist image of the "cyborg feminist"

collapses the historical tensions between technology and human creativity. Her theory of situated knowledges sustains a correspondence between being and knowing and assumes a relationship between social identity and critical politics. She assumes an identitarian reconciliation between (off-shore) workers and the technologies that condition the possibility of their identities. Yet her imagery of globalized, post-modern existence presupposes unlimited possibilities.

Post-modern theory takes an explicit stand against privileging epistemology as prior to politics. It rejects the privileging of any knowing subject, even those situated in a mode of resistance, as rendering the world transparent to consciousness. This radical questioning of the subject has been one of the reasons feminists who turn to post-modern theory are said to be apolitical (lacking normative grounds for their claims). Haraway wants to have it both ways, to critique the unified subject while sustaining a notion of subjectivity to which critical theory might refer. The disjuncture between privileging the subject on epistemological terms and arguing for multiplicity on political terms is not reconciled in Haraway's work, though the delima is dynamically profiled.

Thinking about the dialectics of experience involves asking different questions about the relationship between being and knowledge than do standpoint feminisms. Feminism

does not need a better science of political life, grounded in experience, as Sandra Harding argues. This risks supplying further fodder for the management of politics instead of encouraging contestation and action. ⁴ We cannot render our experience as knowers transparent within the outcome of our research as Harding's essay about 'strong objectivity' implies. Trying to approach objectivity by checking the impact of our material situatedness, or subjectivity, on each knowledge claim controls the possibilities for creating meaning in the world rather than illuminating them. In an essay critiquing Harding's goals of better objectivity, Kirstie McClure argues, "Although the 'theory' privileged here is a specific 'theory of knowledge rather than a specific 'social theory' as conventionally understood, theory is again charged with the task of providing an authoritative foundation for a unified politics capable of effective intervention in the operative dynamics of a social whole." (McClure, 1992:364) McClure is critical of the authorizing strategies of Harding's work, arguing they limit political possibilities rather than expanding them. I agree with McClure in general, but my critique is more concerned with how standpoint theories ultimately treat the subject/object relationship of knowledge. The political problem of closure McClure discusses is immanent in the epistemological frameworks of standpoint theory.

While standpoint feminism advances itself as a critical social theory, these epistemological arguments ultimately rely on causal explanations for social phenomenon. The knowing subject remains the manager of the objective world. Feminist knowledge is therefore not deconstructive of boundaries and limitations placed on the subject in the social world, but is ultimately instrumental. While standpoint theory plays a progressive role in cracking the hegemony of knowledge claims whose legitimacy depends upon abstraction from concrete, situated subjects, it sustains a problematic commitment to identity thinking. This will not move feminism into the coalitional or affinity politics invoked by socialist feminists as necessary for the recognition of difference and the reconfiguration of self\other relations. Instead it invites a further sorting of identities into categories determined through given social relations and hierarchically organized with respect to whether the participants in each category approach historical truth. It remains within the parameters of a politics of representation because the subject in history becomes a monadic entity for politics rather than a multiple, conflictual problem of politics.

Feminism can acknowledge its immanent limits as an interpretive discourse without dissolving into particularism or relativism. This will require interpreting the political significance of experiences without relying on materialist

or scientific conclusions that close down contestation in the name of collective commitment. Experience is messy, infinitely complicated and intrinsically resistant to even the most nuanced of description. Conceptualization reduces it to categories. Experience is particular and resists rationalization. Feminism thus needs to be generous with its interpretive schema, never parsimonious. This is not merely a question of 'more voices' entering into the cacophonous but liberal (tolerant) crowd of truth-seekers. And it certainly does not preclude considerations of what socialist-feminists have argued to be central to feminist understandings about women's lives, ie. material conditions of life, sexuality and reproduction. Though it cannot move beyond the limits I have discussed, feminist standpoint theory developed out of profound concerns for creating the terms of a radical form of feminist solidarity that incorporates from the beginning a respect for the diverse, experiential knowledge claims of subjugated, marginalized subjects. But I think it cannot address the present need to reconfigure the relationship between being and knowledge which in turn can help us develop new political forms for interaction with others. Epistemology is embedded in, not prior to politics. This means rethinking the effort to theorize the political out of the lived experience of women. The project itself is critical to developing normative theories about relations of domination, but the issues that

arise about experience and knowledge cannot be addressed on the terms of standpoint theory.

Ideally, standpoint theorists argue, theory should help us know the world as we act in the world. But this is clearly impossible. The tensions inherent in the project of self-knowledge are best elaborated in the work of Theodor Adorno. We cannot know as we act all the time and, at the extreme, a world constructed out of such a vision is totalitarian. Totalizing self-consciousness is impossible to complete as a project and can lead to paralysis vis-a-vis action. In the epigram I chose for this work, Nietzsche says we cannot and do not know experience as it tolls in our ears. We are always already working on the distortions we call the truth after the fact. Adorno agrees with and responds to Nietzsche's radical skepticism about knowledge and truth. For Adorno, the abstractions that emerge with the creation of knowledge defeat individuality and difference. The colonizing relationship of the subject to the object world in modernity is expressed through systems of abstract exchange which collapse and obscure difference. Adorno's immediate concerns were only occasionally directed towards women or gender. He was, however, committed to exploring the possibilities of subjectivity in modernity and how we come to know ourselves and others in the world. I appropriate ideas from Adorno's Negative Dialectics for a theory of interpretation that works against identity logic

while sustaining engagement with experience in the social world.

CHAPTER III

ADORNO AND THE CRITIQUE OF IDENTITY

In the last chapter I discussed the political tensions within feminism resulting from historical and theoretical challenges to the construction of "woman" or "women" as a unified political identity. I discussed the limits of the ways the subject and identity are understood in socialist\standpoint feminisms. The state of the feminist subject is put into sharp profile by a discussion of the developments and the critiques of these theoretical perspectives. The deconstruction of "identity" has destabilized the subject(s) and political projects of feminism. Questions have surfaced about the possibility of solidarity and collectivity, and indeed about how to sustain the specificity of a feminist project at all.

Contemporary feminisms' concerns about the subject(s) of feminism and the potential for collectivity among women calls for a closer look at the work of Theodor Adorno. Contemporary critical theorists have dismissed Adorno as hopelessly pessimistic, elitist and, perhaps worst of all, as having neither a positive nor an accessible program for political practice. However, Adorno's work can contribute to feminist theory and politics in two ways. First, his analysis of the constellational logics and limits of domination in modernity could contribute to critiquing feminist identity discourses by exploring their limits and

exclusionary premises while sustaining feminism as a critical, self-reflective project. Second, his theory of experience simultaneously communicates the fragility and the potential power of experience as a site of critical, oppositional knowledge production in modernity. Both of these areas are central to the politics of identity as they have developed in feminism. The interpretive theory of constellations emphasizes the potentially multiple meanings embedded in any particular practice or experience. It reconfigures the relationship between knowledge and experience.

Adorno's theory of negative dialectics challenges the limits of modern subjective cognition, encouraging resistance to closure in identitarian categories in thought and practice. This challenge can move us beyond the brittle and often static limits of feminist identity politics to an open-ended but more consistently critical and sustainable politics of knowledge and recognition. In addition, Adorno's attention to the fragility and temporality of resistance can offer feminism means to understand its own multiple and ongoing identity crises and strengthen its reflexivity as a critical theory and practice.⁵

Adorno offers a radical reconceptualization of relations between the self and other (and the other in one's self) which needs attention by feminists concerned with the possibility of collectivist theory and action among subjects

in conditions of modernity. He does this through a critique of the principle of identity and a dialectical theory of experience. He shows how experience, understood dialectically, is a critical force that works against identity thinking, even in what he calls the "administered world." ⁶ I will show how Adorno's negative dialectics can help us conceive of a politics of experience, to theorize a different meaning for the feminist principle that the personal is political that does not resort to identity thinking in either universalist or particularist forms. ⁷ Negative dialectics argues for a non-identitarian relationship between subject and object, between self and other, which allows experience to play a critical role in political relationships.

Before further discussing the positive ⁸ moments of Adorno's work, we must look at his critique of the dominant forms of reason and the demand for identity thinking in modernity. The dismissal of Adorno as anti-modern misses the project embedded in his critique. Adorno argued that the contemporary demand of philosophy must be the recuperation of modern reason's capacity to reflect upon its formation in the world, to be immanently critical of its own forms. He was, therefore, a critic of the forms and consequences of modern reason, but not anti-modern. He did not reject identity thinking as hopelessly dominative. He considered its terms to be unavoidable and even potentially

emancipatory. So while he was a theorist of non-identity, he was neither anti-modern nor a prototypical post-modern theorist. In addition, he did not consider any particular subject (working class, national liberationists, women, in fact any marginalized subject--including himself as intellectual⁹) to have immediate or predictable future access to emancipated forms of reason. It was this latter claim that has led him to be dismissed by later critical theorists and feminists who believe one must have a subject of history to whom one addresses one's theory or exist in a hopeless, aporetic void as a theorist. (Fraser, 1989; Benhabib, 1982)

Adorno is most closely associated with the text Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947). This text has recently received quite a bit of attention by those who would resuscitate it for critical theory.¹⁰ For that reason and because my concerns involve how negative dialectics as a method and a theory contributes to a critique of feminist identity politics, I will discuss only briefly the apocalyptic story of modernity set forth in DoE to introduce Adorno as a theorist centrally concerned with the potential subversion of the logics of domination in modernity.

In Dialectic of Enlightenment Adorno and Horkheimer interpret Homer's Odyssey as a history of the prototypically patriarchal, bourgeois individual. Their interpretation shows Odysseus in the process of coming to know (to separate

himself through cunning and instrumental reason) and to dominate nature in order to achieve a strong ego/identity formation. As Odysseus travels, that which cannot be captured by him in thought, or controlled by him physically is eliminated or outwitted in thought and practice as "other"-- as that which represents desire, the irrational or nature. Through this retelling of the Odyssey, nature is shown to become (historically) that which inhibits the movement of instrumental reason whose telos is the rational society. This makes necessary nature's exclusion as a threat from the circle of enlightenment.

The cognitive logic of identity, shown in the Odyssey to be linked to self-preservation which in turn is understood to be in opposition to the unpredictability or the unknowability of nature, becomes a necessary and socially integrative aspect of modern life. Individuals develop this historical process of identity formation through separation from and domination of otherness as a substitution for mimetic relationships to nature and the external world. ¹¹

Jurgen Habermas argues that Adorno and Horkheimer (but mostly Adorno) falsely accuse Enlightenment reason of creating and enforcing the internalization of relations of domination with the necessary consequence of a totally administered society. Thus, for Habermas, their authorship of the Dialectic of Enlightenment constitutes a performative

contradiction in which modern reason is apparently rejected but then deployed to critique. This criticism has encouraged contemporary critical theorists to identify Adorno with a reductive reading of Dialectic of Enlightenment which places it in the annals of intellectual history as an apocalyptic, totalizing critique of modern reason. This reading and Habermas' alternative view of the modern life world has achieved a common sense status among many contemporary critical and some feminist theorists eager to move on from Adorno's seeming pessimism and intellectual mandarinism to theorize a brighter potential for approaching modern visions of justice, autonomy and freedom through critical reason. (Benhabib, 1982; Young, 1990; Fraser, 1989)

In the course of his intellectual journey, Habermas developed a fundamentally different vision of modernity than did Adorno and Horkheimer. Habermas remains loyal to Enlightenment's own historiography of its relationship to myth or tradition: "The process of Enlightenment leads to the desocialization of nature and to the denaturalization of the human world." (Habermas, 1982:19) Enlightenment enriches our understanding of the world; it is a creative and progressively rational context for understanding life in its differentiated forms. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that Enlightenment brings the socialization (domination) of nature (away from understanding it in its magical immanence) and the naturalization of the human world (so that reason in

itself has no history). Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the Enlightenment centers knowledge of the world in the transcendent or empirical subject, leaving it undifferentiated and situating it as universal consciousness-in-itself.

Habermas argues that "In modern times, traditions become temporalized; the changing interpretations are clearly distinguished from the world itself. This external world divides into the objective world of entities and the social world of norms (or normatively governed interpersonal relationships): both are in turn silhouetted against the inner world of subjective experiences."

(Habermas, 1982:19) This gentle image of the world of objects and the social world of norms being silhouetted against subjectivity is in contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer's story of Odysseus as an original modern subject outwitting and undermining the external world in order to come into dominance over it. From the above contrasts, one might get the impression that the difference between Habermas and his mentors is merely one of emphasis so that the otherwise parallel directions of their inquiries diverge. Habermas is consumed with mining the positivity of modern reason, Adorno and Horkheimer with showing its treachery. This would make it necessary to choose between them; do we accept the gentler vision of Enlightenment

offered by Habermas or do we accept the harsh vision of Adorno and Horkheimer?

Habermas goes much further, however, than showing his disagreement about the possibilities of liberation on the terms offered by modern reason. He asserts that Adorno and Horkheimer have engaged in a performative contradiction. His critique (which he uses against many of his philosophical adversaries) ¹² moves from presenting an alternative image of Enlightenment to claiming that Adorno and Horkheimer are anti-reason even as they deploy reason to critique modernity. This renders their work internally illogical and therefore irrelevant to creating emancipatory (critical) theory. This in itself, all other disagreements aside, defeats their claims about the dominative structures of modern reason. He says they argue that there are no grounds on which to escape the modern trajectory of instrumental reason though, according to him, clearly they have escaped in order to issue a critique.

Contrary to Habermas' reading, however, Adorno and Horkheimer do not issue a totalizing critique in Dialectic of Enlightenment and therefore do not engage in a performative contradiction. Homer's text represents a journey. The "reason" Adorno and Horkheimer critique in the Odyssey is instrumental reason that remains blind to its own historicity. They do not engage in speculation about what reason that is transparent to itself might look like,

precisely because they do not consider themselves to have privileged access to that vision. Instead, they immanently critique the terms upon which instrumental reason moves in the world and the consequences of its arrogant belief in its autonomous self-formation, its necessary connection to self-preservation, and participation in cumulative progress (making the world better--more efficient, predictable, transparent to the self).

It is this differentiated form of instrumental reason that Adorno and Horkheimer take on in the Dialectic of Enlightenment. Even this reason, in spite of the brutal historical consequences of its arrogance (the destruction of otherness through cunning), never completes the task of making what it considers irrational fully rationalized. Adorno and Horkheimer express the incompleteness of the task through pointing out a moment in Homer's text that appears coldly dismissive of suffering but actually indicates a critical reversal in the otherwise seamless narrative of instrumental reason. They interpret this moment as sustaining an anti-rationalist remembrance of suffering.

Adorno and Horkheimer close "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment" with a discussion of Homer's self-interruption as he describes the hanging of women unfaithful to their spouses during their absence. "The passage closes with the information that the feet of the row of suspended women 'kicked out for a short while, but not for long.'"

(DoE:79) The phrase "not for long" could be read as a dismissal of the women's suffering. For Adorno and Horkheimer, however, the phrase signifies an interruption in an otherwise seamless, inexorable, novel-like account of the Odyssey. "By cutting short the account, Homer prevents us from forgetting the victims, and reveals the unutterable eternal agony of the few seconds in which the women struggle with death." They further explain the significance of this moment: "Reticence in narrative (the cutting short of the text), however, is the sudden break, the transformation of what is reported into something long past, by means of which the semblance of freedom glimmers that since then civilization has not wholly succeeded in putting out."

(DoE:79) In this otherwise apocalyptic interpretation of Enlightenment through the Odyssey, which was written during the years of the Holocaust, Adorno and Horkheimer pull out a moment in Homer's text as an acknowledgement of the memory of suffering. This anti-rationalist moment sustains a memory of freedom that is not extinguished even in the most rationalized genocide. The rationalization of the murder of the women for transgressing the patriarchal boundaries of properly female sexuality is therefore incomplete. This reversal does not glorify the moment as necessarily adding meaning to the murder by the patriarch. It is there in the text as a momentary but critical reversal of the Homeric narrative history of instrumental reason. Robert Hullot-

Kentnor explains: "In the possibility of remembering what has happened, the coldness and impassibility of the novel's narration reverses as memory of nature. ...In reflection on this dialectic at a standstill, the necessity ... of the world's daring-do dissolves, and enlightenment comes to terms as the consciousness of the uselessness of sacrifice. In this consciousness, reason recovers its telos." (Kentnor, 1989:26)

Even in DoE Adorno and Horkheimer show instrumental reason to be neither a transcendental (out of reach of human thought or agency) nor a seamless totality. It always remains in a process of becoming a totalizing force as it consumes\subsumes the particular in the dialectic of history. Instrumental reason's claims to progress and rationality are not realized in part because it is contingent upon the process of conquest, of the double movement of creating the enemy other and subduing it. It never finally conquers what lies outside of it. While the moment of nature is cognitively controlled or excluded by the individual in order to construct a rational society, it is never finally conquered as an independent moment in the dialectical movement of history.¹³ In Adorno's theory, it comes to represent the non-identical.

So for Adorno, the philosophy of Enlightenment and the history of modernity is not a closed system. He therefore did not set up, even in the Dialectic of Enlightenment, an

inside and outside to which we as subjects might have immediate access now or in the future. Nor did he think of nature or of non-identity as necessarily utopic.¹⁴ Claims to privileged access as a thinker or as a social actor to radical new forms outside of domination or to the ontological sources of domination will reflect or repeat that which they claim to be escaping. "There is no peeping out. What would lie in the beyond makes its appearance only in the materials and categories within." (Adorno, 1969:140) Adorno did not claim that that which is excluded from the dialectic of enlightenment at any given moment is knowable on terms that would necessarily offer freedom. The project of reversing or subverting the terms of instrumental reason must be immanent to its logic.

Adorno's particular version of critical theory developed as a philosophy of resistance or negative dialectics. Negative dialectics preclude ideas of escape and encourage an image of constantly pushing and transfiguring the limits imposed by identity logic on the self and other while sustaining the tension between theory and practice, subjectivity and interpretation, subject and object.¹⁵ It does not offer an escape route from the hazards of the conditions of the modern social and political world. It keeps us perpetually aware and critical of how knowledge creation or conceptualization, while necessary, potentially disguises, suppresses and even destroys

qualitative differences or experiences that lie outside the grasp of that conceptualization. As a contingent and self-consciously critical world view, negative dialectics helps us resist the absorption of critically diverse experiences in identitarian categories.

In Negative Dialectics Adorno engages in immanent critique of idealist forms of Enlightenment knowledge. He critiques the philosophies of the subject which place it first, as prior to or transcendent over the external world, or the object. Kantian philosophical idealism, in particular, naturalizes the subject at the subject's own expense, sacrificing its spontaneity and the potency of its experience in the world in exchange for the ideological certainty of subjective control and stability.

Yet the generality of the transcendental subject is that of the functional context of society, of a whole that coalesces from individual spontaneities and qualities, delimits them in turn by the leveling exchange principle, and virtually deletes them as helplessly dependent on the whole. The universal domination of mankind by the exchange value--a domination which a priori keeps the subjects from being subjects and degrades subjectivity itself to a mere object, makes an untruth of the general principle that claim to establish the subject's predominance. The surplus of the transcendental subject is the deficit of the utterly reduced empirical subject. (Adorno, 1987:172)

Kant's idealism, with its uncritical (affirmative or positive) stance toward the transcendent subject, reflects the dominance of identity logic in the social world. For Adorno, in addition to being an economic principle justifying exploitation, the exchange principle dictates

social relations on epistemological levels. Identity logic reduces the social world to interchangeable parts; it reduces or brackets off inconvenient differences, simultaneously enforcing and justifying the interchangeability and manipulation of objects. This does not imply that there is a reality or truth to experience which, but for epistemic distortions, would shine through. It is to say that for Adorno, there are always differences between the specificity of embodied interaction with the world and the conceptualization of the interaction. In addition to critiquing Kantian idealism, Adorno spent a good deal of time critiquing the claims of neutrality made by modern positivists who argue they separate themselves from ideological forms and represent the given world in knowledge. Adorno shows their very methodology to reflect the dominance of the identity principle implicated in exchange relations and commodity culture and therefore to be deeply ideological and historical in its attempted absorption of difference.

Adorno's critique of identity logic and its function in the social world reflects the influence of Nietzsche and of Weber in addition to the most obvious influence of Marx. For Marx, the politics of exchange are related to the circulation of commodities; the alienating effects are specific to capitalism. In capitalism, exchange value comes to rule over use value as simple exchange--C-M-C becomes M-

C-M'. This heralds the historical creation of profit as a motive for exchange rather than simple need or social convention. Exchange-value in capitalism is implicated in the alienated condition of workers, in the fetishizing of commodities and in the progressive value of capitalist development in moving us from a condition of scarcity to the heights of our productive capacities as humans. For Marx, the contradiction embedded in the exchange principle lies in the historical necessity of that principle to develop as social productivity increases while at the same time it functions to alienate and immiserate a particular historical class. This class, according to traditional interpretations of Marx, will eventually overthrow the very system that brought it into being. Adorno, following the insights of Lukacs as to the subordination of production to exchange in late capitalism, argues the logic of identity to be deeply embedded in social structures and norms. Adorno understands the exchange principle as a reductive and ultimately violent social mechanism not only attached to the formal economy of capitalism, but to the very question of identity in modernity. As a critic of late capitalism Adorno found the exchange principle operative in the reduction of human labor to waged hours and interchangeable products. But he broadens the meaning beyond what Lukacs argued about the commodity form to show how the exchange principle informs modern methods of constructing knowledge and juridical

norms. For Adorno, the exchange principle is embedded in the very substance of social relations among subjects of modernity.

In the second essay of the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche says that the concepts of measurement, of valuation, of identity emerge as the basis for conceptions of justice. Harms done to individuals or the community can be 'forgiven' in exchange for the punishment which, particularly in modern criminal justice, is quantitatively and qualitatively designed to match the harm done. Justice becomes contingent upon finding equivalencies, so the creditor, the victim of the crime or society can have vengeance. (Nietzsche, 1976:72) ¹⁶ In other words, justice is contingent upon the abstraction from the physicality and experience of suffering and the establishing of equivalencies through the exchange of which the social world claims vengeance. For Nietzsche, the process is embedded in historical relations of power and the enjoyment of cruelty, not in transcendent knowledges of 'the good' as classical idealist philosophies would have us think nor in actual equivalencies as modern scientific positivists would have us think. This process of abstraction becomes a very concrete form of violence, done in the name of justice, which reduces the experience of the self, whether it be the wrongdoer or the wronged, to abstract equivalencies.

Using the legal sphere as an example of the violence of the exchange principle Adorno says:

Law is the primal phenomenon of irrational rationality. In law, the formal principle of equivalence becomes the norm; everyone is treated alike. An equality in which differences perish secretly serves to promote inequality; it becomes the myth that survives amidst an only seemingly demythologized mankind. ... The total legal realm is one of definitions. Its systematic forbids the admission of anything that eludes their closed circle, of anything *quod non est in actis*. (Adorno, 1987:309)

There has been much contemporary work done on the 'myth of equal treatment' under the law and how it perpetuates inequality. The actual day to day functioning of the legal system is less static than Adorno argues here, but the myth of 'equal treatment' before the law serves to perpetuate inequalities in the manner he describes. The myth is still so powerful that it is commonly noted that even oppositional (anti-capitalist, anti-racist, or anti-sexist) social and political actors turn to the courts as the last site of arbitration for their claims more often than any other social site. ¹⁷ In spite of the increasing integration of social, political and legal spheres, the law rarely, as it is structured, takes into consideration the different bodies, needs and experiences which come to be arbitrated under its auspices. And when it does, it has contradictory effects. Adorno, like Nietzsche, argues that the law is founded in the exchange principle, reducing experience to manipulable quantities in order to seek 'appropriate'

vengeance. The 'law' only artificially wipes clean the slate of conflict.

In addition to drawing on Marx and Nietzsche to theorize how the exchange principle functions to eradicate difference in modernity, Adorno's social theory of exchange recalls Weber's famous "iron cage" of late capitalist development, within which subject's fate becomes bureaucratically and functionally determined outside of their individual agency or subjectivity. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism is only the most famous of Weber's discussions of how the dictates of the social world come to bear on the individual, how social categories and processes considered to be natural or outside of the control of the individual deny the ability of subjects to know others in freedom. In the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber shows how an original motivation of modern economic development, the highly individualized, spiritual calling to do good works was gradually transformed, taking on a life of its own and rendering the individual but a cog in the disenchanted mechanisms of progress. As the exchange system of late capitalism became more complex, the motive to work came to be dictated by the instrumental, functional necessities of the system and was only apparently individualized. Individuals' activity in capitalism was mediated not through the meaning offered by religious commitment but by the instrumental imperatives of

rules abstracted from their particular lives. This abstraction of the activity of the self from concrete experience, is a historical and oppressive phenomenon implicated in the systems of domination within which modern individuals live.

Adorno's critique of modernity occupies a unique position among these thinkers. He follows in the tradition of Nietzsche and Weber in his historicization of the fate of the individual in modernity. Like them he looks to the birth of the individual, of Man, in Enlightenment as holding potential for freedom. And like them he sees that potential defeated in the rise of organized, mass society.

For Adorno, Enlightenment epistemologies and social systems falsely render moments of suffering transparently knowable. The irrational, desire--that which would not otherwise naturally have an identity in the social world comes to be identified. It forces them into interchangeable relationships with other objects in the service of explanation and regulation. The modern emphasis on the individual and subjective knowledge denies the critical limits of the integrative forms of representation and communication available to the subject at any given time.

As mentioned above, Adorno's historical reference for the extreme harms of identity thinking is the Holocaust.¹⁸ "Genocide is the absolute integration. It is on its way wherever men are leveled off--'polished off' as the German

military called it--until one exterminates them literally as deviations from the concept of their total nullity.

Auschwitz confirmed the philosopheme of pure identity as death. Even in his formal freedom, the individual is as fungible and replaceable as he will be under the liquidators' boots." (Adorno, 1987:362)

That argument has led to Adorno being critiqued, particularly from the left, for theorizing a social world in which all resistance or opposition, because it must rely on the identity principle for articulation, inevitably becomes complicit with systems of domination. (Habermas, 1982; Benhabib, 1981; Piccone, 1973; Buck-Morss, 1972) It is argued that for Adorno all social and popular movements are imbued with bourgeois principles of knowledge and are therefore incapable of real resistance or of affecting the social world. (Freedman and Lazarus, 1988) I disagree with these interpretations.

Adorno's historical reference points to the path of knowledge construction in identitarian forms as being so treacherous as to potentially result in genocide. But this should not be read as an argument about the inevitability of the system of abstract exchange in modernity leading to genocidal practices. Nor should it be read as arguing the impossibility of oppositional politics in the administered world. "It is precisely the insatiable identity principle that perpetuates antagonism by suppressing contradiction.

What tolerates nothing that is not like itself thwarts the reconciliation for which it mistakes itself. The violence of equality-mongering reproduces the contradiction it eliminates." (Adorno, 1987:142-143) While identity is a coercive social and political principle, identity and difference never historically collapse into a reconciled state. For Adorno, any totality produced by identitarian thinking (including social movements) is potentially antagonistic.

Adorno's negative dialectics resuscitates the Hegelian dialectic but critiques its telos. Identity formation as understood in the tradition of Hegelian dialectics, involves the double movement of engaging an other (in the Phenomenology of Mind this other is internal to mind and external to self) and conquering it in order to create the boundaries, or consciousness, of one's self. Adorno argues through and against Hegel that believing the reconciliation of identity and difference to have been realized in any historical form, whether it be the bourgeois individual or the State, participates in sustaining and naturalizing a status quo still riven with relations of domination. The logic of identity, the creation of boundaries for the self and other, comes to have no history in itself but becomes a fact of nature.¹⁹ In other words if, following Hegel, we assume the reconciliation of identity and difference in any given institution or form of social life, what is actually

still a moment in history and potentially affected by the movement of consciousness, becomes naturalized. However, since nature, including human nature, contradictorily remains as other vis-a-vis history, we remain in a relationship to those institutions which is actually antagonistic (non-identical) but understood (ideologically) as final and unmoving. The Hegelian reconciliation of identity and difference, the founding of identity in its final form in the modern individual and the modern State apparatus is shown by Adorno to contribute to enforce the spell or the reification of the given world.

Adorno argues the contradictory nature of social and epistemological principles of modernity. He does not argue that these led to an historically inevitable conclusion, nor did he argue that late capitalism is without space for critical thought and action. He is not simply arguing that subjects cannot resist because they are imbued with the ideological forms of a closed totality, of the administered world. This would imply the existence of some pure subjectivity before the laws of modernity or capitalism enforced their dictates. For Adorno, we are embedded in our social context through which our sense of self is continually being constructed. Critique is in the awareness of the limits of the constitutive nature of the social world. We cannot return (indeed should not return) to some happily reconciled state prior to the damage of the modern

condition, nor should we assume future access to a reconciled state given particular positioning of subjects in the world.²⁰ Instead, we should recognize that relations of domination between the self and what is other never quite absorb the excess of what is other. Adorno's is a limit philosophy of knowledge. He argues in a lecture on "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy," that Hegel understood "that the limits of knowledge to which its critical self-reflection leads are not something external to knowledge, not something to which it is merely condemned from the outside; rather, they are inherent in all moments of knowledge." (Adorno, 1993:76-77). Adorno's negative dialectics recognizes this as a critical principle negating totalizing or transcendent knowledge. What is outside, what cannot be known or covered by the concept assigned to a thing negates any claim to totality or the universality of that concept.

This discussion of the identity principle can be used to consider the emergence and potential of new social movements.²¹ As these historical movements have emerged as oppositional political identities to imperialist or patriarchal structures of domination, participants have come to develop prior forms through which to know one another. On the one hand these emergent movements challenge traditional axes of power and domination which denied the particular subjects involved a political identity or

relevance in the social world. On the other hand, in considering those identities to exist in an ontological relationship of otherness to a particular enemy, such movements suppress differences in experience and create rigid structures of belonging. Those differences, as I will argue later in the context of feminist theory and politics, could render the political relationships among participants less rigid as oppositional movements develop into significant historical forces. Those differences could prevent identities which are critical and deeply politicized in one historical context from relying on a priori forms of knowledge and thus creating new forms of domination in another. This emphasis on differences presents a problem when we desire continuous solidarity, reconciliation, safety in knowing where we stand in relation to the other. The chaos within solidarity that difference ensures is unpredictable in its outcomes.²² However, it is only in recognizing the lack of finality about those constructions that we sustain critique in an as yet unreconciled world. Through critique, through the determinate negation of positive forms of knowing otherness, and without mapping out or presuming to plan the outcomes, we can suggest alternative ways of knowing otherness in the world. The dialectics of this process, however, the negative dialectics leave a remainder, something not covered by the concept. This remainder sustains the possibility for critique and for

change from a world whose dominant epistemologies and social forms encourage projects that privilege the subject and thus a rigid separation between self and other.

Habermas and others dismiss Adorno for ignoring the potential of modernity and its central concepts of freedom, autonomy and justice. Adorno does say much more about what freedom is not than about what freedom could be. He never says what freedom is because for him it is not yet, in thought or in practice. It is a potentiality and exists in moments of becoming. Freedom is not, as it is for Kant, realization of our private capacity to use reason within the rationalized framework of public obedience. Neither is it realized in the abstracted form of the bourgeois individual or the institution of the modern State as it is for Hegel. For Adorno, domination, the denial of freedom and just autonomy to the self and other, is sustained through the public and private systems of modern life. Against the bourgeois individualism of Kant, he argued there is no site of escape, either into individual consciousness or in privately constituted and publicly sanctioned institutions like the family or the community. Against the Marxist/Lukacsian left he argued that theorizing privileged sites of social identity, whether it be worker, woman or any other historically subjugated subject obscures non-identity.

For Adorno the potential for freedom and a just form of autonomy lies in the reconstitution of how we know and

physically relate to otherness, to what is alien or apart in ourselves and outside ourselves. This other takes the form of desire (remember Odysseus' self bondage as he outwitted the Sirens) of difference, of the strange or unknown. Freedom is denied in modern paradigms of reconciliation or final knowledge of historical process.

In a critique of the left's abandonment of Adorno for his alleged retreat from political theory that can inform practice, John Lysaker and Michael Sullivan make the following comment about the aporias of immanent critique:

After successful immanent critique, however, a poignant problem arises. In the search for new means to achieve the ideals [freedom, autonomy, justice] that prevalent practices fail to accomplish, it becomes apparent that theory has no understanding of these ideals apart from their role in those practices found to be deficient. ... The leaves emancipatory theory between a rock and no-place: it has neither the ends nor the means with which to achieve emancipation. (Lysaker and Sullivan, 1992;95)

The authors then go on to explore this aporetic dilemma of thought and practice in Adorno's work. They show that Adorno sustains the program of critical theory as an exploration of the tensions immanent to the relationship between thought and practice in modernity. Adorno argues that the impotence of attempts (of theory and practice) to radically change the status quo forces dialectical criticism and reflection on the conditions which make thought what it is. If reason is not self-legislating, then any thought must be critiqued in its relationship to the social world.

Adorno's subtitle to Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life expresses his own sense of impotence in the context of his necessary relationship to the world and his thought's embeddedness in instrumental, dominative reason. In Negative Dialectics he says "Dialectics is the consistent sense of nonidentity. It does not begin by taking a standpoint. My thought is driven to it by its own inevitable insufficiency, by my guilt of what I am thinking." (Adorno, 1987:5)

Adorno never claims to have escaped the aporia critical theory's critique of reason creates for thought. However, he does offer a sense of how we can think about the potentiality to live in freedom with otherness. Lysaker and Sullivan argue that freedom for Adorno is "...a property of practices, not persons. Persons become free only through participation in practices that are themselves free." (Lysaker and Sullivan, 1992:112)

I will make a slightly different argument about freedom, not about what it is--even as a property--but how it is as a potential of inter-subjectivity mediated through the object. Adorno argued that the aesthetic realm is a place critical theory can look for concrete practices incorporating freedom. His Aesthetic Theory informs a radical reconception of relational knowledge production and relations to otherness. Lysaker and Sullivan point out that for Adorno, art does not dissolve the tension between

subject and object so his turn to the aesthetic to find the potential for an emancipatory politics in modernity is not a regressive move to elitest forms of expression, but an increasingly radical approach to theorizing within the tension between theory and practice. They argue against Martin Jay, who claimed Adorno "denied the possibility of intersubjective communications in favor of aesthetic experience" (as cited in Lysaker and Sullivan, 1992:122) that Adorno's aesthetic theory is exactly an exploration of the possibility of intersubjective communication. I want to explore how he understood experience, aesthetic and otherwise, as holding that potential. In other words I agree with Lysaker and Sullivan that Adorno remained committed to working within the necessary aporetic quality of the critique of reason, but I disagree with their discussion of freedom which limits it to being a property of practices. I am interested in looking at how freedom emerges through practices but with attention to the broader interpretive concept of experience. Experience is our relationship to the world but also as a subjective lens through which we view the world. The question of experience is embedded in the tension between subject and object that creates the practices Lysaker and Sullivan describe as critical, as refusing the illusion of reconciliation in an unreconciled world.

The notion of totality is necessary to Adorno's theory, but I have argued that it is a dynamic notion; it is not static as argued by Habermas and his followers. Negative Dialectics discusses the relationship between the social whole and particular experience in both philosophical and historical terms. For Adorno, the meanings of particular moments (experience) need to be traced critically within the social whole. It is the politics of this relationship between the social whole, which Adorno calls totality or the administered world, and the particulars of experience with which I am concerned.

Two aspects of Adorno's approach to experience must be considered critical to revising contemporary theories of identity. The first is his historicization of the quality of individual experience. The second is the potential for resuscitating experience through knowledge forms that recognize critical moments of non-identity.

Adorno argues for a theory of experience that does not posit its ontology, its finality or any sort of authorizing link to truth. "Spontaneity of experience is neither continuously maintainable nor downright positive; the truth is not there. The most subjective, the immediate datum eludes subjectivity." (Adorno, 1987:39-40) Rather, Adorno theorizes 1) the historicity of experience and its link to memory, 2) its increasingly mediated quality in modernity, and 3) the politics of our efforts to represent experience

into the world. For Adorno, recognition of the fundamentally historical quality of experience shows that it is a relationship between the self and other and that it mediates knowledge between the particular and the social.

In his lecture on "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy" Adorno discusses the individual as constituted by the social world:

Not only does the bearer of personal consciousness owe his existence and the reproduction of his life to society. In fact, everything through which he is specifically constituted as a cognitive subject, hence, that is, the logical universality that governs his thinking, is, as the school of Durkheim in particular has shown, always also social in nature. (Adorno, 1992: 63)

He goes on:

A mode of thinking that understands the individual as *zoon politikon* and the categories of subjective consciousness as implicitly social will no longer cling to a notion of experience that hypostatizes the individual, even involuntarily. Experience's advance to consciousness of its interdependence with the experience of all human beings acts as a retroactive correction to its starting point in mere individual experience. (Adorno, 1992:64)

Apart from being a response to those who argue he is nostalgic for a lost, bourgeois individuality, this passage argues for the advance to an inter-subjective politics of recognition through the dialectics of experience. With Hegel and Marx, Adorno believes that it is in the sensuous world that we create knowledge, that we become cognitive subjects. This relationship is our experience and in itself constitutes objects for interpretation by ourselves and

others. Our relationship to otherness then becomes an object of interpretation. We can think of experience as a prism through which we interpret the world. The pattern of reflection is mediated by a dynamic totality and by parts of our lives and the lives of others to which we have no immediate cognitive access.

Adorno's discussion of experience, however, is complicated by history; the quality of our experience changes over time, with the totalities which experience confronts. Walter Benjamin had a profound and lasting influence on Adorno's understanding of the changing quality of experience in late modernity. The notion of experience in the name of which Adorno mobilizes remembrance is not measurable or easily described. It refers back to Benjamin's theory of the relationship between *ehrfarung* and *erlebnis*. In order to better set off the dialectical quality of Adorno's approach to experience, I will briefly discuss its relationship to Benjamin's ideas about experience.

Benjamin refers specifically to the quality of experience in modernity in two essays, "The Storyteller" and "Some Motifs on Beaudelaire" (Benjamin, 1968). These essays articulate the difference between the knowledge of experience elicited through information, and the experience that develops meaning through the remembrance and passing on or communicating of experience over time. It is the latter

which is elicited through the art of storytelling. Storytelling engages the audience in an active contemplation of the world.

The auratic quality of the experience related through the art of storytelling survives through the contemplative relationship the audience develops to the story. The story becomes embedded in their lives, as it has been in the life of the storyteller, rather than merely "jostling the consciousness" temporarily as pieces of information. It may be the simplicity of the story, the "dryness" of its terms and its lack of explanation that makes it live on historically, gathering meanings.²³ Being in the company of an audience or fellow listeners makes storytelling about things in faraway lands different from modern ways of knowing otherness or strangeness. As with painting, which entails the looking back and forth of the painter and the painted and subsequently creates a living relationship between the audience and the painting, the storyteller and his audience interact. The reconstruction of experience as information eliminates that part of communication, making it instrumentally available to everyone while reducing its meaning to a brief shock effect. Information, that which attempts to bring factual experiences of others close to the listener or reader through explanation, destroys the auratic content of the experience, fails to enter it into the life of the listener as anything but a passing moment, easily

replaced. The story which does not strain to tell all the verifiable facts or to explain them to a respondent, lives in the life of the listener.

The difference between *erfahrung* and *erlebnis* is elaborated in Benjamin's essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire":

The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience (*Erfahrung*), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life (*Erlebnis*).
(Benjamin, 1968:162)

In modern conditions of industrial life, the shock defense becomes a way of experiencing the world and giving it meaning. It becomes part of Baudelaire's creative energy, "Thus Baudelaire placed the shock experience at the very center of his artistic work." (Benjamin, 1968:163) For Benjamin, Baudelaire expressed the disintegration of auratic experience subsumed in the turn to information, to the kind of experience exemplified by the man in the crowd--hurrying and tensely defensive against the momentary shocks of modern life--not wanting to look at others for fear of engagement.

Auratic experience invested the object with the ability to return the gaze.

Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with

the ability to look at us in return. (Benjamin, 1968:188)

However, Benjamin describes this experience as always passing, as unretainable, (thus the importance of Baudelaire who made his art through the passage of auratic experience):

These data, incidentally, are unique: they are lost to the memory that seeks to retain them. Thus they lend support to a concept of the aura that comprises the "unique manifestation of a distance." This designation has the advantage of clarifying the ceremonial character of the phenomenon. The essentially distant is the unapproachable: inapproachability is in fact a primary quality of the ceremonial image. (Benjamin, 1968:188)

In 'The Storyteller' Benjamin writes of the consuming flame of the story. Experience is only tellable in retrospect, never in its lived moments. As it is told, the life of the teller-- he whose experience is being told-- becomes remembered only through the terms of the story.

His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his entire life. The storyteller: he is the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story. This is the basis of the incomparable aura about the storyteller ... (Benjamin, 1968:109)

Experience evaporates upon contact with deliberative consciousness. For Benjamin it is the unapproachability of experience that sustains its non-identity. As it is known it is consumed. Like the wick of the storyteller's life which is a source of wisdom, experience can only be known in retrospect; distance is the key to understanding, the closer one is the harder it is to see. This is why Benjamin, in

this essay, privileges the storyteller and the flaneur over the man of the masses. These characters sustain a kind of relaxed, contemplative distance to the object which allows the experience of aura, of the witnessing of history 'at a standstill' in the object.

Adorno sustained the argument about the quality of distance that Benjamin said offered access to the aura of the object, allowing it to live. However, Adorno's ideas about experience encourage an intensely political, though aesthetically styled, existence with otherness in the world. The dialectical images of Benjamin's theory of experience become still and then consumed as they are known in the contemplative life of the knower. History becomes a series of images seen only in retrospect, not in a dialectical movement in which subject and object are necessarily interactive. Benjamin's storyteller only knows experience as always already past. Adorno's theory allows for a sustained engagement with the world in experience.

Adorno's desire to redeem the qualitative, critical force of experience in the administered world engaged him in discussions of individuality. This rendered his theory suspect to socialists and feminists who have dismissed this aspect of his work as bourgeois idealism. He is accused of a nostalgia for an age of individuality which ignores the potential of popular movements and the rise of collective consciousness among various groups (students, workers,

women, anti-colonialist) in the twentieth century. He is dismissed for romanticizing a past when access to non-identity was possible on the terms of bourgeois individualism itself.

Adorno considered individuality potentially to sustain resistance to the integrative forces of exchange, but he argued the (rational) individual of Enlightenment to be a reified concept that does not exist in freedom either as subject or object of knowledge.

Similar to Walter Benjamin, Adorno found things immanent in the quality of individuality in the nineteenth century that sustained non-identity. Adorno looks to the 19th century to show how the potential for non-identity, immanent in historical movement, is continually extinguished by encroaching instrumental reason. He argues that 19th century bourgeois individualism weakened the objectifying power of knowledge, contributing to the subversion of grandly oppressive systems theories of philosophy and science which privilege the objectification of the world in explanation as a path to knowledge. He said the individual's capacity to be discriminating in his experience of the object rather than objectifying it through grand systems was present in early capitalism. In other words, individuality in the 19th century contained moments of resistance to the encroaching instrumental forces of enlightenment. It strengthened the individual's capacity to

be discriminating in his experience of the object. He explains the dialectical, negative effects of this discrimination:

Even in the conception of rational knowledge, devoid of all affinity, there survives a groping for the concordance which the magical delusion used to place beyond doubt. ... If this moment were extinguished altogether, it would be flatly incomprehensible that a subject can know an object; the unleashed rationality would be irrational. In being secularized, however, the mimetic element in turn blends with the rational one. The word for this process is discrimination. (Adorno, 1987:45)

The concept of discrimination is a complex blending of a secularized mimetic element of intuition with the modern rational approach to knowing the object. This is not an affirmation or uncritical celebration of 19th century individualism; it is an effort to articulate how the capacity to experience the object without instrumentalizing that experience or flattening it to agree with the terms of exchange is present even during the historical rise to hegemony of the most abstract individualism. It is an effort to redeem non-identity, which never fully disappears, on terms immanent to historical experience in capitalist society. The longing for non-identity, of the "groping for the concordance which the magical delusion used to place beyond doubt" continues, even in late capitalism.

Calvin Thomas persuasively argues that Adorno does not argue for a "going back to" but rather for a resuscitation of experience that is always already there, even in the age of organization. In "A Knowledge that Would not be Power:

Adorno, Nostalgia and the Musical Subject" Thomas argues that Adorno "mobilizes nostalgia." In other words, he engages it for purposes of critique rather than engaging himself in an empty yearning for times gone by. Thomas wonders how accusations of Adorno for engaging in an empty nostalgia could hold when Adorno's life work was consumed with critiquing the regression to or fetishization of any historical moment or theory of days gone by. Thomas argues:

Adorno's nostalgia,...is not for a lost object but rather for a lost possibility, is not a conservation of the past but a move to redeem the hopes of the past. Adorno does not favor a regression but calls for the reactivation of a fundamental human capacity--a capacity without which the word 'human' in the sense not of 'humanist' but of 'humane' could hardly apply: the capacity to suffer and to recognize the suffering of others. (Thomas, :163)

Thomas goes on to argue that Adorno was attempting to reactivate this capacity to hear, to experience, to be in relation of mimesis to the suffering other and the suffering in ourselves; to hear, to know not through abstract concepts or totalizing knowledge, but through an elective affinity to otherness. It is through this relationship of elective affinity that we might know otherness in a manner which sustains connection without erasing difference.

The definition of the object in idealist philosophies has generally been contingent upon presupposed thought forms and unities of the transcendental subject. This glorification of consciousness places the subject first,

thereby putting it in a position of omnipotence over the object of knowledge. The traditional bias towards the subject in idealist theory reflects the relations of domination in society or man over that which is constructed as Other. Adorno found this bias present particularly in the Kantian a priori which, in response to the inevitable contingencies of the tension between reason and desire (nature), explicitly presupposes how experiences are to be thought about. For Adorno, this denies the particularity of experience, and causes the philosophical enterprise to participate in hypostasizing the social world, or totality, in a dominative position over the individual.

This contradiction in the separation of subject and object is imparted to epistemology. Though they cannot be thought away, as separated, the *pseudos* of the separation is manifested in their being mutually mediated--the object by the subject, and even more, in different ways, the subject by the object. The separation is no sooner established directly, without mediation, than it becomes ideology, which is indeed its normal form. The mind will then usurp the place of something absolutely independent--which it is not; its claim of independence heralds the claim of dominance. Once radically parted from the object in Enlightenment knowledges, the subject reduces it to its own measure; the subject swallows the object, forgetting how much it is an object itself." (Adorno, 1988: 499)

Adorno argues that Enlightenment knowledges assume the mind to be capable of wrapping around the totality of objects, of knowing them completely either through prior categories or through empirical observation. This denies the many-sidedness of any object and forces it into dimensions of

total visibility. In denying many-sidedness, idealist philosophy creates abstract forms in the name of truth-telling. It argues we can know through knowledge forms that affirm, prior to engagement, our access to the object. It signifies a will to identify first and engage only after the cognitive relationship is in place. This offers a sense of familiarity with the object, even if it the familiarity is bred from our prior awareness that something is strange or alien as opposed to normal and close.

For Adorno, the rise of positivist sciences in the twentieth century signifies the continuing and increasingly ideological affirmation of the isolated, reified consciousness. Idealist philosophies privilege the subject as transcendent while positivism attempts to remove the moment of subjectivity from the object as a means of approaching truth. They have similar functions in the world. They each represent a longing, in a secular, disenchanted age, for a sense of autonomy, of place or centeredness, of certainty about that which lies outside of our given or immediate consciousness. We rely on these knowledge forms to ensure that we will be left alone, separate from the object, or if we are to engage, to be sure that we can manipulate it successfully to pre-determined ends. For Adorno, these epistemologies participate in constructing and reinforcing the will to dominate otherness, to determine, prior to engagement, the meaning of the

object. As methods of knowledge production they rely on the exchange principle; on making unlike things like, comparable, or conceptual for purposes of analysis. They are complicit with modern structures of dominance.

Thus, for Adorno, in modernity the separation between cognition and reality, between subject and object, is hypostatized, creating truth as that which is detached from the subject and its experience, or embeddedness in the world. Looking back at our discussion of the Dialectic of Enlightenment we can make the connection to the domination of nature, of the irrational, of desire, of that which does not fit into given historical categories and concepts. In idealist philosophies, the subjective understanding of the object, though constructed through social categories of thought and practice, dominates the object. Positivist thought attempts to eradicate the subjective moment from knowledge. However, Adorno argues that the subject is dialectically constitutive of the object, so positivism falsifies the object. It is important to note that Adorno refers often to the idealisms and postivist tendencies in Marxian thought as well. He believes that many Marxisms offer little that is substantially different than bourgeois theory or traditional theory as they posit the proletariat as the reconciled subject/object of history (Lukacs) or make scientific prognoses of the fall of capitalism (positivist/economistic Marxisms).

Does Adorno thus bring the critique of ideology to a close, arguing that there is nothing except ideological forms and concepts dominating the objective world and constructing individuals' subjective interpretation of their needs and experience?

For Adorno critique lies in practices of cognition and recognition among subjects. The moment of non-identity in the object world defies totalizing knowledge forms and falsifies claims to truth. Historical experience is non-identical, a moment of remembrance which resists subordination to the whole. However, it is not the immediacy of given experience that offers access to truths. Negative dialectics critiques the concept without reifying the object as truthful in its givenness.

Adorno argues that experience is rationalized or collectivized and loses its particularity in modernity. This process of constructing knowledge, or historical meaning, constitutes a political relationship with experience playing a critical role. For Adorno experience can be a critical check on these Enlightenment forms of knowledge, but in itself, or in its immediacy, it is not an ontological source of knowledge. Our experience is not transparent to us but always subject to interpretation. Because experiential cognition is an interpretive process, we should acknowledge that there is always something more to that experience than we can name. Adorno argues that the

objects of cognition (experience) will never fit completely into constructed concepts--the concepts will never be sufficient for understanding the object.

The name of dialectics says no more, to begin with, than that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the norm of adequacy. (Adorno, 1987:5)

The cognitive process always leaves a remainder, a constitutive outside, a difference. And objects, or experience, will always resist totalizing abstraction or conceptualization.

Experience forbids the resolution in the unity of consciousness of whatever appears contradictory. For instance, a contradiction like the one between the definition which an individual knows as his own and his 'role,' the definition forced upon him by society when he would make his living--such a contradiction cannot be brought under any unity without manipulation, without the insertion of some wretched cover concepts that will make the crucial differences vanish. (Adorno, 1987:152)

This quotation shows Adorno's respect for experience and the subject's potential knowledge of his own defining differences. Adorno critiqued the concept as a sociological/scientific tool, but also as a political process by which the administered world sustains and integrates itself through social codification. The "cover concepts" referred to above create what becomes a socially necessary second nature understanding or definition of what the worker is. They are as complicit in the systems of capitalism and the coercion of that subject as he makes his living. Through them the worker comes to know himself as

the same as others even as his experience tells him something different, tells him about his difference. However, that telling, that sense of difference, of the remembrance of otherness within the self, however inarticulable, will always resist the currently more powerful, totalizing impulse of identity logic. This perpetuates the antagonistic totality.

It is not only the knowledge of otherness in ourselves with which Adorno is concerned. He demands we take responsibility for the limits of our cognition of many-sided otherness in others. Like Hegel, Adorno argues that there is a separation from the object necessary for subjects' consciousnesses to develop, but because he was committed to the unending movement of the dialectic, Adorno argues that this separation should never be hypostatized nor collapsed in identitarian forms of knowledge.

It is not through the totalizing and distancing effects of objectivism, or through knowledge stimulated by reliance on subjectivity and identity that we will come to live in peace with otherness. Rather, the subject must see its own power enough to yield to the object without fear of self-annihilation. It is through a complex process of recognition, one allowing for the constitutive nature of the object, that we might come to know ourselves and others. This "coming to know" implies an endless, iterative and

reflexive process of understanding which is receptive rather than absorbant of the other's experience.

In "Subject and Object" Adorno argues explicitly for a subject that recognizes itself also as an object. This is a subject that rejects the ideology of the transcendent or always already identified self. In critiquing the epistemological separation of subject and object, Adorno does not argue instead for a relationship of identity. As expressed in the quotation above, what it is to be a worker is always already complicated by difference among workers. Working class consciousness that depends upon the subsuming of those differences becomes yet another cover concept and systematic devaluation of experience.

In "Subject\Object," Adorno argues that the separation of subject and object in thought expresses the real dichotomy of the human condition, our alienation from the object and from our selves. But critical thought must not hypostasize that separation. If we think only the separation we collude with relations of dominance created by the claim to independence by the subject. How might we most adequately think about the relation between subject and object? Adorno begins by describing subject and object as historical terms and critiquing the common usages. He then argues the absolute necessity to preserve both sides of the dichotomy, albeit in a transformed relationship.

Earlier I noted that Adorno did not suggest a going back to a time gone by in early capitalism when true individuality existed, at least as a potentiality. His aversion to this kind of nostalgia is reiterated in "Subject and Object." The passage is worth quoting at length because it expresses Adorno's complicated relationship to the past and to the question of the subject:

The picture of a temporal or extratemporal original state of happy identity between subject and object is romantic, however--a wishful projection at times, but today no more than a lie. The undifferentiated state before the subject's formation was the dread of the blind web of nature, of myth; it was in protest against it that the great religions had their truth content. Besides, to be undifferentiated is not to be one; even in Platonic dialectics, unity requires diverse items of which it is the unity. For those who live to see it, the new horror of separation will transfigure the old horror of chaos--both are the ever-same. The fear of yawning meaninglessness makes one forget a fear which once upon a time was no less dreadful: that of the vengeful gods of which Epicurean materialism and the Christian "fear-not" wanted to relieve mankind. The only way to accomplish this is through the subject. If it were liquidated rather than sublated in a higher form, the effect would be regression--not just of consciousness, but a regression to real barbarism. (Adorno, 1988:499)

Thus, the subject is absolutely necessary to overcoming the alienation of the mythical undifferentiated self/other relationship and of the modern, idealist transcendent self. Self-reflection is central to Adorno's suggestions as to what freedom might look like.

However, Adorno limits his conception of the subject through theorizing the primacy of the object. The subject must see itself as in the world, as constituted by the

social world. "The subject is more the less it is, and it is less the more it credits itself with objective being." (Adorno, 1988:509) He continues:

As an element, however, it [the subject] is ineradicable. After an elimination of the subjective moment, the object would come diffusely apart like the fleeting stirrings and instants of subjective life.

Without the element of subjectivity, of knowing the world, the tyranny of the particular would reign. Knowledge of the object would become only self-referential according to the "fleeting stirrings and instants" of subjective life. Subjectivity is reflection on the subject and subjective reflection. It includes the recognition of the ideological basis for the self-legislating individual or subject, because it means the subject becomes an object, a social object subject to reflection. "Subjectivity is to be brought to objectivity; its stirrings are not to be banished from cognition." (Adorno, 1988:504) Thus, Adorno places the subject and object in an asymmetrical, non-hierarchical relationship which recognizes the constitutive nature of the object without eradicating the subject. It is asymmetrical because the subject is objectified in thought in a radically different way than the subject knows the object. The subject cannot be without the object, without objectification, while the object can be (but not be known) without the subject or the subjective element. However, without society, without the objective world, the subject

cannot even be. The transcendent or empirical individual is a construct. The subject cannot be without the sensuous world or without society.

If he argues that the subject is a thing of the world and for the primacy of the object how is the relationship non-hierarchical? "...by primacy of the object is meant that the subject, for its part an object in a qualitatively different sense, in a sense more radical than the object, which is not known otherwise than through consciousness, is as an object also a subject." (Adorno, 1988:502) The subject must see power in its objective status, not weakness. It must see that a dominative relationship to the object is not necessary to exert itself in the world. He argues that it is in the cognitive relationship to experience as an object that the subject can do this.

The objective content of individual experience is not produced by the method of comparative generalization; it is produced by dissolving what keeps that experience, as being biased itself, from yielding to the object without reservation--as Hegel put it: with the freedom that would relax the cognitive subject until it truly fades into the object to which it is akin, on the strength of its own objective being. (Adorno, 1988:506)

This is Adorno's version of what others have called unity in diversity or the problem of sustaining autonomy within a community of solidarity. But his understanding is more complex than either of those familiar phrases imply. For Adorno, in experiencing the other one must yield to the other ²⁴ without losing one's sense of self. Only then

can one know the other in such a way as to resist the dominative relationship that comes with positivist or idealist forms of knowledge which demand that the knowing subject wrap its mind around the known object or the other and assume total knowledge. For Adorno, this subject/knower is more powerful, not more resigned, in its contingency. In addition, this subject would recognize that it too is an object of knowledge to the other. We should always already be vulnerable to being seen and transformed in relationships to others.

Approaching knowledge of the object is the act in which the subject rends the veil it is weaving around the object. It can do this only where, fearlessly passive, it entrusts itself to its own experience. In places where subjective reason scents subjective contingency, the primacy of the object is shimmering through-- whatever is in the object is not a subjective admixture. The subject is the object's agent, not its constituent; this fact has consequences for the relation of theory and practice. (Adorno, 1988: 506)

For Adorno, the critical issue is not who or which social identity can know truth, but how truths that always already exist for us in the social world can be unlocked through constellations and how that interpretation can be transformed into new social meanings. "As for the privileged character which rancor holds against it, truth will lose that character when men stop pleading the experiences they owe it to--when they let it enter instead into configurations and causal contexts that help to make it

evident or to convict it of its failings." (Adorno, 1987:42)

As discussed above, Adorno argues for a subject that recognizes its power of critique in its contingency in relation to the objects of interpretation. Those include the various truths that emerge in history which must be deciphered and critiqued in relationship to the objects they claim to represent. Constellations provide a metaphor for this cognitive process that does not deny the necessity to identify and yet allows non-identity perpetually to take apart categories in an approach to freedom. As cognitive beings we must relentlessly place concepts in relationship to the object in order to decipher it instead of identifying it. One must not only recognize the historicity of that object, but remember one's own embeddedness in subjectivity, that one's own subjectivity is affecting the knowledge created.

The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects--by the actualization and concentration of something which is already known and is transformed by that knowledge. Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box: in response, not to a single key or a single number, but to a combination of numbers. (Adorno, 1987:163)

Adorno's theory of constellations is not the same as perspectivism. He is not arguing that there are many

different approaches to knowing the object nor that there are competing truth claims about the object. According to the simple form of this latter theory, competing truth claims are resolved on the basis of power or instrumentality which can be rendered transparent through critique. Neither did constellations imply a form of relativism because for Adorno, there are indeed social and historical truths to be unlocked in objects. Objects, however, are not stable in their historical constellation of meanings. Truths lie in the performative process of interpreting the positioning of objects in constellations, not in the immediacy of the object in-itself. Truths are not discovered, but emerge as one places ideas, objects or moments in juxtaposition to one another with the intent of interpreting yet another idea object or moment. ¶

Truths, for Adorno, are socially constructed, but not because of materialist interests that become transparent to a particular class. Truths are complex phenomena of the social world; they exist but are never final. In his critique of metaphysics, Adorno makes clear that truths exist in the world and affect it materially but cannot represent it totally. "Yet the surplus over the subject, which a subjective metaphysical experience will not be talked out of, and the element of truth in reality--these two extremes touch in the idea of truth. For there could no more be truth without a subject freeing itself from

delusions than there could be truth without that which is not the subject, that in which truth has its archetype."

(Adorno, 1987:375) Truths, as the cognitive relationship between the subject and the object, are in flux and are permeable.

If Walter Benjamin was the primary influence on Adorno's theory of constellations ²⁵ in Negative Dialectics he looks to Max Weber to concretize the theory. Benjamin influences Adorno to see the importance of the idiosyncratic and the unexpected aspects of the object through the process of interpretation. The element of surprise, as if one were shocking oneself into a realization about an object, is critical to Benjamin's method of knowing within the conditions of modernity. Benjamin juxtaposes the constructed perspectives of many different, representative, historical figures such as the flaneur (made famous by Baudelaire) the whore and the streetsweeper, to what he called dialectical images. "Benjamin's images functioned like switches, arresting the fleeting phenomena and starting thought in motion or, alternately, shocking through to a standstill and setting the reified objects in motion by causing them to lose their second-nature familiarity." (Buck-Morss, 1977:106) But remember that for Benjamin, the experiences elicited through this were consumed in telling. They could not live in the present, but only as the past. They identify the experience being told through the process

of the story, reconstituting it. Adorno wants experience to live in the present. He theorizes a manner of telling the truth that tried to let the particular survive the process of objectification.

Adorno refers to the Weberian "ideal type" to elaborate his theory of constellations. He argues that the concept understood as an ideal type could be used in constructing constellations rather than being definitionally embedded as models in traditional social scientific arguments about cause and effect. Rather than being used as static models or categories in which to plug social phenomena, ideal types become tools for unlocking the seemingly total integration of social elements in late modernity. They function as means to approach knowledge of the object. Ideal types are devoid of any inherent substantiality and potentially reliquified at any moment. Adorno's theory of constellations is an open-ended process of interpretation, one in which nothing should be taken for granted and to which there is not a static development. The element of shock, of surprise, of being startled out of complacency so as to avoid resting in second-nature interpretations of history and of objects, is critical to Benjamin, Weber, and Adorno. Adorno's theory, however, is grounded in the dialectic, the negativity of which prevents any assumed reconciliation, but the form of which allows for understanding the lived qualities of particular experience,

the situatedness of the particular in a social world organized through the identity principle.

Adorno understands concepts as historical images, produced by human beings, which can be placed in relationship to an object in order to center it and illuminate its contradictory positioning in a world characterized by reification, the exchange principle and identity thinking. "Authentic philosophic interpretation does not meet up with a fixed meaning which already lies behind the question, but lights it up suddenly and momentarily, and consumes it at the same time." (Adorno, 1977:127)

Experience is always in the process of being objectified. It is not something possessed by a subject, or had by a group. This offers us a sense of distance from it which defends against the smothering identity principle and demands that time be taken, that the many-sidedness of experience as an object be allowed to emerge and influence interpretation.

Contrary to what it has become, both in parody and in its dogmatic petrification, dialectic does not mean readiness to replace the meaning of one concept with another illicitly obtained. ... When the concept is pinned down, that is, when its meaning is confronted with what is encompassed by it, its nonidentity--the fact that the concept and the thing itself are not one and the same--becomes evident within the identity of concept and thing that is required by the logical form of definition. The movement of the concept is not a sophisticated manipulation that would insert changing meanings into it from the outside but rather the ever-present consciousness of both the identity of and the inevitable difference between the concept and what it

is supposed to express, a consciousness that animates all genuine knowledge. Because philosophy will not relinquish that identity, it must accept this difference. (Adorno, 1992:71, my emphasis)

Immanent critique and placing concepts in constellations in order to decipher the truths in objects (in experience) precludes thinking in terms of 'escaping' the totality. Thinking on those terms perpetuates definitional boundaries between good and bad, between freedom and bondage, between identity and otherness, which are the very oppositional categories Adorno successfully critiques. For Adorno, total breaks, or escapes are impossible because the social world is not final or thorough in its ability to define and codify lived experiences. Attempts to break out or to escape to an outside only serve to reaffirm the definitional quality of the dominant structures of exchange. Rather, we must see how knowing the experience (the object) of others differently could perpetually defer the collapsing of differences into identitarian forms. The experience of antagonisms and irreducible differences, retains a critical function in spite of the identitarian impulse. These experiences can create a different kind of social knowledge, one cognizant of contradictions immanent in all social relationships.

Adorno argues that as cognitive subjects we must live in the tension filled spaces at the edges of our particular being in order to live in freedom with others. Persistent critique of the limits of one's own cognition may keep the

moment of objectification temporary while sustaining the distance that defeats the smothering requirements of sameness. It will help us avoid the reification of difference as merely the flip side of identity or as a generic space between self-contained identities.

We need to develop a politics of knowledge that persistently and militantly critiques the colonizing tendencies of knowledge construction.

Unbroken and all too human slogans lend themselves to new equations between the subject and what is not its like. Things congeal as fragments of that which was subjugated; to rescue it means to love things. We cannot eliminate from the dialectics of the extant what is experienced in consciousness as an alien thing: negatively, coercion and heteronomy, but also the marred figure of what we should love, and what the spell, the endogamy of consciousness, does not permit us to love. The reconciled condition would not be the philosophical imperialism of annexing the alien. Instead, its happiness would lie in the fact that the alien, in the proximity it is granted, remains what is distant and different, beyond the heterogeneous and beyond that which is one's own. (Adorno, 1987:191)

For Adorno, resistance to the integrative forces of the world requires distance between self and object or other. This is not the distance of disinterested objectivity, which implies that as subjects we can remove the moment of mediation from our relationship to others. It is the distance of respect, of identifying with rather than identifying in the sense of classifying others into immutable and therefore manipulable categories. It is the distance encouraged by the method of knowing in constellations which perpetually illuminate those sides of

the object, of the other, that traditional means of knowing disregard as a burden or as insignificant to the conclusions the knower is obliged to reach.

In a lecture on "The Actuality of Philosophy" Adorno argues, "For the mind (Geist) is indeed not capable of producing or grasping the totality of the real, but it may be possible to penetrate the detail, to explode in miniature the mass of merely existing reality." (Adorno 1977:133) Unlike post-modern theory, Adorno does not argue that reality is something enacted through linguistic constructions. On the other hand, he does not posit the truth of reality as prior to historical interpretation and meaning. He places reality and interpretation in a dialectical relationship, arguing for the immanence of thought in reality and also of reality in thought. Adorno's thinking functions more like a cipher than like a diagnosis:

He who interprets by searching behind the phenomenal world for a world-in-itself which forms its foundation and support, acts mistakenly like someone who wants to find in the riddle the reflection of a being which lies behind it, a being mirrored in the riddle, in which it is contained. Instead, the function of riddle-solving is to light up the riddle, gestalt like lightening and to negate it (aufzuheben), not to persist behind the riddle and imitate it. (Adorno, 1977:127)

What is it in Adorno's theory that I would argue makes politics possible? His theory has helped me see the importance of the different meanings with which we invest the objects of political discourse at any given historical

moment. For example, women's experience becomes intrinsically political when it illuminates in a broader sense the integrative function of norms, previously invisible, which dictate gendered identities and roles. This makes it impossible for those norms to function in the same way or with the same legitimacy as they did prior to the exposure. This politics does not depend upon the collectivity of women as a monolithic identity, but assumes the relevance of creating meaning through interpreting specific experiences as gendered.

For Adorno, experience is interactive with the constellations of concepts, representational forms, which shape the possibilities of meaning. As Peter Dews has argued: "One of the fundamental problems confronting post-structuralist thought, therefore--a problem which accounts for many of its distinctive features--is how to reject simultaneously both the repressive rigidities of self-consciousness and conceptual thought and the available dialectical alternatives." (Dews, 1989) Adorno shows how the subject exists without hypostasizing it. Post-structuralist critique does not sustain the relational quality of experience. Rather than seeing experience as being in a dialectical relationship to the possible forms of representation, it comes to rest in a dependent relationship to those forms in the deconstructive method of interpretation. (Scott, 1991) Adorno's conception of

experience allows for recognition of the qualitative and critical nature of experience in constructing meaning without relying on identity logic through reifying experience as a necessary foundation for truth.

Adorno shows us that delinking historical experience from claims to truth does not necessitate the eradication of the subjective moment from politics. Further, arguing that subjectivity is always already imbued with and reproduced in webs of power-suffused social relations does not remove the subject in itself from a politics of contestation. I argue this essential contestability is a function of the prism of experience.

We too often assume a great distance between reality and representation or narratives about that reality. However, lived experiences are translated as they are put into political discourse. They are interpreted in order to be represented. This process is one that can be intervened in and struggled with politically.

Building a life together may be contingent upon some shared meaning, but that does not exhaust the task of politics. Politics lies in the contestability of those meanings and the process of producing them. The idea that we have to impute an essential nature or quality to the subjects who struggle for recognition reflects dominant biases about how lives have meaning and which experiences count. The turn away from ontological standpoints and

truth-telling subjects does not defeat the possibility of politics. Interpreting experience in their constellations of meaning is a contemplative, reflexive project of constructing political meaning. It is political because it exceeds the terms of the experience and the concepts we begin with and alters them.

Adorno criticized any privileging of the producing, knowing subject. On the other hand, he understood the significance of subjectivity and did not attempt to wipe it clean of historical effectivity as do some post-modern critics of essentialism. For Adorno, there are traces of recognition which offer temporary access to critical knowledge. He argues that moments found in the uniqueness of experiential traces and knowledge of difference can subvert the dominative logics of identity. These traces, placed in conceptual constellations, are no less significant for critique for not being foundational.

The relevance of Adorno's work, and much of Critical theory, for feminism has been recognized insofar as it concerns about the relationship between women's oppression and the domination of nature. Feminists have shown in many different ways how the repression of "woman" and the "feminine" represents the denial of nature and the catastrophe of historical progress. Modern Western thought consistently looks to woman as representative of what is necessarily private, natural and pre-rational. The

Hegelian-Marxian tradition has been shown to be no less biased in its perspectives on public and private lives and the contribution of each to history. Women only become historical actors if and when they enter the sphere of public production; there is nothing specific to gendered lives that has anything to do with historical change. Critical theory calls attention to the crises of modern subjectivity, challenging the concept of Reason as an emancipatory tool of conquest over necessity by a unified, self-knowing subject. Through these theoretical moves, it contributes to challenges to the notion of the unified Subject and examines the ego-centric identity development of the individual as always interrupted by that which is inaccessible to instrumental reason. Rather than assuming the suffering of nature as a residual effect of historical progress, as do many Hegelian-Marxian theories of history, Adorno argues that the persistence of the dialectic, the domination of nature in history, defies closure in identity.

I attempt to advance these important insights with an inquiry into how Adorno might be relevant to urgent questions raised in contemporary feminist theory and politics about identity. Adorno's work did not develop in a linear fashion; it is difficult to argue that any concept, including experience, is used consistently across his works. However, his critical theory of totality in modernity as legislated by Reason and identity logic, is relevant to

feminists concerned with politicizing knowledge in a world apparently fragmented and contingent, yet thoroughly suffused with relations of domination and power. For Adorno, I argue, totality is not final. It is not a self-contained apparatus operating out of the reach of individuals. It remains in a state of antagonism with its own terms of existence. It is non-identical with its objects. Thus, while as subjects we cannot willfully step outside of the terms of its logic, we can potentially subvert its terms where its limits become identified as such through interpretation of experience. There is always a constitutive outside to any system. The project of critique is to bear witness to its boundaries, to make them visible and thus to denaturalize the givenness or common sense status of subject/object, man/nature, self/other relations of dominance. This is where experience and the constellatory quality of Adorno's thought precludes reductionist causal or structural analysis in interpreting the meaning of experience.

Part of the project of feminism must be the creation of recognized meanings for women's experience in the world. This is a necessary part of political work, to develop fields of representation through which the multiplicities of women's experience can be understood. No singular cause or structural law exhaustively represents the meaning of any particular experience. My concern with discussing

experience and interpretation is not to argue that feminism will render the world transparent to knowing subjects. Nor is it to reduce diverse, heteronomous experiences to parsimonious explanations. The point of constellational interpretation is to open up the field of representation to possibilities that will enhance self\other understanding and oppose the enclosure of critique in self-contained categories or some form of inter-subjective synthesis.

Walter Benjamin argues, "truth is the death of intention." In other words, no truth claim about an experience will completely or finally represent the intention of a teller. The truths we develop in the world are always larger than the sum of the aggregate parts of discourse, whether that discourse is conflictual or consensual. Ideas circulate through the social world, they are not settled or self-legislating in their meaning. This is why the image of constellations is so compelling for thinking about a process of interpretation and the creation of feminist meaning in the world. It offers more than liberal theory in that truth is not simply the better knowledge that emerges through willful challenges and 'open-ended' discourse. And it offers more than deterministic theories which search out the underlying structural laws that drive knowledge claims attached to the interest of a particular class or social group. "Truths" will not ultimately be transparently proven to be driven by

particular (even if ideologically unacknowledged) intentions. Experience has too often been understood by feminists to be something one can own, or a substance that inhabits our consciousness as ontological source material.²⁶ Consciousness-raising was premised on the right of the individual to interpret her experience in a safe setting, free of judgement and often free of challenge. As Black feminists and lesbians began to challenge the meanings applied to women's experience in the world by white, heterosexual feminists, it was no longer progressive to see feminism as singularly mapped onto the axis of gender as a system of domination. Instead, feminist thought has been emerging and expanding through engagement with internal differences among women. Feminist theory has become increasingly situationally grounded and contextual as shown in the discussion of standpoint epistemology. We can take this tendency in a direction that does not lead us into the aporias of identity thinking through looking again at Adorno's theory.

How do constellations work as a political theory of interpretation? Various experiences should be thought about as events, rather than presumed to represent a collective experience prior to interpretation. This is not to deny the collectivity of experience. Women, for example, have the experience and the fear of sexual violence in common in the United States. However, the meanings attached to the

experience, how it is represented to women (never only autonomously by women) and the fears of being a victim will not necessarily fall out in common cause. The differences between white and black women in thinking about rape, particularly inter-racial rape, may be as significant for any program of social change as the description of the experience being held in common at any given time. Rather than seeing all violence against women as existing on a continuum and revolving on the limited axis of gender identity, violences should be pluralized to allow the multiplicity of meanings to emerge. Finding ways to speak about rape is critical to ending it. But understanding the contextual meanings of rape to be plural rather than dependent upon one causal moment proliferates the opportunities for intervention and prevention.

Adorno's negative dialectics argues experience to be a sensuous, interpretive relationship to the world without essentializing it as a kind of property of the self. Experience is always already social; it is simultaneously our contact with the world and the prism through which we interpret the world. It should therefore hold a place in feminist thought as an object of dialectical interpretation.

²⁷ It should not be thought of as a subjective as opposed to objective source of knowledge. Nor should it be understood to unilaterally determine perspective.

Adorno's theory of negative dialectics contributes an incisive social critique of identity thereby challenging it as a grounds for feminist politics. His dialectical notion of experience sustains the feminist insights about the personal and the political without collapsing one into the other. We should not demand experience be enclosed within identity logic in order to act politically.

Much of what I have argued about Adorno's work points us in the direction of post-modern theories of representation. In order to better situate his work in the context of feminist debates about identity, I look next at how feminists have taken up the challenge of post-modern critique to recast 'the political' and questions about representation.

Adorno's critique of epistemology and of the imperative for identity between subject and object foregrounds the terms of contemporary debates about identity politics. In the next chapter, I cast these debates in terms of what theorists say is necessary for politics to happen given the fragmented state of the world.

CHAPTER IV

PERFORMATIVITY AND THE HABITUAL SUBJECT

Post-modern feminists argue that feminist appeals to reality and experience as a source of truth limit rather than expand the possibilities of politics. Women, as political actors, must accept the inevitability of contingency and interpretation. (see esp. Scott, 1993; Brown, 1991) Appealing to claims to truth regarding women's lives empties feminism of political content, leaving it in the perpetually anachronistic position of arguing over metanarratives and laws of history rather than taking a willful stand within the historical present. Max Weber argued in "Politics as a Vocation" that in conditions of modernity, politics becomes a "battle among gods on earth," detached from truth, but nonetheless invested with meaning. (Weber, 1964) For post-moderns, however, once one accepts that meaning is created by Man on earth, it is reactionary to take the leap of faith Weber advocated to combat the devils of contingency and relativism in a disenchanted world. Politics is defined by those devils now and feminists need to kick the modern habit of asserting correspondences between experience and truth. They need to learn to engage on the always moving battlegrounds produced through historically contingent power relations. According to Wendy Brown, "For the political making of a feminist future, we may need to loosen our historically feminized

attachments to subjectivity and morality, and redress our historically underdeveloped taste for political argument. We may need to learn public speaking and the pleasures of public argument, not to overcome our situatedness, but to assume responsibility for our situations as well as to acquire perspective and aspire to possibilities that expand them." (Brown, 1991;81) This claim of post-modern feminist theory warrants further examination. What does Brown mean by "assume responsibility" and "aspire to possibilities that expand [our situations]"?

A common claim of post-modern theory is that textual or discursive representations of selves has a constitutive effect on modern subjectivity. Thus, for feminism, the sexual, racial and gendered imaginings of modernity can be shown to have importantly differentiated effects on how women are represented in the world. From this perspective, the social world is thought of as a weave of texts constitutive of everyday, normalizing patterns of behavior and identification. Feminist interpretation can show the multiplicity of ways in which this weave of social texts creates gender as a self-stabilizing effect (rather than thinking of gender itself as a cause) of certain power\knowledge regimes.

The destabilization of these regimes would then constitute the political project of feminism for post-modern theorists. As I will discuss, post-modern feminists argue

that in order to engage politically we must find the fissures in dominative efforts that proscribe the project of being women in the world. They place the tropes of "difference" and "performativity" in opposition to identity in order to reconfigure the complexly mediated relationship between being and forms of resistance. Post-modern theories of this relationship are radically anti-ontological with regard to being, and place resistance as always already within constitutive relations of power. Thus, feminists who engage with post-modern theory critique discursive regimes of power\knowledge (particularly those about sex). Some study how representative discursive regimes of power place the feminine as an object within a phallogocentric hierarchy that denies the feminine its autonomy or intrinsic value. (Braidotti, 1991; Jardine, 1986).

For post-modern feminists, identity is thoroughly contingent; the "concrete" or "real" self posited by socialist feminists is political "all the way down"; its possibilities for being in the world are constituted through, not in spite of, power relations. Gendered identity is so deeply embedded in the normalizing axes of domination and power that the mechanisms of everyday life are implicated in the sustenance of the social world. Thus, the association of daily life, sensuous activity, identity and political empowerment argued by socialist feminists may actually undermine the goal of exposing how gendered habits

and mores are enforced by various systems of identity. In arguing women's social positionality as the foundation for political activity, socialist feminism may be rewriting the script of women's subordination. The assertion that "a knowing self" is discoverable if we remove the distorting oppressions of patriarchal domination forecloses, for example, on the possibilities that emerge with inquiry into women's varied participation (not necessarily a willful participation) in discursive regimes of sexuality. ²⁸

Post-modern feminists attempt to move feminism beyond ideology critique. The truth of the subject's knowledge or consciousness is not ideologically distorted or complexly mediated by the social world; discursive regimes (speech) actually position the subject as a subject. (Fuss, 1989; Spivak, 1982) Rather³ than engaging in the discovery or recovery of subjectivity, it is the subject's emergence into discourse that we must study for political insights into how relations of power and dominance work.

Thus, a critical theory of the representation of gendered identities considers how they are produced through power relations over time and space. Post-modern feminisms consider how to disidentify from and disrupt the constraints and habits that reiterate the terms of social domination. As I will show in a discussion of Judith Butler's theory of drag as a subversive practice, this is often a process contingent upon interpretation and perspective rather than

on an obvious or unmediated quality of the performance itself. This renders the possibility of prior commitments to particular political agendas unstable at best and a reactionary longing at worst.

As I noted earlier, post-modern feminists place questions about difference at the center of their work. The value of arguing for the "we" of feminism is not necessarily denied, but the political value of the "we" becomes part of the question rather than a presupposition. (Riley, 1989; Flax, 1989) Will the positing of woman or even women as knowing subjects only succeed in reiterating the terms of representation that generated feminist critique in the first place? (Butler, 1990) Does it unjustly reduce and distort the textured quality of women's lives and the differences among them? The historical pursuit of sisterhood and identification among women on the basis of common differences from men, has been shown to be untenable for women of color and working class women whose lived experiences of oppression are not reducible to a self-contained gendered analysis. With respect to the question of the "we", black feminists and third-world feminists critique the assumptions of white feminists regarding the significance of racial, ethnic and class differences among women and among women and men. (Anzaldua, 1993; Mohanty, 1991) For example, black women's history of slavery tells feminism that the idealized, representative images of

"woman" as particular kinds of sexual objects or as particular kinds of mothers holding together the nuclear family, have little to do with the specific expectations most women experience in their communities. ²⁹ It is clear that the grounds for feminist theory and the self-understanding of white feminists is radically challenged, not merely altered or expanded by anti-racist and post-colonialist critiques. The project must be to reconsider the epistemological\political commitments and interpretive methods of feminism, not merely to include different women in feminist theorizing or to expand its explanatory capacities to Black and third-world women's lives. (Trinh, 1991; Mohanty, 1991; Spelman, 1989) The project must challenge the very search for the we. I think many ideas of post-modern feminisms contribute to this project but will suggest some ways their approaches come up short strategically and politically in light of demands for anti-racist, post-colonialist feminist politics.

The dialogue between post-modern theory and feminism has contributed to the political project of reconceptualizing relations of power and domination among women. Feminist attention to post-modern critiques of the unified subject and ontological or phenomenological accounts of domination and power encourages carefully nuanced and specific discussions of difference and identity. It furthers the unearthing and denaturalizing of gender

politics as it is imbricated and implicated in the multiplicity of systems of domination. Theorizing the subject and gender as political effects rather than as sources of ontological certainty directs us to theorize difference as effectively subversive of multiple, dominative norms rather than as the obverse of identity among priorly individuated subjects.³⁰ In other words, once we are no longer wedded to stability and unity as subjects we expand our possibilities for acknowledging the multiplicity of subversive political practices among differently situated actors. However, I will argue that if we are to move politically in conditions of post-modern fragmentation and uncertainty, we still need to be able to articulate our reasons to make judgements about differences and how they matter even if we no longer wish to appeal to modernist versions of Reason to make those judgements.

"Difference theory" emerged as feminists theorized the effects of dualist sex\gender systems.³¹ But the project of writing the multiplicity that is women into an emancipatory or, as Drucilla Cornell (1992) boldly calls it, utopian discourse of sexual difference needs a much more complicated mode of interpretation. Otherwise, one difference becomes the difference that matters for the continued life and survival of feminism; the future of feminism becomes telescoped through sexual difference. . The critique of the subject must not proceed only from the

assertion that the subject is always already male. All other inquiry into the status of subjectivity, the complexities of which should be central to feminist work, will instead be derivative if this is the starting point. "Others" become, no matter what their particular history, feminized and chains of equivalency are set up among and around oppressions. Specific arguments about the effects of racism in feminist theory and politics become faint shadows within the discursively overdetermined processes of sexual differencing.³²

Feminist political theory must theorize the specific negotiations made necessary within feminism by the multiple and often immanently contradictory political commitments of all women. The absorption of feminism under the discursive symbolics of dualist sexual difference otherwise precludes attention to very specific and deeply historical tensions in feminism around women's differences. For women of color, multiplicity is a historical experience specific to their condition of subordination and to their terms of resistance. It is not the result of recently issued invitations to write themselves into history through the junctures opened up by a crisis of Western cultural identity vis-a-vis the unified subject and humanist philosophies.³³ Arguments initiated by women of color over the terms of feminist struggle reflect historical, material and symbolic differentials in privilege among women and persistently prohibit any easy

answers about the parameters of feminism as a project. My focus is on the post-modern theory that encourages the strategic articulation of how and where differences matter in a constellational process of creating politicized knowledge about women's lives.

The post-structuralist theory of Michel Foucault ³⁴ offers insights into power and resistance and the disciplinary qualities of modern social life which disrupt historic assumptions in feminism about the politics of the Subject and differences. Theories that emerged as feminists took on the challenge Foucault's work issues vis-a-vis the subject and power will be the focus of this chapter.

Foucault produced complex genealogies of politically marginal sites of social life such as the constitution of madness and criminality. His work attempts the "critical ontology" of a present he argues is constituted through multiple power\knowledge regimes that shape the possibilities of the self and subjectivity. ³⁵ His analyses of the relationships between power, knowledge and resistance are meant to expose the historical practices of our present.

Foucault contributes a relational theory of power to feminism. He does not accept the closures of identity theory. He builds his critique around the coercive, disciplinary practices that result from modernity's insufficiencies vis-a-vis identity and difference. In addition, his work explicitly calls for the transgressions

of limits as a necessary quality of resistance. One limit factor he points to are the limitations of "critical" inquiries which seek to establish once and for all the most likely cause or the best explanation for phenomenon. He displaces the pursuit of cause and effect explanations for the vagaries of modern subjectivity and social life with inquiries into how medical, psychoanalytic, scientific and humanist discourses are constructed and deployed in modernity. ³⁶

With feminism, Foucault refutes the epistemological claim that the Truth is made accessible or even that better truths are accumulated over time through positivist or humanist sciences and philosophy. However, Foucault, unlike standpoint feminists, believes the pursuit of truth is never innocent or outside of the terms of historical relationships of power. ³⁷ Foucault argues for a relational theory of power that makes impossible any presumption of the innocence or ontological purity of any subject. He argues we must resist the tendency to assume the autonomy or agency of any particular subject without taking into consideration the historicity of the very intelligibility of that subject position. Foucault's argument implicates the identity politics of standpoint theory in a politics of representation that calls subjectivities to order in a process of normalization. What many feminists have taken from his work is the seemingly simple, but difficult to

remember, point that what we assume is true or real should always be open to the question of how it becomes true or real. It is through this process of critique that acts which will be transgressive or subversive of the 'real' become intelligible or available to interpretation.

Foucault's genealogical perspective on the subject in history does not deny the presence of the subject in modernity; it understands it as a production of discursive, thoroughly historical, relations of power that allow the subject to emerge as an intelligible object of inquiry.

I find Foucault's attention to "the event" and his argument that we must remain locally committed in the social practice of interpretation particularly valuable.³⁸ For example, gender, if assumed as an unquestioned conceptual starting point, is not local enough. It is too laden with differences and is clearly not a seamless social project across time and cultures. Particular events may become significant through gender analysis in irreducibly different ways than they were understood before, but they do not then accumulate as a final answer to the question of what gender (or feminism, for that matter) is in itself as a system or as a phenomenon. Anti-racist and post-colonialist feminisms have convincingly shown how "gender" understood through Western eyes is insufficient for interpreting the lives and experience of non-Western women and coming to terms with difference in feminism. (Mohanty, et.al. 1991) Thus

Foucault's work speaks to feminist debates about the politics of identity and difference and questions about the status of the authorizing voices of feminism.

Judith Butler's theory of identity as habituated performances continues Foucault's work to break down assumptions about authenticity vis-a-vis gender identity and feminism. Butler's work encourages a spirit of experimentation. She argues the fragmentary, contingent, non-innocent qualities of feminist subjects of power in post-modernity. With other post-modern feminist theorists, she argues that we remain in the position of interpreting meaning, judging what to do, and negotiating over what differences matter when--even as we give up claims to truth and authentic knowledge about our deep selves. In my discussion of Adorno's work, I argued that the normative points of reference for this politics are the somatic qualities of self\other relations which offer guidance in assessing practices of resistance and subversion. I discussed the dialectics of experience and how they move us forward from the static qualities of standpoint theory. Here I further situate my critique of feminist identity theory by considering Judith Butler's use of performativity as a counter to identity claims in feminism. I examine the political messages in her texts.

Butler argues that feminist identity politics mirror rather than subvert the constraints of the politics of

representation within which feminism (necessarily) operates. Feminist identity claims place women as either powerless in the context of patriarchy and in need of proper representation, or powerful because they can escape or displace from outside its borders patriarchy's terms of representation. She describes the conundrum of representation in feminism as follows:

Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations? ... To what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix? If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reification of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal. (Butler, 1989:5)

Judith Butler theorizes performativity as a way of confronting this politics of identity and representation in feminism. She argues it moves feminism beyond the time-worn debate about constructionism vs determinism in identity theory. These arguments, as developed within feminist theory, fail to account for the complexity of 'subject positions' as sites of action constructed through discursive regimes of power. Constructionism implies an otherwise free, self-determining or at least relatively autonomous subject. If the female subject is constructed, the feminist task is to discover the possibilities of a true self that always already lies beyond the construction. If the subject

is determined, it is less free, called into being through a set of prior constraints that are not challenged by any notion of agency or will. Butler argues that the notion of performativity better captures the process through which subjecthood is assumed. She argues:

The 'performative' dimension of construction is precisely the forced reiteration of norms. In this sense, then, it is not only that there are constraints to performativity; rather, constraint calls to be rethought as the very condition of performativity. Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity. (Butler, 1993:94-95)

Thus, performances are ritualized and produced through constraints, none of which is fully determinant of the shape of the production. (Butler, 1993:95) Performance is not the expression of an identity that exists prior to articulation; it is the appearance which will tell us what we can know about the subject. We should not hope for any more truthful identity to be discovered through revelation. We can, however, search out those practices that expose identity norms as acts that are delimited in a temporal and social sense. Practices which disallow the complacency of identity are more valuable to a radical democratic politics than practices that reiterate naturalized, always already gendered qualities of social life.

Butler argues that modernist feminisms participate in affirming the habits of gender identity through starting

from the subject positions proscribed by heterosexualist demands. On the one hand, Butler points out that women's desire may not be ontologically distinct from paternal power. Women's "true" desire will not be discovered in the imaginary beyond the present or have a pure existence; it is a product as well as an object of paternal power. On the other hand, no power, including patriarchy, is capable of the total interpellation of subjectivity. There are always fissures and disjunctures between hegemonic power and the resulting identitarian forms.³⁹ Thus, the subversive quality of any act or principle will exist in relation to the heterosexualist principle, not prior to it in some originary state waiting to be recuperated. (Butler, 1990:93)

To clarify this argument, Butler shows how Julia Kristeva's critique of the paternal law, in which she deploys the figure of the lesbian, reinstates the perspective of patriarchy. Kristeva places the figure of the lesbian as strictly at odds with paternal desire. She projects the lesbian as "Other to culture, and characterizes lesbian speech as the psychotic whirl-of-words." In Butler's reading, the lesbian is thus 'merely' the psychotic production of the law of the father and is therefore a radical identity in itself.⁴⁰ "This tactical dismissal and reduction of lesbian experience performed in the name of the law positions Kristeva within the orbit of the paternal-heterosexual privilege." (Butler, 1990:87) Butler

continues: "Significantly, this description of lesbian experience is affected from the outside and tells us more about the fantasies that a fearful heterosexual culture produces to defend against its own homosexual possibilities than about lesbian experience itself." (Butler, 1990:87) In other words, for Butler, being a lesbian is not subversive because heterosexual culture fears the presence and identity of lesbians as totally outside the norms of cultural hegemony. That would imply that lesbians are only what heterosexualist projections say they are, binding the qualities of lesbian sexuality to the symbolic identifications of paternal law. The heterosexualist duality of sex and gender become final in this formulation, with heterosexualism on the inside and lesbianism on the outside as two distinct and mutually exclusive rather than mutually constitutive possibilities.

Butler goes on to argue what "lesbian experience itself" represents as a subversive act; she argues how lesbian sexuality can be read as subversive without reiterating the terms of heterosexualist dualisms. Lesbian identification may or may not subvert the limits of heterosexualist symbolics of desire. Lesbian sexuality does not exist outside of the terms of constitutive power--in fact, no practice exists totally outside cultural hegemony or the norms of daily life. "If subversion is possible it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law,

through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself." (Butler, 1990;93) Much of Butler's work is devoted to theorizing those "unexpected permutations." She relies on Foucault, but also on phenomenology and post-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to develop the thesis of performativity which allows the space for unexpected permutations to emerge and political subversions to be cast through interpretive action.

In Butler's theory identity and essence are rendered thoroughly mutable. They are thus potentially more free than any identity theory allows. In fact, identity theory or even theory that relies on bodily essence or behaviors as given preclude the recognition of innumerable radical (and unpredictable and risky) possibilities for the subversion of the normalizing demands of power. How does this then translate into a politics? What are the implications of thinking of every permutation of identity, even that of the body, as a potentially subversive, historicized appearance rather than as a foundational or at least structuring principle of social life?

Feminists often argue for pragmatic, rationalist and protective responses to the "real" vulnerability of woman's body and the oppressive "material" aspects of women's lives. ⁴¹

Butler critiques this, implying it is a retreat from politics into the truthfulness of "a body that experiences."

It places that experience outside of the terms of production in discourse. She argues that the female and male body is always already encoded by, among other things, the regulatory constructions of sex. The social world constructs punitive measures to enforce properly gendered, heterosexual identities. While agreeing with Foucault about the discursive construction of identity, Butler shows how even Foucault privileges the body that experiences as somehow prior to the cultural imprints that make its sex intelligible. His use of the diaries of Herculine, the French androgyne, to express the purity of pleasure of an ambiguously sexed physical being fails to take into account the tragic quality of gender enforcement. (Foucault, 1980) Butler argues that Herculine's body is what the social world makes of it, not a pre-social site of pleasure that becomes other under society's imprints. "She" becomes gendered man in spite of her desire to live as a woman who loves women. "She" is not in an unintelligible state of polymorphous sexuality or merely androgynous, as Foucault says, nor is her sexuality comfortably ambivalent prior to the social operations that make her into a man. The gender imperative is always already there for bodies, it is not imprinted on otherwise "polymorphous," ambivalent flesh. In light of this thoroughly enculturated quality of the body, Butler critiques all appeals to identity as even minimally settled within the confines of biological or material "realities."

As pointed out above, Butler is particularly concerned with reclaiming marginalized sexualities as critically subversive of heterosexualist systems of power. However, she rejects the claims of outsider status for these sexualities made by some feminists. Instead Butler argues that lesbian women may reflect, through the rituals and practices that constitute their identities as lesbian, the productive (as opposed to the merely repressive) power of hegemony. They may or may not, given the circumstance, represent 'unexpected permutations' of naturalized heterosexualist assumptions. In other words, Butler does not think lesbian existence can remove itself from those assumptions through claiming either the purity of identificatory relations among women ⁴² or practices that are ontologically out of the reach of heterosexualist expectations. ⁴³ Butler argues that lesbians should be self-consciously anti-gender as a systemic constraint on their identities; but they will not achieve a transcendence of gender through androgynous combinations of masculine and feminine traits or by assuming an already freer identity outside of heterosexualist culture. In other words, they should not remain ontologically committed to gendered traits as they are presently written into the world.

"Only from a self-consciously denaturalized position can we see how the appearance of naturalness is itself constitutive." (Butler, 1990:110) Butler looks for the

extra-ordinary instances of action that de-naturalize everyday gendered life, not to consolidate them into a coherent political program or blueprint for liberation, but to interpret them as exposures that bear witness to how the conventional is constituted as natural.⁴⁴ Butler asks that we cease to assume in advance a binary sexed identity and ask instead, what is at stake in sustaining binary sexed identities. Through looking at "deviance" from those sexed identities differently, as at least partially constitutive of rather than outside the terms of the normal, we can approach an understanding of what is at stake in holding the oppositions steady. We may then begin to undermine commitments to the proper performance of gender and thus to the prohibitive and repressive constraints that heterosexist gendered life sustains.

Butler's argument does not render gender any less effective as a structuring principle of life and experience. In a critique of Butler's thesis of performativity, Christine DiStefano rejects the option to understand gender as performance, arguing that gender is better understood as a deeply historicized, effectively determining, generalizable quality of social life. DiStefano makes a normative judgement about the thesis of performativity representing a playful attitude, one dangerously less serious about its commitments to social change than materialist social analysis that assumes its generalizations

to be recognizable in the world as it is. (DiStefano, 1991) DiStefano implies that Butler's work signifies a retreat from normative theory about gender. However, Butler never claims that gender is not a deeply structuring and generalizable quality of social life. Nor does she argue that it is declining in significance as freely constituted sexual deviance and gender-bending practices proliferate. Rather, she wants to interrupt the persistent tendency toward thinking about gender as determinate and society (patriarchy) as an immutable object to which options of resistance are exhausted by assuming an insider or an outsider status.⁴⁵ She wants to make the demands of any dualist understanding of gender strange and unfamiliar in order to expose them to reflection and subversion.

The thesis of performativity is the pivot upon which Butler turns away from identity theory in constructing a feminist theory of gender. The argument that gender is constituted through performance is not original to Butler. It has been made vis-a-vis the distinct practice of theatrical performance. Jill Dolan has similarly argued that gender is performance in that it has no ontological resting place before the representationalist practices of social life. Dolan adopts a post-Lacanian critical perspective on the feminine as represented as the absence of masculine desire. She argues a feminist interpretation of theatrical performances should set itself to examine how the

feminine is configured only in terms of the paternal laws of symbolic identification. Thus, in the performance that is gender, we should encourage alternative representations of women as subjects of dramatic art, rather than merely as objects of masculinist desire. (Dolan, 1989; Dolan, ed. 1992) Butler expands this thesis beyond the proscenium and beyond Lacan, making the Shakespearean adage that all the world is a stage (managed but not determined by paternal laws of identification) into a theory of politics. Butler's thesis thus faces the potentiality of aestheticizing political life, of turning it all into a play of willed performances. However, she avoids this move, arguing that the thesis of performativity is not like a staged "performance". She offers insight into what is at stake in arguments about "reality" as immutable and "performance" as merely imitative. In other words, Dolan argues that representations of the feminine in the theater reflects how women are expected to "be" in the world. Butler does not differentiate between the theatre as a site of performance and the social world as a site of "being." She removes the proscenium as a distinct line between performance and reality and argues the social world to be constituted through a series of performances. Butler uses the aesthetic form as a metaphor for rather than as a reflection of how "reality" works. Realities are constituted as "acts" in Butler's work. (Butler, 1993) These acts, as in the Acts of

traditional dramatic forms, place action within constraining forms, thereby producing meaning and coherence.

Butler argues, against the expressive politics central to the practices of radical feminism, that there is no truer or better identity in us waiting to be discovered. "Women", for example, may become more visible through political struggles, as have "lesbians". However, what becomes visible is not an unchanging truth about woman or even multiple truths about women. What becomes visible is an effect of discourse and remains "essentially" subject to interpretation. It is subject to the conditions of possibility which created the terrain of emergence in the first place. For Butler, there is no essentially gendered subject prior to the performance of gender. For her, what emerges and congeals as the truth of identity is thoroughly contingent upon interpretation. In other words, we identify in particular ways because of the constraints of representation. Our identities have no ontology prior to the acts and modes of representation in which we are embedded.

Thus, Butler argues that the boundaries of any system will not become transparent to particular revolutionary perspectives while remaining opaque to others. In response to Monique Wittig's theory that revolutionizes lesbian existence as the ultimate mode of resistance, Butler argues that it is logically impossible that heterosexuality is

radically determined, completely compulsory and non-volitional while lesbian sexuality is somehow more free of determinant structures or norms. Butler does not think there is this radical disjuncture between compulsory heterosexuality and homosexuality. In addition, she critiques the theory of heterosexuality as a compulsory system developed by lesbian and feminist theorists as diverse as Adrienne Rich, Monique Wittig and Catharine MacKinnon. Instead, Butler argues there are psychic affinities that cross the fictive boundary between these sites of sexual identity. In other words, homosexuality is ritualized and riven with power relations that also weave through heterosexuality and constitute the possibilities of its existence. This does not make it the same as heterosexuality, it does imply that homosexuality in itself, as an identity, is always already constructed in part through the terms of hegemonic heterosexuality. The political trick is to expose the norms of exclusion that operate within heterosexuality to degrade homosexuality to outsider status, not to claim a purity or coherence to homosexuality in-itself. This poses a threat to the stability of heterosexualism and therefore potentially opens up possibilities for movement beyond its dualisms.

Further, Butler does not disagree with the project of unearthing gay and lesbian historical lives. Because of certain historical periods when homosexuality has been

necessarily clandestine, and lesbian existence completely invisible, the signals put out about sexual identity often are consciously ritualized. They constitute an encoded cultural world and make possible claims about a distinct history of lesbian culture. ⁴⁶ Butler does disagree with the use of this project to determine the essential truths about lesbian existence ⁴⁷ and the terms of lesbian identity. ⁴⁸ Unlike many lesbian and gay theorists Butler does not think the political value of asserting the cultural/historical consistency of gay life lies in its consolidation alongside heterosexuality as a legitimate identity choice. Habits and rituals of identity formation take on naturalized qualities as they exist over time. This is a danger, not necessarily the strength of gay and lesbian community. ⁴⁹ The codification of rituals of sexed relations begins to reflect the exclusionary qualities of the heterosexualist system and like that system, to disallow experimentation and openness to differences as threats to lesbian existence.⁵⁰ The politics of gay identity thus is in the subversion of gender and the heterosexualist matrix that enforces its terms, not only in the consolidation of gayness as an alternative "choice."

The operations of gender are quite effective at disguising themselves in necessity and in the vicissitudes of everyday life. Thus, for Butler the subversive exposure of the actual inessentiality of gendered identity will lie

in the hyperbolic, self-consciously performative imitation of the (always fictive) ideological presence of an original. This exaggeration of the terms on which the world makes itself intelligible to knowing subjects has traditionally been the territory of the theatrical. As discussed above, Butler brings it into the world, refusing the separateness between the performance or the expression and the reality. For example in the case of Queer politics, the public theatrics of groups like Act Up represent a deliberate reappropriation and subversion of meaning of terms ordinarily used to shame, to interpellate the abject social identity that acts differently from the heterosexualist norm. Arguing for the performativity of gender changes the "realities" of gender from behaviors, or immutable facts of socialization, into a politics which might then be intervened with.

Contrary to what some critics assert (DiStefano, 1991; Benhabib, 1991), Butler sustains a theory of gender as a system that gives form to her theory of performativity and does contribute to a politics of interpretation. For Butler, gender is a contingent sexual positioning but it is also constituted through a "tacit collective agreement."

Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions--and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction 'compels' our belief in its necessity and naturalness. The historical possibilities materialized through various

corporeal styles are nothing other than those
punitively regulated cultural fictions alternately
embodied and deflected under duress. (Butler, 1990:140)

Butler makes clear the punitive measures this 'tacit collective agreement' engages in order to properly engender bodies. However, the circularity of her discussion of gender as a tacit collective agreement obscured by the credibility of its productions, recalls liberal social contract theory. The artifice that is the social contract of liberalism is sustained precisely through agreement generated by its self-legitimizing effects (of collective and individual security). Butler drops the rational individual who exists prior to politics and enters into this contract, but sustains the social metaphor of agreement, which begs many questions about social relations. Post-structuralist theory displaces the opposition between liberal (rationalist) and deterministic (socially engineered) theories of social relations with a theory of constitutive power. This moves theory beyond the notion that there exist potentially innocent individuals or identities before the laws of history (or before the social contract is made). The premise is that we are all complicit in cultural hegemony, not in the sense of being guilty rather than innocent, but in the sense of having participated, and needing to reflect deeply on the forms and substances of this participation. Thus, changing "tacit collective agreement" to "tacit, collective participation"

adjusts the liberal connotations of Butler's phrase and moves towards a more material and active sense of how social relations work. ⁵¹ This piece of her analysis, however, shows why anti-ontological social criticism is often conflated (by its critics) with a liberal or pluralist politics. It is quite difficult to see the normative qualities of anti-ontological critique.

With reference to Monique Wittig's fictional accounts of lesbian experience and radical potential, Butler writes:

Indeed the source of personal and political agency [in these texts] comes not from within the individual but in and through the complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity itself is ever-shifting, indeed, where identity itself is constructed, disintegrated and recirculated only within a context of a dynamic field of cultural relations.
(Butler, 1990:127)

What are these complex cultural exchanges? How do we assess the difference between exchanges and appropriations? Butler does not explain the relationship between culture and politics or between differentials in social power and exchange. This is where I think we need to look beyond a theory of symbolic identity formations, derivative from psychoanalytic theory, which Butler's thesis of subversive performativity sustains.

"There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions' that are said to be its results." (Butler, 1990:25) Butler invokes expression which generally implies a representation of something enigmatic that lies below the

surface of appearances. The performance of an identity ordinarily implies that one is deliberately setting up a ruse, that one is outside of one's normal self. It is distinct from expression, but can be expressive.

"Performativity," on the other hand, argues that the expression is the thing, that we are not moving in and out of our selves in ways more or less truthful or authentic. It implies that there is no distinction between appearance and reality whereas expression implies a difference and a relationship between appearance and reality. Post-structuralist theory deconstructs social relations as "texts" to show that they do not leave any remainder in reality, but indeed are constitutive of reality. I think an expressivist politics implies the sustenance, if not the essentiality, of a moment that provides a sub(con)text for the act. One is expressing something that is other than the appearance. While the correspondence is never exact or total, I think of the relationship as a stratified, dialectical layering where expression never exactly communicates the experience nor the prior intent. The intentions of the speaker are never exactly met, but there is something other than the appearance itself to be considered as a political problem. The notion of performativity tends to erase this stratified, dialectical relationship between action and interpretation in social relations.

Post-modern theory refuses dialectical methods for thinking about society and social relations on the grounds that traditionally, dialectics assumes a teleological overcoming. Butler eliminates the consideration of dialectics in explaining gender identity. In particular she critiques dialectics' dependence upon the realm of necessity for explanation of historical change and progress. In Subjects of Desire (1987) she examines the tradition of dialectical theory which argues the historical relationship between necessity and human will or agency. Butler's work attempts to move beyond dialectics to the deconstruction of the moment of "necessity" in itself. As pointed out above, this necessity includes the body and/or sex. Butler rejects any normative claim that oppositional movement should be organized on the basis of identity or "reality". Social life is always already organized through and around identity. Appropriating and reinventing categories in the name of autonomy from prior identifications potentially constitutes new exclusions that reiterate the political processes of representation feminism has set itself the task of critiquing.

Butler is not only suspicious of identity but rejects outright any notion that identity exists in itself as anything but a fictive representation of who we think we have to be. For Butler, we do not need identity to be critical actors. Instead we need to expose, persistently

disidentify from and actively disrupt the naturalized identity demands placed on us. As I have discussed, Adorno thinks of identity as a necessary moment of cognition and of recognition, but one that needs always to be recognized as incomplete, as not covering the excess, and as coercive in its defensiveness against that excess. Butler thinks of identity as constitutive habituation. There is no somatic moment, no going through the object or anchoring of knowledge in the normative qualities of self\other understanding. This becomes particularly apparent in her discussion of the politics of drag. It is here, where she advocates a practice that exposes the inessentiality of gender that the normative potentialities of her work come through most clearly. However, her theory of identity as performative is not sufficient as a basis for interpreting the always only potentially critical qualities or the politics of drag.

Butler's discussion of gay and lesbian drag as performatively subversive of heterosexualism has been highly controversial among feminists. She argues that the performance of drag is intrinsically deconstructive and therefore constitutes an oppositional movement vis-a-vis oppressive gender identity. This rubs against the grain of feminist critique of gay male drag as a classic expression of misogynist, masculinist appropriations of the feminine or

lesbian drag as a glorification of male-centered heterosexualist values. (Frye, 1983)

Butler rejects this critique of drag as a homophobic reversal of the claim that lesbians are 'really' women who cannot find a man. She argues that this critique of gay male drag engages in a homophobic logic--that gay men create themselves only with reference to the absent woman. That is an astute reversal of feminist critiques. However, Butler's reclamation of drag as subversive does not take into account how it is constituted through a complex of meanings. Instead she defines it only in terms of resisting heterosexualist desire. Her discussion implies that the meanings of being sexed male in this society are somehow detached from gay men in drag. Many gay men are actively misogynistic. This is not intrinsic to or a necessary determinant of gay male identity; rather it is related to being male in a misogynist culture. Homosexual men are not always only homosexual men defying the rules of heterosexuality. Even as men who love other men are abjected through heterosexualist identity norms they have access to other social identifications that lesbians, for example, do not. If Butler is going to argue, along with Denise Riley (1989), that women are not always only "women," but move in and out of that identity in complicated and often unpredictable ways, she should apply the same insight to any identificatory system. Otherwise she approaches the

reification of gayness or sexual difference as intrinsically subversive of gender oppression.

In a later discussion, Butler argues that she was not arguing that drag is universally subversive. Instead she was theorizing the ambivalence of drag within the heterosexist matrix in which it stands. However, her qualifications of the theory and caveats about how drag performances work their subversions do not adequately respond to the criticism that all performances are layered with multiple meanings, not only embedded in singular contexts. Practices subversive of social demands for proper performances are immanently ambiguous and contradictory. They may not be subversive of sexism or of racism--even if they call naturalized heterosexuality to account for its fictional status.

Gay men "participate" in complicated ways in sustaining patriarchal hegemony that offers them privileges as men and constructs opportunities depending upon what race and ethnicity they are. These aspects of how homosexuals are, whether we think of the self as a performer or as essential identity, should not be bracketed off from their performances as gay men. This would collapse gender into sexuality, avoiding the different implications for politics of their distinct terms of reference. Drag queens may need additional performances to be convincing to women who have experienced the effects of misogyny and sexism of men

generally and interpret drag through that lens. The subsequent implications for the appropriation of the feminine may or may not be negative for women, but they should not be dismissed as irrelevant in a society drenched with differential power linked to gender identity norms. Feminism should look at gay male drag with an eye towards the potential disidentifications they make from heterosexualist culture. But this will not eradicate the speculative gaze it should sustain in relationship to the way the performer sets off the glories of male gayness from lesser identities represented by womanness. The quality of the self\other relationship upon which the politics of the performance rests will speak to the normative value of drag for women and feminism (and indeed of "women" and feminism for drag).

On the other hand, drag can and should be read as a parody of gender essentialism and as potentially subversive. As mentioned, Butler argues the ambivalent quality of drag. However, she interprets the ambivalence with reference to whether particular queens perform on the terms of parody, or whether they are merely reasserting the value of real gendered identities and then placing value on those identities through performance. In other words, the critical quality of drag depends upon its immanent belief in itself as representation rather than its embeddedness in particular social relations or material life. This point

can be illustrated by considering Butler's discussion of the ambivalence of drag as a subversive act in an essay about the film 'Paris is Burning' entitled "Gender is Burning." In this essay she argues that drag is subversive if the desire of the performer does not lead her to want to finalize or really "be" the other gender because of a final value placed on that otherness. "Paris is Burning" shows us that performing drag can be deadly, not subversive, if the performer wants to become other. This is the desire of Venus. Venus Xtravaganza is a Latina, transexual man, becoming a woman who says to the camera that she "really wants to have a house in the suburbs to clean and a man to take care of her." In other words, Venus really wants to be a woman. When the previously fooled man who she hopes will bring her to his house in the suburbs finds out the "truth" of her gender, he kills her because of her left-over organ.

There are several messages to be read out of Venus' life and death. One implication of Butler's discussion is that Venus was trying to be too real and paid the price. Venus should have realized that drag could only go so far, that drag is drag. She suffered in life and died from her desire for the real thing. Her left-over organ signifies the excess, that which was unaccounted for in the calculation of the man who murdered her, who refused to forgive that she could not really be the woman, no matter how powerful her performance. Either way, the desire for

the real becomes deadly. What message do we address to Venus and the man who murdered her? Butler might say, given her discussion, "Recognize the limits of your performance, not in mourning over an inaccessible real thing, but in recognition that no one's life is defined by the real thing, only by symbolic identifications." Butler would warn Venus about thinking fulfillment was possible through being a real woman and instruct her on the constitutive partiality of all identities. I think this shows that Butler's argument about drag is not "playful". Rather she succeeds in showing how dangerously invested we are in enforcing the real. Given present social conditions, living with the ambivalence of her condition may have kept Venus in the underground, impoverished world she thought she could escape through becoming a complete woman. But her yearning for escape through becoming totally other (white and female) is fatal. Venus' yearning for completion in nature of a socially constructed and socially valued identity is tragic.

The other queens in the film, who do not try to be too real, but allow the audience to 'see' the parody, survive. The audience knows the parody and participates fully in it. Is this then subversive? For Butler it is because the parodic quality of the practice of voguing creates a culture, a community, which she argues is a valuable counter to heterosexualist assumptions about sexual "deviants" and their capacity to live affirmative, empowering lives. She

refutes interpretations of the film that argue the queens only live lives of despair and unfulfilled longing to be the dominant other.⁵² The representation of the Queens in the film radically subverts the terms of hegemonic heterosexualist assumptions about how particular kinds of family and sex are necessary to sustain community.

Butler takes note of the punishments that await those who insist on not doing their gender right or who refuse the "reality" or "essentiality" of their gender identity. Social marginalization is viscerally painful and Butler does not romanticize the community as being immune from these effects. However, for Butler the critical move is not to discuss the oppression of deviants but to rewrite the script through which dominant culture understands their lives. This means breaking down the assumptions that Black Drag Queens in Harlem are only oppressed and kept down by their delusional desire to be white and female. The various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and as gender is considered to be a matter of cultural survival, there is much at stake in participating in the writing of those acts. Butler shows the queens to be participants in subverting the script of gender, to be subjects and not only passive objects of oppression.

It is thus clear what Butler means by subverting gender. However it is less clear what she means by "doing gender right" and whether women can or do submissively

participate in the heterosexualist structures that shape our gendered lives. Generally, even participating in heterosexual "normalcy" is contingent upon unpredictable and often unstructured expectations. For example, the unpredictability of heterosexualist, male expectations of women from one moment to the next is dangerous. Women who live their lives "doing their gender right" are as likely to be beaten or raped as often as women who violate the current rules or ideals for proper gendered behavior. To talk to women who have survived battering relationships is to hear a litany of attempts to get their gendered role right in order to stop or control the violence. In these situations, even heterosexual women cannot "do gender right." Many "proper" performances never lead to the rewards Butler implies women are receiving who do gender right. I make that point to suggest that Butler's work creates too stark a difference between the ability or willingness to do gender right and sexual subversions as if the former is easily accessible to men and women and the latter more dangerous to men and women alike. It should be acknowledged that there is no symmetry between (or among) the sexes vis-a-vis the dangers of acting outside of gendered norms.

Judith Butler has developed a compelling argument for dispelling identitarian myths about gender and essentialist reinscriptions of heterosexist dualisms. I find, however, that she places too much faith in the immediacy of

appearances and too much emphasis on representation as a site of subversion. This leaves little room for discussions of history as structuring the political potential of subversive acts and the political significance of loyal acts.

Butler argues the denaturalizing performances of drag to be intrinsically subversive of the myth of the original or essential relationship between biologically sexed and gendered identity. Inspiring gender trouble with parodic performance causes the construction of gender identity to lose its foundational source of stability which is constitutive of heterosexual and heterosexist gender identity. Butler analyzes gender as the result of the experience of desire emergent from differentiation from an other (gender) in the framework of institutionalized heterosexuality. She argues that this relationship constitutes and reinforces heterosexual gender construction. Butler sees gender as an experience of desire constituted through the heterosexualist opposition of male\female. The performances she argues subvert dualist hetero-genders therefore are linked specifically to gender understood only through its constitution as heterosexual desire, as male and female. But gender is never completed through its constitution into male and female as sexes. Gender is dependent upon a grid of identificatory mechanisms, including but not limited to class, race and ethnicity, that

add up to be larger than the mere sum of their parts. We cannot linguistically represent the entirety of the effects of gendered experience. Gender is not only the aggregate of performances and habits; social identity is more than the sum of the parts of the performances in which subjects engage. Being a black woman or a white woman is not equal to the sum of performances of racial and gendered identities. One of the key issues of black feminism is the inarticulable qualities of being black women in a social world that has historically coded black as male and gender as white.⁵³ Black feminists have struggled not to use additive language for a quality of life that is different and more than the sum of those two parts. As a social identity "black womanness" exists in tension with the conceptual forms of representation available to them as subjects of experience at any given time in history. White feminists have begun to struggle with this question as well, though clearly for very different political reasons.

Butler argues that radical politics lie in particular subversive practices through which any claim to gender identity is exposed or denaturalized. While I am clearly in agreement with aspects of this critique, I do not think it adequately addresses the question embedded in all discussions of identity: that of self\other relations forged through differences. Other post-structuralist feminists who critique essentialism in feminism articulate the

complexities of struggling within multiple or webbed (as opposed to bilateral) relationships of power and domination. (Flax, 1993) Gender is a relationship and a concept which intersects other relationships and concepts in the social world, including but not limited to race and class, to sustain particular norms of behavior. However, in a radical reaction to the "exclusions" Butler argues are embedded in feminist identity politics, her interpretation abstracts the moment of parody as subversive without linking it up with the historical meanings which all performances carry with them. The cultural form Butler is politicizing always does more than subvert naturalized gender. To isolate that moment is reductive. There is a social world of perception which must be considered in relationship to particular moments. Within that world the meanings of particular moments need to be critically traced along various axes of domination and exclusionary practices. Thinking about women's experiences as localized events embedded in identity forms that simultaneously render them intelligible and limit them can avoid assuming in advance that "womanness" and modes of sexuality are defined primarily through heterosexualist interpellations rather than through race, class and other politically intertwined strategies of othering.

It is clear from the heated quality of the arguments "for and against" that there is much at stake in feminist

discussions of post-modern theory. Some have argued that post-modern feminists are in fact using alternative metanarratives (that all resistance is a discursive effect). ⁵⁴

Other feminists critical of the turn away from philosophical reflections on subjectivity and materiality follow Lukacs in claiming that while the world may be a fragmented mess of interests and relative claims to power, critical theory should not fall into acceptance of that state. According to this reading, post-modern feminist theorists are merely making the best of a bad situation in embracing fragmentation and indeterminacy in their rearticulations of politics. Women have been denied Subject status or a positioning as historical actors for too long; the triumphs of feminism are too fragile to move away from the theoretical resources that positively affirm subjectivity. In this vein, Nancy Hartsock argues that it is no accident that just as oppressed, colonized subjects are fighting their way onto the historical stage, white, European, mostly male theorists are proclaiming the Death of the Subject. (Hartsock, 1992) And Seyla Benhabib states in "Feminism and Postmodernism: An Uneasy Alliance":

What follows from this Nietzschean position is a vision of the self as a masquerading performer, except of course, we are now asked to believe that there is no self behind the mask. Given how fragile and tenuous women's sense of selfhood is in many cases, how much of a hit and miss affair their struggles for autonomy are, this reduction of female agency to a 'doing without the doer' at best appears to me to be making a virtue out of necessity. (Benhabib, 1991:140)

In other words, the role of feminism is to buttress woman's selfhood and subject status; to accept the contingencies and vagaries of (masculinist) political life as necessary is to give up ground barely even won.

However, for feminists sympathetic to post-modern theory, the crux of the political argument has to do with whether feminists are clinging to the very modalities of Enlightenment principles of the self and identity that have buttressed the historical marginalization of women and the feminine principle. Most feminists who have turned to post-modern thinking argue that we cannot create a politically and ethically effective feminism without sacrificing our search for the determinate subject\object or the immanent values of womanness. Jane Flax and Wendy Brown respond sharply to feminist hesitations in the cold light of the post-modern crisis of epistemological certainty. They argue that the commitments to truth and epistemological foundations professed by some feminists are a reactionary response to the fragmented course of the world. (Flax, 1993; Brown, 1991) Rosi Braidotti goes somewhat further with a historical argument that feminism itself is a part of the crisis of the Subject in modernity because the emergence of women as subjects necessarily deconstructs the phallogocentric norms that situated the Enlightenment subject of Reason and History. For Braidotti, post-modernity should be treated by feminists as an opportunity

rather than as a process of dissolution or a reason for despair. It is only reason for despair for those who held power on the terms of Enlightenment political orders.

(Braidotti, 1991) I think Brown and other feminists allied with post-modern theory are right; possibilities for the future lie in work done on the agonistic, conflictual, unstable sites of coalition and not on the situated, settled grounds of identity. But I have reservations traceable to their treatment of experience and history.

For example, the parodic performance may subvert essentialist commitments to particularly coded, gendered identities, but the social meanings evoked will alter the politics of the parody, even as an act. Thus, for example, white men cannot engage in performances of black women as if the differences between them are merely phenomenal or apparitional rather than historically defined. The old television show, "Amos and Andy" in which white men in black face played black men and black women, representing them through the images white America imposed on blackness, can hardly be said to be subversive of racial meanings. Rather, it reinforced them through representation. It is not only the parodic quality of the act that matters politically but the social relations as a backdrop that makes the act intelligible to an audience. ⁵⁵

If understood as social relationships rather than ontological sites or ahistorical concepts, modern identities

can be understood to be invested with meaning in a process that does, as post-modern theory argues, defy the traditional essence\appearance dichotomy of dialectics. Butler argues for the politics of appearances that parody and subvert the very idea of essences. The limit of this argument is that it does not account for the (always relational) differences between, for example, white men and black women that render the performance possible in the first place as an intelligible event. This is what I believe to be the politics of identity.

Through our critiques of the logics of organizing principles of social life, we begin to break the habits of identity thinking. As I will explain, this does not mean giving up the specificity of feminist criticism. It does mean interpreting different women's experiences as intelligible through constellational forms rather than as only other than the masculine or as fully determined by patriarchal\phallogocentric hierarchies of symbolic representation and organization of material life.

After reviewing the defenses of and attacks on identity and identity politics that have emerged over the last ten years in feminism, I have come to think that identity is too loaded, too "heavily imprinted with the footprints of metaphysics" (Caraway, 1991) to continue to be held up as a paradigmatic foundation for feminist praxis. On the other hand, I am not so optimistic as post-modern theorists about

the politics of breaking down the identitarian forms that renders the very way we speak and act in the world intelligible.

The meaning of moments of resistance like the ones Butler describes should not be separated from their historical and social context. Meaning emerges through a dialectical tension which prevents stasis on either the particular (the performance) or the social (the contextual) level. We can see a connection between the critique of identity (and therefore of standpoint feminisms that start from identity), offered by Butler and Adorno. Both recognize the dangers of reifying the "given" or the "real." And both offer ways of re-presenting critical differences among gendered experiences seen as politically loaded events rather than as necessary or inevitable realities. Butler's approach to identity as an act argues for the subversion of identity using the logics of its own self-legitimizing effects, ie. if gender is said to be essential and final, let us do our politics through practices and/or acts that parody the very idea of gender as essential and final.

Adorno's critical theory anticipates post-modern feminist critiques of identity. More than any other modernist theorist, he shows the danger of identity thinking and refuses to capitulate to any reconciled vision of the world. But unlike post-modern thinkers, even in their most political, post-structuralist incarnations, he locates the

imperatives of critical philosophy in the politicized self\other relation. Adorno's theory of the agonistic yet always already relational quality of experience allows the subject to re-cognize itself through its experience with an other.

Feminism should not retreat from the fragmentary and contingent conditions of politics. But this places all the more weight on the constellatory interpretation--on localized, immanent philosophical inquiry. The different interpretations that emerge among women about an experience apparently held in common reflect the changing shape of that moment (of the experience) that was other in its own present. We must not continue to think we "own" our experience or that we can ultimately control how they will be read or represented by other in political contests over meaning. We cannot decide in advance which events will be emancipatory, especially not if we are truly engaged in coalitional politics; but we can and should, nonetheless, strategize and plan and struggle over the terms of representation of experience and social relations. We are not expressing a settled reality when we talk about experiences; we are participating in the reconstitution and transformation of that reality.

The post-modern turn in feminist theory has shown that many of the foundational concepts of feminism repeat the epistemological and identitarian strategies that create the

terms of dominance and exclusion against which feminism claims to be struggling. For example, if feminism makes claims about representing all "women" as an abstract category, they may be reinscribing the juridical practices that disallow difference, deviance or disobedience from established norms of political life. Abstract representation of others carries with it the danger of obscuring difference and particularity. Thus feminism needs to locate itself on the discursive edges of otherwise naturalized systems of dominance like heterosexualism. Performative strategies can expose gender as a historical effect undermining its naturalized claims.

Judith Butler repeatedly admonishes feminism to be aware of its own exclusions and the paradoxes of representation. She describes the deconstructive contribution to feminist politics as follows:

I would argue that the rifts among women over the content of the term [woman] ought to be safeguarded and prized, that this constant rifting (sic) ought to be affirmed as the ungrounded ground of feminist theory. To deconstruct the subject of feminism is not, then to censure its usage, but, on the contrary, to release the term into a future of multiple significations, to emancipate it from the maternalist and racialist ontologies to which it has been restricted, and to give it play as a site where unanticipated meanings might come to bear. (Butler, 1993:16)

In Bodies That Matter, in place of feminine embodiment as ontology, Butler argues for a radical performativity that will deconstruct the foundationalist biases of feminism toward the 'reality' of women's lives. Butler relies on

Lacanian notions of the symbolics of identity and the habituated performance that is gender. Thus the body becomes relevant to politics through strategies of representation.

For example, Butler says that appeals to materiality as a grounds for feminist struggle ignore the always already historically inscribed "sex of materiality." (Butler, 1993:54-55) In other words, Butler textualizes the notion of "matter" in order to challenge feminists who would claim that the vulnerability of women's bodies and the materiality of injury determine a common political or epistemological foundation.

These challenges inspire reconsiderations of experience as a foundational concept for feminist theorizing and practice. I have argued that while we must challenge any notion of an unmediated relationship between experience and identity, we should sustain that relationship as relevant to feminist inquiry and transformative strategies. I have argued that difference is historical and relational, not textual. My arguments with Judith Butler revolve around her dismissal of experience as a qualitative moment that informs discursive (social) understanding. I discussed in chapter two an alternative way of thinking about experience that loosens its association with identity thinking while sustaining the material stakes of political struggle.

For Butler the insistence upon difference each time representationalist discourses claim to have settled identity claims is the life-blood of feminism. For Adorno, the materiality qualities of experience that defy the colonizing terms of representation are what make those differences Butler refers to significant. The excessive quality of experience, the moment of non-identity that confronts an oppressively organized object world, drives Adorno's critique. It prevents him from settling for an identity between theory and practice as it engages him in a persistent critique of dominative forms that deny extra-conceptual differences. For Adorno, identity is not a habit, it is a requirement of a world organized through abstract exchange and equivalencies. Adorno abandons the modern quest to identify the revolutionary subject of knowledge as he critiques dominative forms naturalized through the object world, or the world external to the self. However, he remains concerned with self-other relations as they are constituted through the object world, the world of creation and historical change. Adorno spends most of Negative Dialectics critiquing those philosophies that settle the subject in place prior to engagement with the object. He and Butler may agree that freedom or liberation depends upon the exposure of the constraints of identity, but Butler's thesis of performativity renders social relations, ie. how we are in the world as social beings,

insignificant. Adorno remains a modern thinker because he sustains the premise that inter-subjectivity is organized through the object world. To struggle with the terms of identity means to engage in a critique of the object world as a shared space of artifice but also of social relationships.

CHAPTER V

"WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO IS SPEAKING?" THE POLITICS OF RE-PRESENTING EXPERIENCE

In this chapter I consider contemporary feminist political strategies and practices against sexual violence in the light of some of the arguments about the politics of identity I made in earlier chapters. Sexuality has attained its ideological influence in modernity by virtue of its private and individuated status; feminism has made public the terms on which sexuality and sexual relationships actually work to sustain particular forms of male dominance. The experience and the threat of sexual violence disciplines and controls women's bodies (or those bodies marked as feminine), placing severe and often unpredictable limits on the feminine subject's action and agency. Feminism exposes those forms of private violence previously protected by ideological commitments to social non-interventionism into the (heterosexual) domestic and/or sexual sphere.⁵⁶

However, identity thinking informs feminist theorizing about sexuality and inhibits feminist strategizing against sexual violence. As I will discuss, with particular reference to arguments articulated by Catharine MacKinnon, in exposing to public scrutiny what had been hidden as private suffering, feminists claim to have discovered an immutable reality of gender relations. Radical feminists generally argue that the cultural assumptions about and

practices of sexuality offer men the socially sanctioned choice of whether to be violent or not and strip women of their sexual autonomy and physical freedoms.⁵⁷ The foundations of sexual politics are thus created by men's ability to rape, to control and to exploit women's sexuality--that which is most private and her own. The "anti-violence against women movement," as inspired by radical feminists, has set up sexual violence as a fundamental and apparently immutable source of male power. They have exaggerated the agreement dominant culture sustains in reinforcing the rules of gender. Political frameworks that explain sexual violence as a naturalized aspect of the totality that is patriarchy cannot take advantage of the complex and contradictory quality of the practices that enforce "proper" gender identity in the context of sexual politics.

How might we avoid organizing our thinking around the impermeable reality of sexual violence as a defining experience of gendered life? I will suggest that the various practices of sexual violence against women indicate the mutability of gendered identity and can be understood as moments of non-identity in an otherwise apparently stable system. Rather than arguing that sexual violence defines and proscribes women's possibilities, we ought to shift our emphasis to show how sexual violence indicates the instability of patriarchal dominance generally. At the

particular and strategic level, we can then understand feminist opposition to sexual violence not only as a defense against systemic aggression, but also as a means to expose the fissures and contradictions of gendered norms. I will argue that sexual violence demonstrates the historical mutability of patriarchal desires and heterosexualist dominance; it thus represents a moment of non-identity in gender even as it acts to enforce its rules.

In the last chapter I discussed how the desire for the real or the natural as a referent for a stable sense of gendered identity can provoke extraordinary violence. Judith Butler argues that drag as a performance is not a misogynist attack on or appropriation of women's true identity but instead is parodying the concept of the real dualities of gender. Instead of participating in the reification of the dualisms of gender by attacking drag as a violation of a true identity, feminism might reconsider its effect as a deconstructive act parodying the naturalized assumptions of gender upon which patriarchy relies. More generally, post-structuralist feminism and queer theory have argued that punitive measures against sexual deviance and the moral outcry against homosexuality indicate the historically unstable quality of heterosexualist norms--that they are not natural or immutable, but actually in need of enforcement. Similarly, sexual violence against women, in its many variations, may indicate the historically

unpredictable and unstable quality of gender identity. How might the movement against sexual violence against women take advantage of this shift in emphasis from theorizing the immutable qualities of gender to exposing the historical instability of gender identity?

In what follows, I consider the relationship between violence and power in order to better understand how sexual violence as a practice serves a political rather than a private purpose. Sexual violence is a means of social control, it enforces the norms of gender determined by variable historical contexts. Elaine Scarry's study of the relationship between subjective pain and objective social power informs my thinking about how sexual violence produces its social effects. In light of those considerations, I discuss whether some trends in the movement against sexual violence, and the theory that inspires it, reinscribe normative assumptions about gender identity which make sexual violence possible in the first place and limit the potential range of political responses.

The political imperative to give a voice to the silence of suffering drives the movement against violence against women. This process of naming and describing the experience of sexual violence from women's perspective has forced the acknowledgment of their suffering, but it also has the negative effect of further identifying women as victims who need protection and services. I agree that sexual violence

serves to enforce the dominative rules of gender identity; yet, I will argue that, as an experience, it does not offer a common reality or foundation for feminist identity. Feminism must experiment with taking the presumed realities of sexual violence apart in order to interrupt its apparently seamless effects on women's lives. Otherwise we risk reinscribing typical conceptions of femininity always already imposed on women's lives, rather than challenging and changing the various hegemonic narratives about gender which create the terrain on which sexual violence works. To be gendered female becomes a form defined by its imminent vulnerability; important variations in representations of masculine and feminine sexuality that inform the different practices of sexual violence go unmarked. Sexual violence has historically differentiated effects even as it serves to enforce masculinist dominance. Beginning our analysis cognizant of these effects, as illuminated by women's actual experiences of both victimization and resistance, may help us better envision the demobilization of masculinist dominance, rather than proceeding from an assumption of its universal effectiveness.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND MALE POWER

For the last ten years the arguments of Catharine MacKinnon have provoked intense debate about sexuality and sexual violence within feminist circles and beyond.⁵⁸ Her particular feminism is a necessary referent for any

discussion of sexual violence, because for MacKinnon, as for other radical feminists, the struggle against sexual violence is at the heart of feminist politics. MacKinnon's work attacks gender inequality under the terms of the liberal state and argues the significance of sexual violence in upholding that inequality. However, because she argues sexual violence to be both a cause and a symptom of women's sexual powerlessness her theory cannot account for the contradictory sexual messages that inform sexual behavior and desires.

"As marxist method is dialectical materialism, feminist method is consciousness raising: the collective, critical reconstitution of the meaning of women's social experience, as women live through it." (MacKinnon, 1987:83) Thus, MacKinnon introduces a discussion of consciousness-raising (CR) as the origin of feminist theory. For MacKinnon, CR is a practice that creates theory through interpreting women's experience. As a method it emphasizes discussion of the intricate patterns of the dominative social relations that women negotiate daily as gendered subjects. MacKinnon follows in the Marxist epistemological tradition of arguing that women were uncovering or revealing a reality that is otherwise distorted by the ideological forms and institutional structures created by and for the interests of men. However, the reality MacKinnon concludes women discover has not inspired an unencumbered sisterhood as it

developed social currency. The experiences that count for feminism are of suffering, of exclusion and oppression. There is scarce mention of how diverse women live their daily lives or how they negotiate sexuality and find pleasure through their sexual lives. For MacKinnon, these questions are not meaningful for feminism; in fact, she argues that the very language of negotiation is a telling sign that women are in bondage. (MacKinnon, 1987:135)

MacKinnon maintains that the realities of women's sexual suffering prove that any indication of power in their lives is created by and for men who are invested with the choice to give or take away power. As a consequence, her feminism unnecessarily limits feminist strategies to a narrow, reactive terrain populated by generic and fearful women.

MacKinnon argues that the totality of sexuality is defined by male dominance in patriarchy. The violences perpetrated by men against women govern sexual politics. For MacKinnon, under patriarchy (gender hierarchy with men on top) sex is violence and women's agency in sexual relationships goes only so far as the need for survival in the face of potential rape or coercion dictates. Sexual violence defines the possibilities of women's lives and holds male power in place. Sexual suffering will therefore create the grounds from which feminism emerges as simultaneously a collective and a collectivizing critique of the social order

Thus, in MacKinnon's analysis, feminism is what we know when we bear witness to the sexualized powerlessness of women. "The substantive principle governing the authentic politics of women's personal lives is pervasive powerlessness to men, expressed and reconstituted daily as sexuality." (MacKinnon, 1987:120) Women's sexual powerlessness identifies her as woman. She is the object of desire, never the objectifier. She is literally the prey of the forces of objectification.

For MacKinnon, then, sexual experiences are something given to women at the hands of men. If projected into the world by women, sexual politics reflect a singular reality or truth, which is that women are powerless in relationship to men and are always potentially victims of male power. MacKinnon's version of consciousness-raising as a feminist method does not reconfigure self-other relations through the philosophical or analytical examination of experience. Rather, it engages in that project in the service of 'discovering' the truth of women's powerlessness, which is always already there in spite of who might be in the room and in spite of power relations that may in fact be determining the shape of discourse as it emerges in the group. Thus, consciousness-raising groups, or feminist methods as theorized by MacKinnon, do not hold potential as counter-hegemonic sources of knowledge about the world or power; they are, rather, merely places from which to

discover women's lack of power. She does not take power relations within the group into account as a central concern of feminism. The truth of sexual suffering is waiting to be revealed as common to all women.

How is sexual suffering the reality of female sexuality? MacKinnon argues that sexuality is not pre-social or pre-political. It is in the world at the behest of the patriarchal order. Thus, feminists who argue that women must experiment or rediscover the sex that has been denied them by a repressive society, or who argue that pornography and rape is 'violence' but not necessarily sex, are wrongly assuming that there is something called female sexuality in the world, even if it is alienated or repressed.⁵⁹ For MacKinnon, that phrase expresses an impossibility. Sexuality is what masculinist culture wants and has the power to unilaterally create, therefore, 'female sexuality' is what men want. The violence that is rape and pornography is female sexuality. To argue otherwise is to not see the reality that confronts women everyday as victims of the pervasive threat of sexual violence. Sexuality is made, not given, but it is made through masculinist violence. (cf. Brownmiller, 1976)

Sexuality, in feminist light, is not a discrete sphere of interaction or feeling or sensation or behavior in which preexisting social divisions may or may not be played out. It is a pervasive dimension of social life, one that permeates the whole... Dominance eroticized defines the imperative of its masculinity, submission eroticized defines its femininity... sexual

difference is a function of sexual dominance.
(MacKinnon, 1987:130)

In this analysis, sexuality (as a practice but also as a constitutive difference among women) as a realm of possibility is obscured by its reduction to male desire. Sex is gendered dominance, and race and class relations are insignificant in the context of feminist politics. None of these historical moments of experience and difference matter for MacKinnon's 'unmodified' feminism.

While she places women's experience at the center of what feminist theory should be, MacKinnon argues it is in the world only at the whim of all-powerful men. In her feminism, women become the objects of male desire. MacKinnon's feminism hands reality over to male power, placing feminism in the outsider position of bearing witness to a male standard.⁶⁰ How feminism is to engage in the reconstitution of this 'reality' witnessed through critique is never made clear but confused by the leap from the particularity of women's experience to the universality of women's lives, as defined by a monolithic male power.

MacKinnon thus presents us with the paradox that, on the one hand, feminism as a political theory should be immanent to women's experience, while on the other hand, feminism only emerges when the qualities of the monolithic reality that is gender dominance have been established and fundamentally agreed upon. MacKinnon assumes that women's

lives are only perceived as different until they engage in consciousness-raising, when the similarities will become apparent. She assumes a pre-discursive reality which women must discover, that of sexual suffering, but fails to acknowledge the meaning of that sentient experience as contested--even among women. ⁶¹

I argue that we should not displace the quality of sexuality in itself, including sexual suffering, from the contested space it occupies among women. Deciding once and for all what the 'reality' of sex is turns it inward as a site of 'truth' rather than projecting its claims outward to be contested and politically significant. The social significance of female sexuality is thus rendered through its vulnerability and dependence on male power rather than through its potential for constitutive public power. In MacKinnon's epistemological framework, we have to 'know' sexuality in a form determined by patriarchy in order to 'be' feminist. She describes sexuality as "that which is most her (a woman's) own," comparing it to the creative practice of work in Marxian theory as that which is most essential to the being of the worker. For MacKinnon "[w]omen's sexuality is, socially, a thing to be stolen, sold, bought, bartered, or exchanged by others. The moment women 'have' it--'have sex' in the dual gender/sexuality sense--it is lost as theirs. To have it is to have it taken away." (MacKinnon, 1987:172) In other words, MacKinnon

makes sexuality the defining moment of woman's life then tells her she never had it. She says men respond to women's sexual pain only to eroticize it. Putting women in pain defines the terms on which male sexuality thrives.

MacKinnon then 'proves' her point by pointing to the empirical reality that is the prevalence of sexual violence against women. In other words, violence is sex for men because sexual violence is so prevalent. And, when men are not violent in sex, it is only because the woman is saving herself through 'consenting'. That consent cannot be 'real' in MacKinnon's world. The barrier that is gender dominance is unidimensional and impermeable. Sexual violence is both a cause and a symptom of women's sexual powerlessness.

To effectively confront sexual violence, feminism requires a less systemic theory that can take differences among women into account as it argues the logic of sexual violence. We should theorize sexual violence in such a way that encourages us to see in it the particularities of a constellation of concrete effects, none of which should be placed as the determinant moment, but each of which is critical to understanding the experience. In what follows, I outline an approach that contributes to an oppositional sexual politics but does not rely on the universal agreement among women about the social meaning of their common victimization at the hands of men as a pre-condition of feminist politics.

Setting up the pain of sexual violence as the reality of women's lives renders MacKinnon's feminism complicit in the reification⁶² of that reality. It offers patriarchy the status of reality; it sacrifices the significance of women's experience as it collapses their differences into sameness for theoretical and political efficiency. Maleness also has no differences in MacKinnon's theory. Maleness becomes the undifferentiated 'reality' against which feminism can be. (Tong, 1991) This logic thrives as the 'truth' of sexuality rendering irrelevant any possibility of difference. This theory conflates sexual dominance with gender and the resulting totality with the impossibility of female sexuality. This causes feminism to abandon strategic thinking about experience in favor of identity politics. It implies an eventual withdrawal into a politics of protectionism (of the feminized body) when the social world does not adequately respond to the articulations of suffering.⁶³

Setting up the fact of sexual violence and the experience of sexual suffering as essential limits on women's possibilities for being in the world participates in the reification of an undifferentiated masculinist dominance. Empathic responses to women's suffering and insistence on the solidarity generated by the claim that 'it could happen to any of us' participate in conferring a monolithic reality onto what I will argue is better

understood as a contested, fragile, even phantasmatic edifice of masculinist dominance. Patriarchy is not univocal or monolithic in its project of dominance as MacKinnon implies. It reinvents itself and the (contradictory) terms of its legitimating cultural scripts in the face of historical shifts in gender relations.

Can we rethink the relationship between violence and power in such a way that recognizes the immanent contradictions and differentiated forms of masculinist dominance without abstracting from the actual experience and pain of sexual violence? Elaine Scarry's discussion of the underlying structures of torture inspired my exploration of this possibility.⁶⁴ Her analysis of the relationship between the infliction of physical pain and the substantive reality of political power suggests a critical perspective on the practices of sexual violence. I conceptualize sexual violence as a practice deployed in the name of stabilizing the otherwise fragile edifice of masculinist power--creating its fictions but also perpetuating its material effects in the world. Scarry offers a materialist perspective on the matter of physical pain and power. Materialist philosophy has taken many different forms often indebted to but not necessarily identical with Marxist versions. Some materialist thinking invokes determinist theories that say consciousness is determined by our situatedness vis-a-vis production in the social world. It often disallows thinking

about consciousness separately from historical conditions of production. In feminism, materialist theory has moved far beyond these limits. Previously, I discussed the materialist grounding of 'standpoint feminisms.' That area of feminism has sustained a link between theory and the material conditions of everyday life as necessary to politics. For example, Donna Haraway negotiates a complex theoretical path between determinist theory that says our material circumstance forms our potential for consciousness and post-modern rejections of any correspondence between social conditions of production and radical subjectivity. Her 'Cyborg feminist' suggests the possibility of a feminism in spite of the contradictory and substantively material effects of modern epistemic demands on subjectivity.

(Haraway, 1991) Rosemarie Hennessey's work describes the potential for understanding feminism as a concrete intervention into the 'interdiscourses' that weave the material lives of women into particular forms in the service of patriarchal desire. (Hennessey, 1993) Other contemporary materialist theories have invoked the materiality of cultural forms in arguing for the 'concrete effects' of discursive and semiotic constructions on social life.

(DeLauretis, 1987)

Scarry is a materialist in that she argues the social world is constituted through objects.⁶⁵ She reads the social world through reading its relationship to material

objects. Her discussions of those moments we take for granted on a daily basis (the reliance on a chair to hold us upright and our responses when it 'fails' in its task) bring the object world to life as it signifies the creativity immanent in social relations. (Scarry, 1985:296) She does not argue that objective structures and conditions form consciousness but discusses in a more limited fashion how they signify the necessary sociality of the human condition. She argues that assuming a shared object world allows us to 'work on' the shared problem of sentience and human experience. (ibid. 291)

For Scarry, human beings require the object world as a space of mediation in order to share experience. If a feeling (an experience) has no object that is other to itself, it is intrinsically non-social. It cannot simply emerge into the social world through language but will resist linguistic representation. Pain is such a feeling. Thus it is implicated in her work for its potential to 'unmake' the human world. We tend to think of pain as something inward and subjective; as apolitical in-itself but perhaps useful for obtaining political ends. Putting others in pain or enduring pain is sometimes used as a means to a political end. But the pain in itself rarely sustains scrutiny except as a means to an end such as a confession in torture sessions, a victory in warfare, or getting another person to do what you want them to do. Scarry, however,

through considering the quality of pain in itself, shows how it is in itself related to the sustenance of power. It is not only a means to an end but through its intrinsic qualities can be translated into power when put to political purposes. Scarry's discussions of the structure of torture and of war offer insight into why the infliction of injury has not withered as a tool of political dominance even as modern forms of power become more sophisticated. ⁶⁶

Scarry argues that pain has a unique relationship to power. The infliction of pain is not the result of the 'failure' of politics or of negotiations between or among parties; while not necessary to power, pain has a logic unto itself which may be useful to power. ⁶⁷ Unlike every other experience we associate with feeling--- desire, love, distaste--- pain has no object to which it refers. It therefore resists objectification in description or in explanation. Scarry asserts that pain may be the one instance where one person, she who is in pain, experiences something like absolute certainty and another, she who listens and even tries to empathize, experiences something like absolute doubt. Sentient beings may all experience pain, but it resists representation because it has no object external to the self.⁶⁸

Physical pain not only resists representation but actively works to destroy language. It exists in a destructive tension with our ability to communicate. In

spite of countless historical examples to the contrary, we often assume that if we tell the world of pain it will respond to the truth or the fact of the experience and progressively eliminate pain. Scarry argues that the resistance of pain to representation in language renders that representation all the more significant for politics. Specifically, Scarry discusses torture as a ritualized, political use of pain in light of her thesis about the radical subjectivity and inwardness of the experience of pain.

Scarry asserts the radical subjectivity of pain and hence its absolute incompatibility with the object world. Pain destroys the object world as it has existed in its normal social forms for the victim. In torture, when objects are transformed as instruments to inflict pain, the prisoner's world is systematically and ritualistically destroyed; she is separated from the objects in the world, material and ideological, as their comforting normalcy is subverted through the use of them as torture weapons. Her contact with objects and ideas is no longer sure or safe. Her inner world of pain removes her from them. The prisoner not only loses her sense of place and/or identity, but as she speaks the words of the torturer in confession as an effect of her pain, the world sees her as split off from what made her real outside the torture chamber. Those who confess are identified as betrayors, as weak. Even those

with a strong sense of empathy may not avoid having a sense of disappointment in the prisoner for speaking. This tendency conspires to enlarge the world of the torturer and thus the power of the regime he represents. (Scarry, 1985:29-32)

There is a different kind of politics attached to the body in Scarry's work. With the body as referent, she suggests a humanistic thesis. The body comes to matter in its complex sentient relationship to the world, not as an object of pity (as victim) nor as an object of pure sentience, but as an object of political inscription as we confront what she calls 'the problems of sentience.' The body is a potential site of creativity and pleasure in relation to the object world, or of unmaking and suffering as that relationship is distorted through the infliction of injury. Torture distorts the bodily relationship to the object world, dissolving the boundary between inside and outside the body through using the victim's body against them as a weapon. It becomes a weapon, separate from the self:

Each source of strength and delight, each means of moving out into the world or moving the world in to oneself, becomes a means of turning the body back in on itself, forcing the body to feed on the body: the eyes are only access points for scorching light, the ears for brutal noises; eating, the act at once so incredible and so simple in which the world is literally taken into the body, is replaced by rituals of starvation ...The prisoner's body--in its physical strengths, in its sensory powers, in its needs and wants, in its ways of self-delight, and finally even, as here, in its small and moving gestures of friendship

toward itself--is, like the prisoner's voice, made a weapon against him, made to betray him on behalf of the enemy, made to be the enemy. (Scarry, 1985:48)

The victim's pain defines her in relationship to the torturer. She is intensely alone without the safety of solitude. She is simultaneously intensely exposed, but denied the comraderie associated with being in public. ⁶⁹ It is through the falsification and denial of the victim's pain that torturers work to translate pain into an emblem of a regime's strength. The enlarged map of human suffering (the extension through objects of torture and proclaimed motivations for torture) becomes the insignia of power. The totalizing pain inflicted by a torturer resists representation, destroying the victim's language and radically altering their relationship to the object world, or their former reality. Thus Scarry acknowledges the 'reality' of pain as it works to defeat language and therefore the terms on which objective social power can be sustained.

Scarry's immediate moral and political concern is with pain as it is deployed to reinforce the reality of otherwise illegitimate and even phantasmatic power. She describes how torturers use ritualized practices to inflict pain that in destroying the world of the prisoner virtually create the world of the state. The quality of an 'incontestable reality' of the physical pain inflicted upon the victim is conferred upon the regime as an incontestable proof of its

stability and reality. In addition, the fear of others about the threat of real pain confers a reality onto state power. If we think of states and societies as existing in a relationship of negotiated power, torture becomes a weapon of the state with very specific and rationalized effects. Torture engages in "the conversion of absolute pain into the fiction of absolute power..." (Scarry, 1985:27) That is, torture may be understood to signify the weakness of the regime while, at the same time, it is used as a means to confer reality on the power of the regime.

Torture is thus simultaneously at the extreme edges of the negotiation that is politics and central to state power in modernity. Rather than talking about torture only as an arbitrary instrument of barbaric or irrational regimes, Scarry talks about it as a ritualized process by which regimes confer an incontestable 'reality' onto their presence in people's lives.

In the very processes it uses to produce pain within the body of the prisoner, it bestows visibility on the structure and enormity of what is usually private and incommunicable, contained within the boundaries of the sufferer's body. It then goes on to deny, to falsify, the reality of the very thing it has itself objectified by a perceptual shift which converts the visions of suffering into the wholly illusory but, to the torturers and the regime they represent, wholly convincing spectacle of power. The physical pain is so incontestably real that it seems to confer its quality of 'incontestable reality' on that power that has brought it into being. It is, of course, precisely because the reality of that power is so highly contestable, the regime so unstable, that torture is being used. (Scarry, 1985:27)

The argument that pain resists and even destroys the 'normalcy' of expressing feeling to the world is important to feminist arguments and struggles around sexual violence. Scarry's discussion of torture resonates in women's testimonies of life with male batterers where every object in the home becomes a potential weapon and the home spaces that should offer safety become associated with danger and prolonged punishment. It also speaks to the stories rape victims tell of alienation from their own bodies after their bodies are turned into objects as sexual weapons against themselves. For Scarry, the underlying structure of the infliction of injury, which renders a victim's pain as a perpetrator's power, illuminates the solipsistic relationship between sexual violence and masculinist power.

Scarry's discussion of the silence of pain faintly echoes Adorno's critique of representation. For Adorno, suffering in-itself resists representation. As we struggle to represent it, we risk reducing its specificity to prior social understandings, thereby normalizing suffering or even rendering it falsely heroic as a signifier of what it means to be a victim. The impulse to impose externally derived meaning on the radically subjective experience of suffering reduces the memory of experience by controlling it for purposes of collective representation. The non-identity of the event, the moment of suffering that resists

representation, the irrational otherness of experience, is repressed, forgotten or actively ignored. In other words, we risk the rationalization of suffering as we objectify experience. Scarry does not condemn this impulse to represent suffering as does Adorno; instead she makes the connection between the silence of pain and the institutionalization of torture in modernity and tries to capture the politics embedded in efforts to represent pain. The absence of language for pain allows pain to be transferred from its originary site in the body and reappropriated to substantiate fictions of power.

Scarry's analysis suggests that we might understand the practices of sexual violence as a systemic response to the limits of patriarchy and to the fact that it can never establish its power once and for all. Its constitutive limits require the violent disciplining of women's bodies. Sexual violence thus signifies the limits of patriarchal power, rather than its real authority or totalizing power over women as a system. Its prevalence shows just how much is invested by masculinist culture in sustaining the reality of sexual violence as a threat against women and in constituting its devastating effects on women's bodies as absolute.⁷⁰ It has been argued that sexual violence is the means by which men can control the sexual 'otherness' and potentially threatening powers of women; that men live in fear of the feminine principle as something that undermines

their sense of place in the world and use sexual violence to undermine the power of the feminine. But my discussion does not assume in advance the immanent or essential power of women as women. It is limited to arguing the relationship between the infliction of sexual suffering and the social power wielded by men.

As I discussed above, the expectation that the experience of sexual suffering is transparently accessible to representation and that there are gains to be had in the articulation of that experience has been central to the politics of radical feminist struggles against sexual violence. This runs the very real risk of undermining the efforts of feminism to reinvent women as differentiated sexual subjects through setting them up as sexual sufferers in the public contest over sexual practices. Radical feminist assertions about the univocal truth of sexual violence focuses our attention on arguing about the truth of radically subjective experience which in itself resists representation, while ignoring the historically specific qualities of the practice itself. This argument does not elide men's responsibility for hearing and responding to women's experiences; rather, it suggests that there are cognitive limits embedded in the (political) process of representing experience, particularly the experience of other-inflicted pain, even when that pain is related to or contrasted to sexual pleasure and desire.⁷¹ If, as we

struggle to give voice to the otherwise invisible pain of sexual violence, we identify the inarticulable specificity of sexual pain with male power, we risk collusion with that power. Radical feminists rightly argue that sexual violence is systemic and political and must be named as such. However, they take the further step of arguing that sexual violence represents the totality of male power. This move is offered to counter liberal/individualist perspectives that say sexual violence is an aberration from the norm and who place the burden of proof on the individual victim to show that she did not 'want it.' The importance of Scarry's discussion of the structure of torture and the relationship between pain and power is to show that we do not have to reverse the terms of the dominant understanding (sexual violence is not a sign of an aberrant sexuality but a totalizing condition of sexuality) in order to argue that it is political. For Scarry, the experience of pain undermines a victim's objective social power; similarly, the experience of sexual violence has undermined women's objective social power. I have imported Scarry's ideas about the relationship between pain and power to argue that sexual violence simultaneously indicates and disguises the limits of masculinist power. However, I push her analysis beyond its original framework to argue that sexual violence can become a politicized site of potential reversal and subversion of patriarchal fictions about power rather than

an 'inevitability' which signifies the powerlessness of women as objects of male desire and violence.⁷²

REFLECTION ON OPPOSITIONAL STRATEGIES

Movements against sexual violence have become visible and, to a limited extent, legitimate in the United States. The pervasiveness of sexual violence, and its status as a public rather than a private problem, has been recognized through the feminist struggle to place women's perspectives on, and concrete claims about sexual violence in front of the public by litigation, academic research and grassroots education. However, the present character of the increasingly institutionalized anti-violence movement offers a complex field on which to continue to struggle against sexual violence. Women are still put in the position of proving on individual grounds that they are indeed 'proper' victims (Estrich, 1982) and of proving themselves worthy of the 'justice' and related services the state has to offer. Legal, psychological and therapeutic discourses have displaced feminist critique as general frameworks through which sexual violence is understood. (Fraser, 1989) The particular social and political logic of sexual violence is underestimated even while legal and psychological remedies proliferate. This is in part due to the emphasis of these social scientific strategies which tends to be on understanding the victim's responses. This, in itself, would not be a problem, but for the fact that it focuses

attention on establishing the truth of the victim's subjective experience of suffering at the expense of studying and arguing about the history and politics of sexual violence as a social phenomenon.

In other words, society has figured out different ways to treat women as victims--to react to sexual violence--but there has not been an adequate focus on meaningful strategies of prevention. Andrea Benton Rushing supports this insight in her personal account of her survival strategies in the aftermath of rape. She describes tactful doctors, helpful rape counsellors and non-judgemental police. She reports that in the South, in a case of a black man raping a black woman, the police and doctors were all quite sensitive and treated her as a 'proper' victim rather than as a participant in the act. She comes to the conclusion, however, that while this may indicate systematic improvement in the institutionalized treatment of victims, it does not indicate any ideas about how to stop rape. (Rushing,1994:130) Rushing also speaks to the contradictory ways the experience of rape continued to define her life in the aftermath. The experience was something she could neither heal from through 'rationally' reconstructing her daily life nor something she could transcend through drawing on the significant resources her community had to offer. While her narrative is inconclusive, her story is not of a woman who becomes a victim, but of an event that sets in

motion a process that inexorably and unpredictably changes the terms on which she can live her life.

Matters are further complicated by the fact that sexual violence as a practice is subject to historical and contextual shifts in meaning. As I discussed above, it is not an experience to which feminism can safely refer as a common reality binding women into a politicized group across or in spite of time, race, class and other differences. We should approach theorizing about sexual violence with the same suspicions about ontology and identity thinking as we have other questions about women's lives. This will further theory that starts feminist critique from differences among women rather than 'including' difference as relevant but not fundamentally constitutive of feminism. I have argued that feminists should remain consistently aware of the costs of any struggle organized around the singularity of 'woman' as an identity. In the context of sexual violence, it ignores the ways race and class relations change the stakes and outcomes of speaking out about experience. The politics of struggle against sexual violence are not self-contained in gender but intersected by race, class and sexual relationships and meanings, which must be taken into account at the start.⁷³ Thinking about the practices of sexual violence as signifying the limits of an internally contradictory and historically differentiated patriarchal system moves us in this direction. For example, the

totalizing theory of gender dominance suggested by MacKinnon as an explanation for sexual violence does not adequately account for the multiple 'realities' of women lives as they negotiate sexual politics.

Further, the politics of representation persistently interferes with any effort to comprehend the experiential 'truth' of sexual violence. Feminists have often assumed the courtroom to be a conflictual but nonetheless effective place to communicate and educate the social world about sexual violence. However, as Kristen Bumiller shows in her analysis of the trial of several men who committed a gang rape in a public bar, legal discourse tends to have the contradictory effect of rendering the experience of sexual assault as an individual tragedy without illuminating the social truths about power embedded in the particular experience of sexual violence. (Bumiller, 1989) Therapeutic discourse focuses on the response of the victims rather than shifting our attention to the social pathologies of sexual violence. It focuses on patterns in women's responses and while valuable in helping society recognize the post-traumatic stress associated with sexual assault, renders it an illness that must be healed rather than an injustice that must be prevented.

Psychological and legal discourses about domestic violence represent women's responses to violence as irrational.⁷⁴ The woman herself is therefore not

considered an authoritative source for the interpretation of her own experience. (Schneider, 1986) The meaning of her experience is left to experts as they dissect her responses. This tends to further mystify the 'realities' of the violence perpetrated against her. 'Expert testimony' in the trials of battered women who kill or attack their abusers may help to educate the public as to the prevalence and patterns of sexual violence. However, the terms of its admissibility in court have been shown to be organized around the imperative to prove the woman psychologically incapable of 'normal' actions and therefore less than rational in her response to violence. (Schneider, 1986) Historically, rape had been assumed, legally, to be intercourse until the woman successfully could prove she resisted. Similarly, domestic violence is assumed to be a private and gender neutral affair until it is successfully proven that women are made (temporarily) crazy by abuse.⁷⁵ In a strange twist, the woman's illness is necessary to prove the prolonged character of the violence.

These discourses obscure women's experiences as they limit political strategies to the terms offered by the liberal state.⁷⁶ The struggle over whose experience counts in the legal and psychological discussions has brought women's experience of sexual violence into the public sphere as a recognizable phenomenon. Women now have an expanded language to describe what has happened to them, which the

police, courts and social service system must respond to. Mandatory arrest statutes for batterers, the general admissability of 'expert testimony' and increased shelter space for women escaping violence are all significant changes. As Andrea Benton-Rushing describes, rape victims, particularly in the context of stranger rape, are often treated with more respect and have a language with which to demand attention to the rape as a crime. However, as I have pointed out, these changes do not necessarily shift the assumptions about gendered identity that organize the terms on which men continue to commit sexual violence.⁷⁷ The research assumes a binary model of gender identity without taking into account differences in cultural and historical contexts.

I would argue that feminists need to look more carefully at the particulars of gender identity in the context of race, class and sexual differences and make connections through those considerations to the phenomenon of sexual violence. Otherwise, as the social scripts of gender relations are rewritten in efforts against sexual violence, the actual women who are raped and battered will continue to be excluded as interpretive subjects of their own experience.

Elaine Scarry's argument about the relationship between physical violence and social power suggests that we conceptualize the practice of sexual violence as signifying

the limits rather than the source of male power. Can we then take this shift in emphasis to suggest strategies that demobilize rather than respond to the social forces that engender sexual violence? Asserting the 'reality' of suffering does not make the representations of it any less problematic in a social world organized through abstract systems of identity and exchange. In fact, as I argued above, it risks collusion with masculinist power.

Shifting our focus away from the totalizing logic of patriarchy means paying attention to women's varied means of resisting, negotiating and finding pleasure in sexual politics as well as to her victimization. Women are never only passive objects of sexualized violence. How might we begin to break down the forms of gender identity which create the terms on which sexual violence does its damage? How might we avoid the therapeutic inscription of women as less than rational actors, or the legal inscription of women as victims, in fighting sexual violence? It is necessary, although not sufficient, to 'include' women in the courtroom battles and the social service systems as authoritative sources of the truth about their experiences. We have to take a step away from our focus on remedying the effects of violence and look at strategies of prevention. *

* It is important to note here that the discussion that follows is specifically about rape, not about intimate violence or about sexual harassment in the workplace. Some of the insights about the discursive constructions of women's bodies may be helpful to developing a similar

Scarry's argument about the relationship between pain and power suggests the risks feminism takes in identifying women's pain with male power. How might we take advantage of the insight that sexual violence simultaneously enforces and indicates the limits of male dominance? I argue this suggests a feminist strategy that includes the creation of counter-hegemonic modes of representation for the experience of sexual violence. The relationship between gendered identity (masculinity and femininity) and sexual violence changes. Even if we do not reveal a truth about gender identity through the critique of sexual violence we do participate in shifting the socially constructed terms of gender identity that inform how sexual violence does its damage. I have criticized the tendency of feminist strategies to focus on understanding and articulating the pain of sexual violence. I borrowed some ideas from Elaine Scarry to suggest why that approach has not stopped men from raping and beating women. I have not addressed specifically those feminists who strategize to prevent sexual violence. I am not going to review the extensive feminist literature on separatist strategies or the 'pro-woman' theories which argue an essential difference between women and men vis-a-vis violence. Instead, I will discuss this question from a post-structuralist perspective because I think it

discussion about those kinds of violence. But, as I will discuss, the strategic implications for action do not apply in the same way.

contributes to a non-identitarian approach which I suggested Scarry's warnings about reinvesting women's pain in male power imply.

Post-structuralist feminist theory contends that gender dominance is enacted through language and discursive strategies. As a response, it seeks to identify the political efficacy of challenging the discursively constitutive habits of gendered life.⁷⁸ How might this approach contribute to strategic opposition to the systemic logic and particular realities of sexual violence? Does it further the project of demobilizing male dominance? In an essay about how feminism might rethink the politics of rape prevention, Sharon Marcus argues from a post-structuralist perspective that the experience of rape should be understood as culturally scripted or encoded. She argues that the 'success' of rape is dependent upon a sequence of events, not on the biological or historically determined powers of men to possess women at their will.

Marcus appropriates insights from post-structuralist theory to argue that the linguistic habits through which masculine and feminine identities are enacted create the terrain on which sexual violence takes place. From this perspective, she goes on to argue that rape as an engendered practice might be understood as a culturally scripted interaction, rather than an inevitable reality. Her approach treats sexual violence as a variable practice of

dominance rather than as an immutable reality of gendered identity. She argues that feminist strategies focus too much on the experience of a rape that has already happened and its effects on women's lives and too little on how to strategically demobilize masculinist cultural processes that enable rape.

Feminist theorists have named the experience of rape as the 'reality' which disproves post-structuralist arguments about the discursive production of subjects and experience.

⁷⁹ Marcus argues that this insistence reflects a general tendency to name rape as an irreducible reality in-itself. She argues that this guarantees that the rape will always have already happened before the social world is held to account.

To treat rape simply as one of [quoting Mary Hawkesworth] ... 'the realities that circumscribe women's lives' can mean to consider rape as terrifyingly unnameable and unrepresentable, a reality that lies beyond our grasp and which we can only experience as grasping and encircling us. In its efforts to convey the horror and iniquity of rape, such a view often concurs with masculinist culture in its designation of rape as a fate worse than or tantamount to, death; the apocalyptic tone which it adopts implies that rape can only be feared or legally repaired, not fought. (Marcus, 1993:387)

Marcus goes on to discuss feminist anti-rape literature that advises caution in avoiding sites where rape might happen and against resistance in the event that it does happen.⁸⁰ If women took the advice of most rape-prevention manuals to heart, they would live lives of utter caution and

defensiveness in the interest of protecting their bodies from violation.

I think the most profound insight in Marcus' discussion is how easily talk of the 'reality' of rape slides into an assumption of the 'inevitability' of rape. Feminist insistence on the 'reality' of rape as a foundation for political action serves only to reify the inevitability of the physical act by eliding its socially constructed nature (i.e, Marcus' "script"). Marcus tells us that men's bodies become weapons and tools of violence and women's bodies become objects of violence; there is nothing intrinsic or ahistorical or natural about the differential in male/female recourse to or capacity for violence. She advises women to understand themselves as subjects of violence, not just in practicing reactive self-defense techniques, but through aggressively intervening in any cultural and linguistic inscription of their bodies as always already rapable. She also argues against collapsing all offensive sex talk, including harrassment, into the category of 'rape.' This implies that there is no space for intervention in male defined sexual politics; feminist strategies are thus left to focus on proving the violence of the event after the fact. (Marcus, 1993:389)

Marcus argues that thinking of rape as a cultural production expands the opportunities for intervention before and during the act which can actually prevent rape rather

than assuming the rape to already have happened upon the entrance of a rapist. Disrupting rapists' assumptions of their own omnipotence and their victims' passivity is a key, argues Marcus, to preventing rape. Her argument is supported by the empirical work of Pauline Bart and Patricia O'Brien who studied rape prevention strategies and conclude that women who fight back immediately and use the widest range of strategies, defensive and offensive, are most likely to avoid rape. (Bart and O'Brien, 1985:33-57)

Marcus' discussion argues for the denaturing of the sexual aspect of sexual violence so that it might be 'read' as a script and thereby interrupted. MacKinnon's construction of female sexuality as a thing of male desire inhibits this kind of interruption because, in her understanding, sexuality is violence. In other words, for a woman, the 'success' of rape in its outcome as sexual satisfaction for the man is as inevitable as the punch in the nose during a male bar brawl. The vulnerability of the sexual does not enter into MacKinnon's theoretical framework. However, the research by Bart and O'Brien shows how women who respond in aggressive ways not traditionally associated with feminine behavior are more likely to avoid rape. This implies rapists have particular expectations which can be interrupted as feminism successfully exposes them. Women who subvert what Marcus calls "the gendered

grammars of violence" (Marcus, 1993:393) are more likely to escape or fend off aggression.

Relevant to the question about the sexual in sexual violence is the debate that has gone on within feminism about the relationship between sex and violence in rape. In the 1970's, in order to emphasize the criminality of rape, feminists argued that rape is an act of violence, not of sex. This was in response to sexist assumptions about how rape is really just rough sex, or that women 'enjoy' being forced and say 'no' to communicate 'yes.' Feminists argued that what may feel sexual to men is in reality an act of violence against women. In 1977 Michel Foucault added a twist to arguments about the criminal violence of rape, suggesting that rape should be decriminalized and, thereby, juridically "desexualized" so that civil penalties could be levied commensurate with other acts of civil harm.

Foucault's motivating concern was that the surveillance of sex and the investments of the state in regulating sex are encouraged through the criminalization of rape as a sexual crime.⁸¹ Feminists responded that his strategy ignored the fundamentally gendered quality of rape and that they were not interested in protecting sexuality, ie. male-defined sexuality, from the regulating mechanisms of the state. They argued rape is a fundamentally different kind of crime, one that places women or any femininized subject in the subordinate position, unlike being punched in the

nose. (Plaza, 1978) Their discussion shifted the terms of debate once again to argue that rape is violence against women even as it is sexual for men. Desexualizing rape would leave its utility for enforcing gender dominance in place; women may receive financial compensation for their injuries, but society would not recognize the specificity and difference of the crime of rape as an act that enforces masculinist dominance.

I agree that rape is different because it functions to differentiate masculinity from the feminine; but another reason to recognize rape as sexual is that it renders it all the more fragile.⁸² Sexuality has a complex, and, even if deeply embedded, nonetheless permeable script attached which is quite different than the scripts of generalized violences people commit outside of the terms of gender and sex. Male sexuality is not monolithic or self-assured. The drive to rape ought to be shown to be a signifier of the contradictions immanent in masculinist conceptions of sexuality and not only significant in demonstrating their dominance over women as gendered beings.

In a survey conducted by MS Magazine in the 1980's, men and women were asked what they feared the most from the opposite sex. Women responded that what they feared most was being killed. Men responded that what they feared most was being laughed at. If we can get beyond our horror at what this tells us about the different fears men and women

live with, we can take advantage of the insight it offers into gender relations. Emphasizing the fragility of the male erection in the context of sexual violence may or may not lead to an escalation of violence.⁸³ But if women are thinking about the collapse of the penis as a possibility rather than assuming the inevitability of penetration, the possibilities for subverting the rapist's script internal to the event itself are multiplied.

Thus, the strategic implications of Marcus' criticism of feminist insistence on the 'reality' of rape as it proscribes women's lives are important to consider. However, there are limits to her argument. She assumes sexual violence is like a confrontation between autonomous subjects rather than an event more often embedded in a relationship. It is common knowledge now that the vast majority of rapes are committed by men the victims know or are acquainted with and that women who are battered are not only forced to have sex but are subjected to a very complex environment of intimidation, threat and physical violence. (Brown, 1984; Walker, 1984) Even Bart and O'Brien note that women have a difficult time differentiating between 'consensual' sex and aggression during the relationship--which is not the same as saying that women do not know if they have been raped. The point is that given the complexities of sexual politics, sexual violence is not only confrontational but relational. Generalizing about sexual violence through the image of

stranger rape again reduces the complexity of the phenomenon and the difficulties in representing it to the social world. Feminists have shown the tension immanent to the relationship between the experiences of sexual violence and the conflicting representations of it which then produce hegemonic narratives that conceptually organize our experiences. The question of how sexual violence is to be re-presented in the political process of educating the social world (including women) as to its prevalence and to its terms of existence is not resolved by breaking it into its component parts as a linguistic event.

In addition, we experience our bodies through social relationships in ways unavailable to discourse. The sum of linguistic strategies will not add up to the truth about those experiences, though we can shift perceptions and common interpretations of them over time. Marcus' argument to deconstruct the rape script implies a prior analysis of the whole in which that script is embedded.⁸⁴

Theorizing sexual violence with an eye towards the non-representability of sexual pain shifts our focus to the naturalized social truths embedded in the event itself. Radical feminists have argued that sexual violence is systemic and political. They then take another step of arguing that it represents the totality of male power. As I have said, this is to counter liberal perspectives that say it is an aberration from the norm and place the burden of

proof on the victim to show that she did not 'want it.' But we don't have to reverse the terms of dominant understandings (sexual violence is not a sign of an aberrant sexuality but a totalizing condition of sexuality) in order to argue the prevalence of sexual violence.

Representing sexuality requires a certain level of objectification, which is not necessarily anathema to feminist theorizing about sex. Sexuality may thus become a terrain for renewed discussion in feminism about self-other relationships that do not rely on a presumed identity between or among women as suffering, gendered or sexed subjects. We can build alternative modes of representation for understanding sexual violences in their specificity without assuming dualist models for gender identity. We can create counter-hegemonic modes of representation which will not be static and enclose women in the identity of potential victim.

Essentializing sex as the 'being' of woman colludes with identity discourses that obscure differences among women vis-a-vis sexuality and the history of sexual politics. Arguing sexuality to be the 'essence' of women's identity and the violation of it to be the 'worst' thing that can happen conspires with narratives that place women in the role of passive victim. Rather than participating in normalizing the idea of sexual violence by arguing it is a potential experience for all women--a theory that implies

that women must construct their lives and feminist theory around that potential, we should struggle to make sexual violence appear to be as strange as possible in the moment and in general. ⁸⁵ By this I do not mean to participate in the liberal assumption that 'normal' men do not rape or that intimate violences⁸⁶ are an aberration in an otherwise peaceful private sphere. 'Normal' men do rape. Intimate violence is normal. Public speak-outs and support for victims are crucial to building a society where sexual violence does not successfully stigmatize victims. However, building upon the thesis of the non-representability of pain, we can render sexual violence strange through being less systemic in our theorizing and taking the exposures of each incident as an event in itself. The dearth of public stories about women who successfully resist sexual violence shows how our attention, while needing to remain focussed in part on healing and justice for survivors, must be diffused to take victories into account. They can tell us as much about the logic of sexual violence as stories of victimization. They offer the material to build alternative modes of representation for understanding women and men in relationship to the potential for violence. This may help women, who carry all their particularity and differences with them, take down the fragile edifices of male power through the exposure of sexual violence as a practice rather than working politically only in spite of or with the

purpose of overcoming the effects of sexual violences that have always already happened.

CONCLUSION

The historicity of the identities of 'women' challenge feminism to take its own performative and experientially driven constructions of 'women' and 'gendered experience' seriously as such rather than assuming these categories to be lying in wait of discovery. Feminism does not bear immediate witness to a truth beyond the terms of available conceptual forms as MacKinnon argues. Experience is always being interpreted as it is represented to the world. Those interpretations carry crucial historical differences within them. The effort to politicize sexual violence should not displace the differences among women about sex and sexuality. The appearance/reality dichotomy understood by radical feminists to organize women's experiences of sexual suffering inhibits and limits strategic interventions.

Interpretation exposes unintentional truths in the details of everyday life in organized society. Feminism offers a way of politicizing interpretations of the world without forgetting the vagaries of experience. The socially constructed quality of truths about experiences previously taken for granted as part of 'the nature of things' are exposed. The 'realities' of experience are not the background to a foreground of ideological untruths, but

something to be interpreted as potentially telling truths about the social world.

The project of disarticulating patriarchal power does not require feminism to express a univocal truth about women's experiences of suffering. Experience is a sentient relationship to the object world which becomes intelligible as we engage in a process of political contestation and interpretation. Through interpreting and interrupting the phenomenon of sexual violence feminism intervenes in distinct and critical ways with dominant discourses and assumptions about gender and sexuality that unjustly shore up male power; it does not 'discover' a previously hidden or underlying truth about the totality of women's lives within an undifferentiated patriarchy.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In a recent essay called "Experience" (1992) Joan Scott makes an argument about the question I raise in this dissertation about the relationship between experience and identity politics. Her discussion criticizes the deployment of 'experience' as an authorizing moment of feminist and other critical histories. She argues that experience slides into static identity forms when it becomes a moment in historical inquiry assumed to be transparent to interested knowers. Scott looks at how "experience" is invoked in historical inquiry to authorize discussions of previously invisible histories such as those of gay men, lesbian women and women of color. Scott argues that the invocation of experience as a source of authority discourages and even obscures inquiry into the political and social conditions that render those particular historical experiences invisible in the first place. I agree with her argument against invoking experience as an authorizing strategy. It renders it static, as if it is something one can have in the sense of exclusive ownership. However, as I think I have shown, the politics of experience are not exhausted by rejecting its authorizing force in favor of explanations of its historicity. Scott's essay defers commitment to the politics of experience. She is essentially arguing for a better explanation of historical silences and exclusions.

She does not tell us how this is a transformative project for social relations of domination, only that it can expose the terms of those relations more effectively.

Through exploring the contributions of Theodor Adorno to philosophizing identity and experience, this dissertation takes up the politics of experience as a non-identical dialectical moment that sustains a politics potentially transformative of presently dominative and oppositional self-other relations.

This work engages the debates about identity and experience in contemporary feminism. It considers the arguments about identity that have taken shape within various discursive\theoretical frameworks of feminism. Responses to the "problem" of identity within feminism have proliferated in the last ten years. But I look at areas of feminist theory I think most clearly profile the dilemmas of identity itself as a social and historical effect in modernity: materialist and post-structuralist feminisms. I came to this project with my critical perspective on identity politics informed by Theodor Adorno's philosophy. Reflecting on issues raised by feminism and Adorno's critique of identity leads me to argue for a politics of experience that is non-identitarian but driven by an imperative to understand and change the material effects of dominative self-other relations in the object world.

Feminist identity thinking is not only present in theory that would posit an immutable essence of womanness (the sexual, maternal or sisterly self) as prior to all social inscription. Materialist feminist epistemologies concern themselves with the historicity of women's identity and the potential therein for collective politics. I examine feminist epistemologies which take a different path from feminists who make ontological arguments about identity and politics. Developments in feminist standpoint theory have elaborated a complex lineage between Marxist epistemology and feminism. Standpoint feminism develops a materialist epistemology that will offer legitimacy to women's particular situatedness as a site of struggle. Standpoint feminists can be understood to be responding to the falsely universalizing claims that plague some Radical feminist versions of what it means to be woman in the world. As I explain in my final chapter, Radical feminists assume an unencumbered sisterhood present beyond the differences apparent within patriarchal structures. Standpoint feminists also try to get at the process of politicizing experience in such a way that feminism becomes possible in spite of perceived differences. But they do it through examining the social and historical relationship between being and knowledge. They pay attention to questions of epistemic privilege and material privilege vis-a-vis the production of knowledge, thereby avoiding the leveling

discourses of some Radical feminisms. At their best, standpoint feminists work within the tension between the particular and the universal in trying to weave a moment of solidarity out of the material differences in women's lives.

I've explored some of the questions raised by these attempts to found feminist interpretation and political solidarity in women's material conditions of life. Standpoint feminisms consider how feminist identity emerges out of the material conditions of being gendered "women" in the world and explore the political potential in assuming the necessary partiality of "objective" knowledge. They argue this partiality is what makes women's knowledges critical. Standpoint theory is an effort to legitimate the distinct forms of knowledge available if one attends to the lived experiences of women as specifically gendered subjects.

Standpoint feminism thus approaches the kind of non-identitarian materialist knowledge I want to develop; it attends to and politicizes experiential knowledge as a founding moment for the critique of systems of dominance. Standpoint theory thus contains important potential to collectivize women as an identity without imputing an essence to "woman," as less historically oriented feminisms tend to do. However, as I have pointed out, each standpoint theorist eventually relies on an ahistorical quality of women's experience in order to found and/or legitimate

feminism as a distinct form of knowledge production. Standpoint feminists assume an identity between the subject of feminism and the object-world of women's lives; they depoliticize experience in an attempt to legitimate feminist identity as possible in spite of differences among women. While I acknowledge the political insights into the relationship between material being and objective knowledge, I critique the moments of identity thinking in standpoint feminism.

Feminist epistemological attempts to reconcile the contradictions between being and knowledge into a unified, feminist subject of modernity ultimately rely on static notions of experience and social identity. Their attention to experience slides into a reliance on identitarian forms. I discuss how the efforts of standpoint theorists to identify the subject of history for feminism do not adequately address the challenges differences among women pose for feminism as a transformative project. The politics of difference are more relevant to the future of feminism than the location of a singular feminist perspective.

Standpoint theorists argue for establishing a stable political identity for feminism. (see especially, Hartsock, 1988) I argue the critical potential of experiential knowledge is obscured within this organizing logic of feminist epistemology. The politics of representing, identifying or conceptualizing otherness interrupts projects

that construct the feminist subject out of the material condition of women's lives. Because standpoint theorists depend upon a particular meaning of gender identity as the constitutive common denominator among women they rely on the modern notion that the conditions of different women's lives in the world are ultimately the material politics works on rather than that which provokes politics. In effect, the closer feminist methods come to identifying the terms of gendered life, the more differences emerge to defeat the solidarity presumed to be the desired goal of feminism. Thus, as I point out above, even "experience" has become a contested political concept in feminism rather than the foundational material upon which feminism as a movement works. (see Grant, 1993; Scott, 1992) I critique the identity politics of standpoint theory because it asserts a correspondence between the positions subjects assume or are historically placed within and the kinds of political knowledge they will develop as feminists.

The politics of representation and the power\knowledge relationship are central to the creation of a collective identity among women. Feminism works through the particularity of the self in relation to the organized generality of the collective. This process is critical to successful intervention in systems of abstract exchange which govern modernity. Standpoint feminism does not

adequately recognize the risks of collectivity in modernity but strives to affirm the possibilities of collectivity.

In the next chapter, I have turned to Theodor Adorno as a philosopher who is unrelentingly suspicious of collectivizing forms, political and philosophical, in modernity. While some have argued his suspicions are historically appropriate only to the era of Facism, I think his concerns should inform our critiques of contemporary politics of collective movements. Adorno's theory of non-identity takes us toward political self-other relationships in modernity that challenge the identitarian forms that obscure or deny difference. For Adorno, persistent attention to non-identity in philosophical and political inquiry offers critical and liberatory potential.

Adorno argues that the continual search for closure, for a politics based in the construction of collective identity or the subject\object of history, (the "German nation" for Hegel, the proletariat for Marx, and the "new social movements" for post-Marxist theory) enforces conditions of abstract unity under concrete condition of dominance. Adorno moves away from that search in both his philosophy and his interpretative work about social phenomenon.

Adorno argues the disappearing subject to be both an effect and a necessary condition of abstract relations of exchange in modernity. He develops his argument for the

critical politics of non-identity in Negative Dialectics. For Adorno, no subject of knowledge "escapes" the ideological forms which constitute the social whole. The politics of identity through which subjective life is articulated reflects the contradictions of the system of exchange enforced by capitalist social relations.

Adorno warns us against asserting an identity between subjective knowledge and the object world. He does not give up on philosophical inquiry into the subject\object relation as inspired by the Marxian tradition of materialist knowledge. But he sustains a commitment to theorizing the mediated quality of inter-subjective life and the possibility that truths may be found in the particulars of the object world while the whole remains false to its own immanent promises of freedom.

The rest of this work takes up the question of whether political movement becomes paralyzed as the non-identical self is silenced or stilled by the awareness of the incoherence of its own history and agency. Are the possibilities for active intervention in relations of dominance shut down or multiplied through the critique of materialist foundationalism in feminism?

Adorno contributes to understanding the contradictory quality of feminist commitments to gender as a form of identity. But I turn to Judith Butler's work in order to elaborate more fully how representations of gender work to

condition the terms on which we can "be" as gendered subjects in the world. Post-modern feminists reject even limited gestures toward materialism as a grounds for politics. In particular I consider the implications of Butler's theory of "performativity" and her implicit displacement of experience from interpretation and politics. She critiques commitment to ontology in feminist theorizing as constraints on political action. Her theory of performativity detaches her vision of feminism from "women" as subjects prefigured for politics by material conditions of life. Relying on Lacan, she argues that gender identity is a habit performed within the naturalized constraints of a historical but intrinsically punitive process of exclusion.

Butler reminds us that even materialist approaches like that adopted by standpoint theorists can reify the "reality" of gender if they do not call into question the founding moments of their own inquiry. In standpoint theory, one of those founding moments is the material relations of sex and reproduction. For Butler, however, the sexed body is political through and through. If theory reproduces as the grounds for its possibility the reality it professes to challenge, for example, the condition or existence of material (and maternal) bodies, it will obscure possibilities for subversion immanent to the terms of the historical emergence of that reality.

Feminist post-structuralism organizes politics around the terms of representation. Identities emerge through practices of exclusion and abjection. Those exclusions are never finally accomplished but remain in process. For Butler, subverting the multiple processes of gendering subjects means deferring commitment to the priorly gendered subject as a condition of feminist politics. If gender is habituated, feminism must learn to work on the "groundless grounds" of representations that are political all the way down. "For the subject to be a pregiven point of departure for politics is to defer the question of the political construction and regulation of the subject itself; for it is important to remember that subjects are constituted through exclusion, that is, through the creation of a domain of deauthorized subjects, presubjects, figures of abjection, populations erased from view." (Butler, 1993:13)

The political differences between Adorno's and Butler's critique of the modern subject and identity can be summarized as follows. They both critique identity as it enforces particular exclusions, but Adorno theorizes identity as an historical effect and material condition of cognition. In his work, this does not imply the dialectical "overcoming" of identity into a synthesis of freedom. Rather, he argues forms of identity thinking to be historically specific to the condition of abstract exchange relations and commodity culture in capitalism. Butler's

critique of identity tends to be ahistorical because she never quite explains what is at stake in the material conditions that sustain the exclusionary habits of identity. Her claim for the normative value of detaching politics from identity does not take the quality of historical experience into account. I argue this material quality of experience makes political argument intelligible. Women of color do not critique the exclusions of feminist theory as constructed by white women because of an abstract claim about the injustice of exclusion. They critique the exclusions practiced by white feminists because they prohibit or defer attention to what women of color do and how they interpret their conditions of life as significant for a transformative politics. The material suffering caused by exclusions demands the reconfiguring of self-other relations in their immanent and historical sociality. In Adorno's theory, we are necessarily social. Our "performances" fulfill historical conditions of necessity which are riven with inequality and dominance, yet ideologically proclaimed to be acted out in freedom. Adorno reminds us of the somatic moment that will drive critical inquiry into these performances. Butler worries that any reference to the subject or to the "reality" of women's lives will reinscribe the terrain on which dominance does its work. My reading of Adorno argues that it is through

the object world, the world of experience, that we expose the suffering caused by dominance.

In the final chapter I look at sexuality as part of the world of experience feminists have exposed as a site of suffering but also of possibility.

Feminists have referred to the sexualized violences committed against women's bodies as one of the "realities" of gender that post-structuralist theory ignores. My engagement here with the politics of sexual violence was motivated by the challenge of thinking about the suffering caused by sexual violence as a discursively constructed experience. We may argue that sexual violence is a result of discursive constructions of sexuality, of women or of masculinity. But how do we politicize the phenomenon as a practice in itself without reducing it to the terms of a socially constructed narrative? How might we problematize the way feminism has developed the political terrain around the event of sexual violence without denying its urgency as a constitutive limit on how women can be in the world?

Sexual violence is an experience of subjects engendered as feminine, or as women, obscured through the ideological commitment to keep sexuality in the realm of the private and of the individual. Taking a critique of identity thinking into account while attending to the interpretation of material experience, I suggest a shift in our focus to the process of politicizing sexual violence. Feminist

interpretation should not rely on women identifying as potential victims in order to assert that there is a political problem. I argue we should pay more attention to what sexual violence as a practice does in the world. Theorizing it as a result of gendered dominance collapses it into one limited framework for understanding its effects. Instead, we should interpret sexual violence as an event that potentially expresses truths about multiple systems of dominance in the world. The reality and the potential of being a victim of sexual violence telescopes women's possibilities for being the world. But the political strategies we develop for combatting it do not have to reflect that narrow space.

Multiple strategies for resisting apparently intractable phenomenon can emerge through interpreting the many-sidedness of experience. Feminist commitments to interpreting experience encourage expanded possibilities of oppositional practices. I try to show the limits of feminist theoretical frameworks without using them as a foil against which to create yet another framework. Feminism has emerged as a political discourse through differences among women, not in spite of differences among women. Present debates about identity and difference in modernity are well-served by focussing attention on feminist history and theory as a place where the questions are about the survival of a historically necessary movement rather than abstracted,

disembodied considerations of democratic practices or the politics of representation.

My discussions about identity and experience culminate in a chapter about sexual violence because--in spite of the currency of popular suspicions about feminisms that deploy sexual violence as a signifier of women's ultimate victim status--I continue to think it is a defining issue for feminist struggle. In discussing the embodied experience of sexual violence as a political practice, I argue that as we critique identity discourses in feminist theory, we do not necessarily give up political argument and strategizing over improving the actual, material conditions of women's lives.

My final chapter looks at how the questions raised earlier about the politics of identity are related to the social or collective capacity to bear witness and to offer meaning to suffering. Adorno's specific historical concern was with how the Holocaust gathers meanings which bear false witness to that which cannot be rationalized or finally explained on the terms modern cognition offers. My discussion of how sexual violence is politicized reflects this concern. The focus on whether feminism defeats its transformative potential through its emphasis on women's suffering, or as Wendy Brown has put it, their "wounded identities," draws attention to the implications of imputing historical meaning to experiential suffering as the inaugural moment for political action.

I draw on a number of resources to consider the contentious debates about sexuality and sexual violence in feminism. My discussion is partially driven by a concern with how the political/discursive terrain on which the struggle against sexual violence takes place precludes consideration of race as a structuring principle of the phenomena of sexual violence and of the possibilities for collective movement among women. Many feminists have pointed out how racism constructs a wholly different set of images and demands women of color (for example) are expected to live up to within the mainstream of sexual culture in the United States. In addition, an anti-racist feminism must take into consideration the differential treatment of victims and perpetrators in cases of inter-racial rape. All rape is not the same in the eyes of the law nor in the eyes of a racist social order. (Estrich, 1987; Hall, 1983; Davis, 1974) It therefore must not be treated as essentially the same by feminists in the struggle to stop it. Through the dialectic of experience and the representation of that experience within the various institutions women go to for justice and protection, racism structures and restructures the image of the proper victim. In combatting this it is not enough to say that the reality of rape is the same once racist constructions are exposed, but to develop a constellation of fields of recognition for women's different

experiences and histories that will render them intelligible to the public world in their particularity.

In light of these concerns, my final chapter explores the possibility that feminism may participate in constructing spectacles for consumption rather than deconstructive narratives of resistance through the struggle against sexual violence. It suggests how feminism may be complicit in rendering women's particular suffering available for consumption in a world organized through abstract systems of exchange which level experience into manageable categories for mass consumption. Without pretending to find an answer to the problems embedded in representing suffering or rejecting out of hand the priorities of the movement, I draw upon the philosophical work of Adorno and Elaine Scarry to consider how they might intervene in arguments about the effects of imbuing otherwise privatized suffering with political or historical meaning as a justice-seeking strategy.

I've concluded through this work that feminism should not understand the project of representing the experience of sexual violence as expressing a settled reality but as a means to disrupt and transform the social terrain on which sexual violence thrives and does its damage. The political terrain on which feminism works never holds still. A non-identitarian approach encourages practices that demobilize masculinist power through exposing its fictions rather than

insisting that we can overturn the 'reality.' It moves feminist struggles against sexual violence forward through differences among women. It responds to the articulation of concrete experiences without constraining feminism to the grounds of prior assumptions about the sexual identity of women as vulnerable.

Antagonism and conflict is inherent in feminism. It is necessarily a part of feminist struggle because of the feminist respect for the particular, for experience and the sentient qualities of everyday life. Conflicts over the definition of the personal and of the political, and over how the relationship between them works have driven feminist politics as have conflicts over whose voices and experiences count in feminist interpretations of the political world. In the course of this struggle, however, the critical politics of experience are too often subdued by the politics of identity in a search for affirmative or 'positive' collective knowledge and action. My dissertation argues that a non-identitarian feminism will reside in the tension created by the pressure to rationalize commitments to one another in the name of conceptual order and the imperative to listen to women's voices and interpretations of their experiences with an attitude of radical receptivity to what may be at the margins or even outside of the given terms of the rational. Because he reconfigures the dialectic to take account of this tension, Adorno contributes to this project.

ENDNOTES

1. Catharine MacKinnon argues that "difference" and even "differences" among women are the "velvet glove" on the iron fist of patriarchy. This does not recognize different experiences as significant moments for politics, but reduces them to representative symptoms.
2. Nancy Hartsock (1987) critiques feminist theoretical alliances with Michel Foucault on the grounds that he is a white, Western male who exercises the privilege of disclaiming identity and subjectivity. She finds it suspicious that just as women and people of color and post-colonial subjects are finding their voices, post-structuralist theory begins to argue that the subject is irrelevant and indeed a ruse of history. In a similar vein, Seyla Benhabib (1991) argues "Given how fragile and tenuous women's selfhood is in many cases, how much of a hit and miss affair their struggles for autonomy are, this reduction of female agency to a 'doing without the doer' [reference is to Judith Butler's critique of the female subject] at best appears to me to be making a virtue out of necessity." (Benhabib, 1991:142) In other words, women are not yet ready to give up on subjectivity and notions of self. The implication is that formerly subjugated subjects, the invisible others to dominant forces, must move through the power of subjecthood to achieve whatever emancipated state lies in the future. This of course begs the question of the politics of the subject which I will address specifically in my chapter on Theodor Adorno.
3. Foucault's work contradicts this claim. He argues that power relations produce what is accepted as knowledge; that we are never transparent to ourselves as autonomous subjects who know the world through reason. (see esp. Foucault, 1984)
4. Kirstie McClure (1992) critiques Sandra Harding from a somewhat different position than I do. She argues that Harding, in her efforts to delineate how the 'science question' works within feminist thinking, effectively shuts down much of what makes feminism such a vital political discourse for late modernity. The overriding concern with causality and a properly scientific form for feminism, ie. objectivity and explanatory breadth, scientizes politics rather than politicizing science through feminist critique. McClure follows in the tradition of Laclau and Mouffe (1986) in arguing for a feminism that encourages the proliferation of politicized sites of contest rather than trying to organize feminism into a 'proper' theory of causality vis-a-vis women's oppression.

5. Linda Alcoff (1988) refers to the 'identity crisis' in feminism. Her discussion is limited to placing essentialist notions of the subject up against post-structuralist critique. This would imply that the "crisis" only hit with the historical discovery of multiplicity among women in the late 1980's. This does not reflect the complex history of feminism adequately. The subject of feminism has been under scrutiny since the emergence of radical feminist activism in the late 1960's. There is no "crisis" in the temporal sense but an ongoing argument.

6. This term reappears in Adorno's work in several contexts. It refers to the world governed epistemologically, economically and politically by systems of exchange. It is similar to Weber's metaphor of the 'iron cage' in that it does not imply a closed system, but one which 'appears' out of reach of the individual as agent.

7. Angela Harris (1990) argues that on the one hand, there exists within feminism the tyranny of particularity or self-referentiality which, because all experience must be equally valued, makes everything eventually the same. This is akin to an extreme and simplistic form of relativism. On the other hand, there exists the tyranny of abstraction or the universalizing 'we' which removes the power to identify from the individual. Neither pole furthers a critique of identity as a necessarily relational political concept. Abstraction posits an identity beyond the reach of particular individuals, and has been shown to be contingent upon the power to silence while particularity posits a fully self-referential identity. Both result in privileging sameness, or equivalence, over difference as the key to political understanding and movement. If everything is self-referential or contingent upon the subjectivity of the knower, then everything eventually is the same. If everything fits under the abstract concept then those who would otherwise declare difference are necessarily silenced.

8. "Positivity" is in quotes because for Adorno, the potential for an affirmative moment only rests in the negativity necessary for any moment of reflection on cognition or knowledge production.

9. As I will discuss Adorno did believe a certain distance from lived experience, a kind of alienation from the given world around the subject, was necessary for critical knowledge.

10. see Robert Hullot-Kentnor (1989); Andrew Hewitt (1992); Peter Uwe Hohendahl (1993).

11. Mimesis signifies a relation to the object prior to the naming or conceptualization of that object by a knowing subject. In Dialectic of Enlightenment, the concept of 'mimesis' invokes the mythical relationship of man to nature. It is mythical in that there is not a 'truth' in it available to the rational individual as one who names; it is prior to the emergence of knowledge through naming. It is a relationship of non-identity.
12. see Jay (1993) for a discussion of Habermas' rhetorical strategies.
13. Susan Buck-Morss discusses the methodological importance of the concept of 'natural history' (1977:52-62). However, she does not discuss the concrete relevance of the domination of nature to Adorno and Horkheimer's argument about identity. Patricia J. Mills argues that the attempt to resuscitate nature as an independent moment in the dialectic of history is central to the critique of Marxian theories that celebrate 'productive man' as engaged in a liberatory project (1989:86-88). The domination of internal and external nature by the repressive forces of modernity remained central to Adorno's philosophy beyond The Dialectic of Enlightenment. However, taking the two above mentioned discussions into account, we can see that reason and desire, identity and nature always remain in a relationship, the former is never finally successful in eliminating the latter.
14. As Patricia J. Mills has argued in a critique of Isaac Balbus and Ynestra King, nature is not benign in Adorno's work (1991). Rather, it is also known as what is repressed, dangerous, other.
15. As I will discuss later, Lysaker and Sullivan, in an article about Adorno's attention to critical practices, argue that he remained committed to figuring out the implications of the inherent tension between the subject and object of knowledge rather than succumbing to the collapse into identity or the reified separation.
16. In addition to the connection between the exchange principle and justice, we learn from Nietzsche that the right to determine these equivalencies is contingent upon relations of power. Adorno does not theorize power. To supplement his critique of identity with a theory of power we can turn to Foucault.
17. Participants in the Critical Legal Studies movement, the Critical Race Theory movement and Feminist legal theorists have been arguing for years that the law, as constituted in liberal doctrine, cannot take differences in

histories, in biology (women's versus men's bodies), in personal experiences, etc. into consideration as it seeks 'justice'.

18. I am not arguing that feminist identity thinking is akin to that of identity thinking on the level of the state, international institutions or patriarchy. However, it is important to note how identity thinking has emerged in different historical forms and with different, usually tragic historical consequences. I disagree with the pragmatic response that women 'do what they need to do to survive and thrive,' including ignoring difference in favor of expediency. I also disagree, as I will discuss later, with the alternative response, ie. that identity thinking among women is somehow different than for men or participants in patriarchy because of women's relatively powerless position.

19. In an extremely lucid account of the exposure of the imperialist, bourgeois self that Adorno and Horkheimer engage in throughout their exegesis of the Odyssey, Michael Clark points out how the double movement of creating the enemy other and the conquest of that enemy other is never quite complete. Those who are different never succumb totally to conquest so the process of 'othering' must be carried on as if it has no history even while its historicity is continually being exposed by the resistance of the object of conquest (Clark, 1989).

20. Socialist feminists have worked out sophisticated epistemological arguments for subjugated knowledges that in themselves are objective perspectives on the world because they 'confess' to their partiality and interest. Traditional, disembodied knowledges disguise or mask their interest and therefore are not objective but ideological. The potentiality for social change is more likely to reside, therefore, with marginalized peoples who have an interest in overturning the status quo. (see Haraway, 1990 and Harding, 1993)

21. See Ernst Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1986) for one of the most complete theorizations of "new social movements."

22. Two of the best statements about the necessity and politics of this 'discomfort' come from Minnie Bruce Pratt (1984) and Bernice Johnson Reagon (1992).

23. In "The Storyteller" Benjamin differentiates between storytelling and information:

Every morning brings us the news of the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot

through with explanation. In other words, by now almost nothing that happens benefits storytelling; almost everything benefits information. Actually, it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it. Leskov is a master at this... The most extraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks. (Benjamin, 1968:89)

24. When I use the term "other" I mean anything outside of the self that is potentially knowable but still strange or unfamiliar. This could, of course, apply to anything, a desk or a chair in the room with us. Here, however, because I am concerned with the political world, I am concerned with the generalized others that the political world constructs. Currently, within and without feminism, these include racialized, gendered, ethnic, and sexual others. To confront oppressive systems of power we must be explicit about how contemporary relations of domination work in their historical contexts and be specific about who and what we mean by "otherness."

25. See Susan Buck-Morss (1977:96-110).

26. See Judith Grant (1994) for a critique and a rejection of 'experience' as a necessary concept for feminist analysis.

27. By object, I do not mean something necessarily exogenous to or fully separate from the subject, I mean the object world to be the external and internal means by which we sustain ourselves as social, conscious beings.

28. This is what Wendy Brown is arguing as she says feminists must "assume responsibility." (Brown, 1991)

29. It is now common among feminists to cite to Sojourner Truth's speech at the Akron convention (1851) as emblematic of the contradictions racial differences present to the unity of 'woman' as a concept. Truth took the truth out from under white feminists whose presumptions about what 'woman' was a reflection upon who they were expected to be as white, middle-class, keepers of the hearth. Feminists of color have continued in her tradition of supporting feminist struggle but also persistently making trouble for any feminism that relies only on gender for its political terms of reference.

30. Too often, difference is invoked in order to "include" others but not to recognize them or cede privilege. People are never merely "different", politically significant differences play a role in the construction of differentiated subject positions. Depending on how one is positioned, participation will be more or less legitimated--more or less recognized.

31. "Difference" is often conceived in feminism as referring to the difference between men and women or between masculinity and femininity. Debates about social policy have been particularly myopic in conceiving of the "difference vs. equality" problem between men and women only in relationship to gender and sex difference.

32. While the scope and intelligence of her discussions of feminist theory, French and American, are impressive, Rosi Braidotti fails in her discussion of the future of feminism to take into account that it is contingent upon reconfiguring relations among women vis-a-vis systems of domination that render them participants in and not just victims of relations of dominance. For her, figuring out how to write sexual difference without repeating the sins of the father is the future of feminism. But women's lives are not only defined by their sexual difference from men or even from one another. (Braidotti, 1991) Alice Jardine's text, Gynesis, published six years earlier is just as guilty of this myopia with respect to the imperative that feminism become anti-racist, anti-classist and post-colonialist in its very self definition. (Jardine, 1985)

33. This is a paraphrase of Rosi Braidotti (1991) and Alice Jardine's (1986) arguments about feminism and feminist theory. Each places the conditions of emergence for feminist theory and politics in the late 1960's within the fissures of Western civilization. This privileges Western systems of thought and practice beyond the scope of their actual effectivity in creating the terms on which people live. In addition, it places all feminisms in the context of resistance against that particular paradigmatic history, though historically, the social messages addressed to and the demands on women of color and colonized women have been significantly different.

34. Foucault did not accept the label of 'post-modern', and in fact understood his project as an exploration of the "attitude" that is modernity. (Foucault, 1984;39, 1983;34) His conceptualization of modernity as an attitude precludes thinking of it as a period of time that has come and (perhaps) gone. Nonetheless, his historical positioning vis-a-vis Marxism and particular Althusser's Marxism, and his critique of those paradigms as they existed in France

make it accurate to think of his philosophical framework as 'post-structuralist.'

35. He outlines this project most explicitly as an "attitude" of moderns in "What is Enlightenment." (Rabinow, ed. 1984) This essay is considered by many to be one of the clearest statements of how he understood his own project in general terms.

36. Much of the anxiety aroused by the post-modern turn in feminist theory relates to the seeming unwillingness of post-modern theorists to assert, or render explicit, their political agendas. Nancy Fraser has shown how Foucault's work, particularly that of Discipline and Punish, relies on a humanist impulse in order to make its argument about the individuating internalization of social discipline and surveillance in modern society. (Fraser, 1984) Seyla Benhabib argues that critical social theory must assume a subject in the world to whose immanent self-understanding it addresses its claims. Otherwise it will remain in an aporetic state of static self-referentiality. (Benhabib, 1982) I think these commentaries miss the point made by Adorno, that critical theoretical practice in late modernity exists in a necessary tension with the colonizing and absorbing tendencies of identity logic. To proceed in a space "between a rock and nowhere" (Lysaker and Sullivan, 1992) in a time when it is not possible to claim we know how the relationship between theory and practice--or between consciousness and revolutionary agency--works, is the task of critique. For Foucault the imperative to historicize or theorize the present through the conditions of the past--to render the familiar strange and the normal bizarre--meant theory had to be locally oriented and attentive to the tasks various concepts, like humanism or the revolutionary subject/object have been put to in stabilizing given forms of domination. This approach may have implicitly humanist grounds in some sense, but I am not sure why that undermines the critical possibility in unearthing how humanisms have been deployed in the context of various humanly constructed catastrophes of modernity.

37. This point is best made Foucault's essay "What is Enlightenment" (1984). In it he displays a certain ambivalence about the project of Enlightenment and modernity and disabusing any notion that he was simply opposed to Enlightenment or to modernity. This essay reflects on project of interrogating the nature of Enlightenment illustrated by Kant's letter to a newspaper in the 18th century. Foucault shows how explanations of Enlightenment often claim it is about finding the exit from the present, finding a 'way out' of bondage to necessity (the body), or constructing a limit to what the possibilities are for an

enlightened life. He conceptualizes it instead as an experimental attitude toward pushing and expanding the possibilities of the present.

38. In his essay, "Truth and Power" (1980) Foucault elaborates on both of these themes.

39. This is the argument with which Butler opens her discussion of "Paris is Burning" (1993) in order to show that the queens as depicted in that film disrupt and subvert hegemonic assumptions about sexuality and community even while they represent "the abject" in heterosexualist identity systems.

40. This is a common theme in contemporary attempts to articulate the subject of feminism. Teresa de Lauretis draws on many theorists who use a similar theoretical strategy vis-a-vis totality to argue that feminist positioning is a positioning from the outside that offers a radically new vantage point. Feminists like Marilyn Frye, Adrienne Rich, Gloria Anzaldua, Barbara Smith and Monique Wittig are all said to create figures of 'otherness' that take on the task of unsettling every definition arrived at through dominant, patriarchal conceptual systems. For deLauretis, feminist consciousness "can only exist historically, in the here and now, as the consciousness of a 'something else.'" (DeLauretis, 1990:145)

41. Mary Hawkesworth⁷ (1989) critiques both feminist standpoint theory (for simplistically arguing that women have superior access to truths) and post-modernist theory (for privileging text and fiction over world and realities). It is not clear what she is arguing for except, perhaps, a more 'rigorously' rationalist epistemology that takes women's lives into account in asserting truth claims. Her argument about cognition as a human practice seems to welcome a sprinkling of standpoint and postmodern insights. But she adamantly dismisses these latter theoretical approaches once she has distilled them into "intuitive" vs "relativist" epistemologies. For Hawkesworth, 'Reality' gets in the way of both these approaches to feminism and any epistemology must 'recognize' that. Post-modern feminisms do not displace or disavow reality in favor of fiction. Hawkesworth's use of the terms 'fact' and 'fiction' already sets up a dichotomy between them that post-modern theory rejects. In addition, Hawkesworth says post-modernism is an epistemology. It is not an epistemology, it is anti-epistemology because it refuses the subject/object basis on which all epistemological theory must rest.

42. The Radicalesbian manifesto, "Woman-Identified Woman" (1973) articulates many of the themes of a lesbian-feminist politics which demand commitments to women to be total; partial or temporary commitments are threatening to lesbian existence because they imply an experimental, even exploitative voyeurism, rather than an informed commitment to a lifestyle.

43. Both 'sides' of the sex debates in feminism argue that there is something in lesbian sex practices that defies heterosexualist demands. On the one hand it is argued that women will naturally have sex grounded in a higher emotion than base desire, thus sex between women should be more pure and equally about giving rather than only about taking pleasure from another. The process of objectification should somehow be absent from lesbian desire. On the other side women argue that when lesbians engage in sado-masochistic or other violent, objectifying practices, they are freeing themselves and by association, the social world from the puritanical constraints of heterosexualist constructions of 'proper' sex practices. Each side thus argues that they are escaping.

44. Foucault similarly focusses on those practices considered marginal to or derivative of political life, ie. the construction of madness, of illness, and of crime, to see what he could learn about the construction of sanity or wellness or good citizenship. He did not assume in advance a binary opposition between the categories.

45. Bonnie Honig similarly takes up the thesis of performativity in her critical readings of modern political theory. She argues, "The feminism I have in mind does not embrace and repeat the constations of gendered subjectivities, it does not organize itself around them. It announces their indeterminacy, celebrates their perpetual failure to achieve the closures they assume, and seeks their subversion through a series of performative appropriations and negotiations." The thesis of performativity, in other words, takes the constations of gender into account but refuses the political position that settles itself within their terms. (Honig, 1991: 209)

46. See Joan Nestle (1987) for a personal history describing this unearthing of the codes of lesbian communication in literature.

47. In Adrienne Rich's essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1976) she argues that lesbianism should not be reduced to sexuality or to having sex with women. She shows how lesbianism exists on a continuum of women's relating to one another on the margins of

masculinist and heterosexualist social demands. Each of these relationships constitutes a resistance against patriarchy. According to this account, were it not for heterosexualist demands for women's attention, women would be 'free' as lesbians. It is only the coercive power of heterosexualism that sustains male\female relationships as the norm. This article has been critiqued on many grounds. It fails to consider the politics of lesbians who "come out" and\or live as women who love women exclusively. Lesbianism becomes naturalized as the underside of the heterosexualist matrix rather than understood as a way of life that exists in an active and contingent relationship to heterosexualist dominance. It also places all women on the same plane as potential lesbians, imputing false consciousness to heterosexual desire rather than shedding light on how heterosexual desire is constructed in its differentiated forms. It is falsely universalising of "lesbian existence."

48. See above discussion of Monique Wittig's conceptualization of lesbian identity.

49. Shane Phelan (1991) makes a similar argument.

50. This is most apparent in the 'sex debates' where the 'sides' articulated are those of the pro-sex factions and the vanilla sex factions. The former argue for the 'freedom' to experiment with violence and dominance (sado-masochism) against the latter claim that those practices of sex further represent the terms of heterosexualist desire. (Vance, ed. 1984; Ferguson, 1984) Butler would not argue that there exists any 'freedom' to experiment but that all practices will reflect cultural and social constraints. The question for Butler is not 'what kind of sex is permissible?' but 'why do we produce such a panic when we talk about or do sex in particular ways (eg. with women) and how can we further produce such panic in order to expose the vulnerabilities of heterosexualism?' The other ways of thinking about sex reproduce the assumption that heterosexualist desire is complete in itself instead of dependent upon its other (homosexuality) to affirm its normality.

51. In the following chapter, I address how thinking through the tensions of the forms and substances of this participation is precisely where a reading of Adorno can intervene in the debates about performativity.

52. This is how bell hooks reads the film (1992). I think she takes too much away from the wo\men in the film with this assessment of their actions and desires. hooks further interprets the film as an exploitative act of voyeurism on the part of a white filmmaker who essentially

makes the film for a white audience to see into the depths of Black and Latino social life for their own edification and entertainment without having to accept any responsibility. Butler, on the other hand, puts a much more affirmative spin on the relationship between the filmmaker (who is lesbian) and her object--which I think stretches her argument about the immanent subversions of sexualized symbolisms too far. She says Livingstone, as a lesbian, projects herself into the film through the camera as the enabling phallus. This allows the queens access to fulfillment and implicates Livingstone directly as a participant in their lives. In other words, Livingstone is not only a voyeur but is participating affirmatively in the lives of the subjects of the film through the apparatus of the camera. I think hooks' critique is more to the point.

53. The classic title, of an anthology of black feminist writings, All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of us are Brave (Hull and Smith, eds. 1984) expresses this.

54. See for example, an exchange between Linda Gordon and Joan Scott (1990).

55. Christine DiStefano (1991) makes a similar argument. I agree with her discussion of the historically political critiques of gender but disagree that post-modern critiques of gender theory are "merely" playful and too theoreticized. Deconstructing gender as a discursive effect may shift our attention to otherwise obscure sites of resistance, like performance.

56. See Martha Albertson Fineman and Roxanne Mykitiuk, eds.(1994) for recent discussions and critiques of feminist strategies for bringing sexual violence to the surface of public consciousness. See also Vicki Bell (1993) for an excellent discussion of feminist projects as they relate to sexuality and violence.

57. Susan Brownmiller (1975) makes a biologically deterministic argument that when men discovered they had the capacity to rape they proceeded to do so, finding ways around women's resistance and setting up an unquestionable regime of patriarchal power buttressed by the threat of rape.

58. Just a brief list of the most comprehensive critiques (focussing on her theory of sexuality, not on her arguments about pornography and its harms to women) includes: Drucilla Cornell (1991); Marianna Valverde (1989); Angela Harris (1990); Carole Vance (1992); Judith Grant (1993:74-

88); for a more sympathetic reading of MacKinnon's project see especially Teresa DeLauretis (1990; 1984).

59. In the 'sex-debates' that took shape in the 1980's, radical sex activists organized in opposition to radical feminism for refusing the radical possibilities of women's sexuality. For MacKinnon the 'appearance/reality' grid lay across gendered relations of dominance, disguising women's plight as objects. For sex-radicals, the 'appearance/reality' grid lay across sexuality, ie. the appearance is that women are asexual or passive, the reality is that women's sexuality has yet to be discovered. One might interpret MacKinnon as claiming women engage in alienated sex, but she so adamantly rejects the notion that women have agency as sexual subjects that gender dominance, not sexual repression remains her determinant reality.

60. MacKinnon argues: "My suggestion is that what we have in common is not that our conditions have no particularity in ways that matter. But we are all measured by a male standard for women, a standard that is not ours."
(MacKinnon, 1983:70)

61. In a critique of MacKinnon's essentialism, Angela Harris argues that "...feminist essentialism represents not just an insult to Black women, but a broken promise to listen to women's stories, the promise of feminist method. (Harris, 1990:601) She argues that MacKinnon's feminism identifies the condition of Black women as essentially the same as White women, only worse.

62. I use reification deliberately here to argue that the conceptual framework constructed by Radical feminism ignores its own historicity and limiting exclusions as a cognitive approach to exuality and sexual suffering. This is how Adorno understands reification in sociology and philosophy-- as that process of cognition which renders the object ahistorical or part of second nature through the hypostasis of its conceptualization. See Rose (1978) for a discussion of Adorno's theory of reification.

63. This is what I think Alice Echols and Ellen Willis are talking about when they critique the "decline" of Radical feminism into what they have labeled "cultural" feminism. (Echols, 1987; Willis, 1984) Also, many observers have noted the change in the movement against domestic violence from a collective project organized around the assumption that women who are beaten are potential feminists to a movement organized around service and therapeutic "helping."
(Fraser, 1991:177-181)

64. I by no means equate sexual violence with torture, nor do I compare them as events though sexual violence may be torturous and torturers make use of sexual violence, not only with women but with men as well. They exist in a relationship but are importantly differentiated as types of dominative practices.

65. This echoes Adorno's argument for the primacy of the object as the site of self-other understanding which he offers in opposition to epistemologies that rely either on the eradication of the subject or the centrality of the subject in creating knowledge of otherness.

66. Foucault argues in Discipline and Punish (1979) that as force becomes invisible, power becomes more effective. The more invisible power is in its operations on the subject, the more successfully it is sustained. Thus force is other than power. Scarry's argument is quite different. She argues that the physical effects of force exist in relationship to power.

67. This reminds me of recent claims that sexual harrassment and date rape and even domestic violence against women are the result of failed communication between otherwise potentially compatible partners. This renders the violence derivative of desire, implicitly forgiving the perpetrator and obscuring the intent to use violence in order to assert power.

68. Again, by the language of sharing I do not mean a harmonious site of mutual giving but a place where even in conflict we should remember the essentially social quality of our own participation.

69. This description of the literal deconstruction of the boundaries of the body reflects themes in narratives about sexual violence, especially those about domestic violence. Women's bodies become objects which are then used against themselves as torture victims bodies becomes objects used against themselves.

70. In my discussion of Butler's work in the previous chapter I showed how the construction of the 'real,' particularly with regard to stabilizing gender/sex identities can become a life and death enterprise.

71. In the 'sex wars' of the 1980's, (see Snitow, Stansell and Thompson, 1983; Vance, 1984; Ferguson, 1984) much of the disagreement focussed not just on questions about power and inequality in sexuality. Protagonists argued about whether violence and pain could be part of consensual pleasure or whether they were just manifestations of sexist attitudes

toward what is pleasurable in sex. The discussions were often characterized by arguments over whether feminism should focus on exploring the otherwise forbidden pleasures of sexuality or critiquing the dangers of sexuality for women. Advocates of sadomasochism, those who would challenge dominance with asserting their 'deviance,' fought with the anti-pornography and anti-rape activists over the terms on which women should think about sex. In these debates, sexuality was either a source of liberation and should therefore be free of politicized rules of behavior or a source of suffering and should therefore be the site of collective (feminist) resistance.

72. Scarry's ideal is 'civilization' based in the common project of literally building an object world. She celebrates the ways human solve the problems of sentience as the cornerstone of civilization. Her discussion differs markedly from Marx who argued the creativity of production as such. Scarry argues the creativity of making the world in relationship to the body and bodily needs and desires. "Higher moments of civilization, more elaborate forms of self extension, occur at a greater distance from the body:...Yet even as when most exhilaratingly defiant of the body, civilization always has embedded within it a profound allegiance to the body, for it is only by paying attention that it can free attention." (Scarry, 1985:57) It is this dialectic between embodiment and transcendence through the object world that creates the terms of civilization for Scarry. I appreciate the relevance of that aspect of her work, but cannot develop the implications in the context of this discussion of violence.

73. Kimberle Crenshaw discusses the role of identity politics and differences among women as they impact the politics and policies of battered women's shelters in different communities. She shows how many women are excluded from services because of an emphasis on the psychological effects of battering. She argues we need an approach that takes into account individual women's structural places in the intersecting systems of race, class, sexuality and gender. For her, effective strategies for serving the complex needs of women would entail understanding any identity-based group as always already a coalitional gathering. (Crenshaw, 1994)

74. An example of the problematic politics of representation in the context of sexual violence is how use of 'the battered woman syndrome' has evolved as centerpiece of feminist strategy in litigating cases about domestic violence. This descriptive phrase was developed by Lenore Walker through extensive research on women who are battered. As a feminist and as a clinical psychologist, Walker

explains the psycho-social effects prolonged punishment and emotional abuse have on women's individual agency. (Walker, 1979; 1984) She found that women suffer from "learned helplessness" as the cycles of violence perpetrated by her partner or spouse confine their control over or ability to predict the violence become more and more shaky. Women enter into a phase where they are unable to accept the "reality" of their situation or seek help. Her concept of the 'battered woman syndrome' has been put to use primarily as an explanatory framework in the trials of women who kill their batterers to help juries understand why the defendant did not leave her batterer and why she committed murder rather than going to the protective institutions of the state. While explaining a great deal to the public about the patterns and dilemmas of women trapped in situations of domestic violence, and in spite of Walker's own efforts, this approach has rendered battering a medical rather than a political question. In order to be forgiven on legal terms, women's response to violence (especially if they use violence) must be rendered a syndrome, not a rational reaction to continual abuse and exploitation. According to this narrative, women stay with their batterers--not because they rationally believe they have a right to be in their home or because they know from experience that any effort to separate from their abuser may increase the danger (Mahoney, 1991)--but because they have been rendered 'helpless' in the relationship. In order to explain taking aggressive action against a batterer women have to prove they were helpless.

75. Elizabeth Schneider interprets the contradictory effects of feminist jurisprudence through reading court opinions regarding the admissibility of expert testimony in the defense of women who kill their abusers. She argues that the 'battered woman syndrome' has been interpreted by the courts as an explanatory rather than a descriptive framework for women's behavior thereby rendering their responses to violence as symptoms of an illness rather than actions taken in the interest of their survival. (Schneider, 1986)

76. In response to Schneider's article, Lenore Walker correctly points out that until the rules of evidence which are sex-biased in favor of typically masculine rules of behavior in cases of self-defense are changed, the expert testimony she has to offer about battered women will continue to be heard by courts as proof that women are different from men in the sense that they are lesser beings than men. (Walker, 1986)

77. In spite of the popular attention to the issue, studies have shown that the numbers of rapes, and the frequency of wife and partner abuse has not shifted even with city-wide,

comprehensive programs involving police, prosecutors, counsellors and service workers. The New York Times Magazine profiled one of the most comprehensive programs in the country started in Duluth Minnesota. The article said that in spite of the best efforts of the courts and social service system, the level of violence had not declined. (NYT October, 1991) In addition, apparently logical strategies, like mandatory arrest statutes, affect different communities in radically different ways. (Sherman, 1991) These examples show that as the violence continues unabated, the systemic responses become normalized.

78. See my discussion in chapter 4.

79. See Hawkesworth (1991).

80. See the appendix of Russell (1976) for a good example of rape-prevention literature published by a San Francisco area rape-crisis center which advises perpetual vigilance and cautious behavior in light of an all-consuming threat against women's bodies.

81. See Bell (1991) For an excellent discussion of the reductionist quality of this debate that ignores the complexities of its own discussions.

82. It has been empirically shown that men who rape think about it and experience as a sexual act. Twenty years ago, Diana Russell interviewed rape victims and rapists in order to show that, while from the victim's perspective, rape is traumatic and stigmatizing from the rapists' perspective is a relatively predictable response to 'uncontrollable' desire for sex. Rapists often speak of themselves as loving women or merely wanting to show women 'what they have.' (Russell, 1975; Scully, 1990) However, men also use rape specifically as an act of violence against a particular woman, particularly in the context of intimate or 'domestic' violence. In these testimonies of torture-like situations, men use sex as a weapon among others against women.

83. Bart and O'Brien's research on rape prevention shows that there is no necessary increase in violence when women resist. In fact, they show the absurdity of telling women telling women not to resist in the interest of 'avoiding injury' as if the rape itself is not an injurious act. (Bart and O'Brien, 1985)

84. For example, in a survey of research on family violence, Linda Gordon and Wini Breines (1987) point out how recently family violence has been named and that and the exposure of the ideological terms on which it is discussed

or not discussed publically, is still developing. Teresa DeLauretis, in arguing against the post-modern reduction of experience to discourse point out that this does not mean family violence did not 'exist' as a practice prior to the naming. The historical practices of violence and the means through which they are represented exist in a dialectical tension, not in a teleological synthesis as the reality finally finds its truthful name or as the naming constitutes a reality. (DeLauretis, 1987)

85. I understand the demand for solidarity in the argument 'we are all potential victims' in light of classist and racist assumptions about who rapes and who the victims are. However, we should try to move beyond rendering 'woman' as a potential victim as grounds for solidarity.

86. I use the word "intimate" rather than the more commonly used "domestic" because it communicates the close proximity of a woman to her batterer in the context of the home and their relationship. "Domestic violence" reminds of the days when the violence was understood as somehow less severe than the real violence that happens in the public world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, Theodor. Negative Dialectics. translated by E.B. Ashton. New York: Continuum Publishing, 1987.
- . The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1976.
- , Minima Moralia. translated by J.F.N. Jephcott. London: Verso Press, 1951.
- . Aesthetic Theory. translated by C. Lenhardt. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- . Hegel: Three Studies. translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- and Max Horkheimer. Dialectic of Enlightenment. translated by John Cumming. New York: Continuum Publishing, 1988.
- Alcoff, Linda and Potter, Elizabeth. Feminist Epistemologies. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Anzaldua, Gloria ed. Haciendo Caras; Making Face/Making Soul San Fransisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1993.
- Arato, Andrew and Gebhardt, Ekie, eds. The Essential Frankfurt School Reader. New York: Continuum Publishers, 1988.
- Bell, Vicki. Interrogating Incest, Feminism, Foucault and the Law. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Benhabib, Seyla. Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- . Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- and Cornell, Drucilla. Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations trans. by Hannah Arendt. New York: Random House 1968.

- . The Origins of German Tragic Drama trans. John Osborne. London: New Left Books, 1977.
- Braidotti, Rosi. Patterns of Dissonance. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Brownmiller, Susan. Against Our Will, Men, Women and Rape. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute. New York: The Free Press, 1977.
- Bulkin, Elly, Pratt, Minnie Bruce and Smith, Barbara. Yours in Struggle. Minneapolis: Long Haul Press 1984.
- Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- . Bodies That Matter. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- and Joan Scott. Feminists Theorize the Political. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Cocks, Joan. The Oppositional Imagination: Feminism, Critique and Political Theory. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Thought and the Politics of Empowerment. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Cornell, Drucilla. Philosophy of the Limit. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- . Beyond Accomodation. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- . Transformations. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Dewey, John. Experience and Nature. Illinois: Open Court Publishers, 1929.
- Diamond, Irene and Quinby, Lee eds. Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988.
- Dolan, Jill. The Feminist Spectator as Critic Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988.

- Ferguson, Ann Sexual Democracy: Women, Oppression and Revolution Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.
- Fineman, Martha Albertson and Roxanne Mykitiuk, eds. The Public Nature of Private Violence. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Flax, Jane. Disputed Subjects. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Thinking Fragments. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Foucault, Michel. The Foucault Reader, Paul Rabinow, ed. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- . Power\Knowledge, Colin Gordon, ed. New York: Harvester Press and Pantheon Books, 1980.
- . Discipline and Punish. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- . The Order of Things. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.
- . The History of Sexuality. New York: Vintage Books, 1980.
- . The Archealogy of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.
- Fraser, Nancy. Unruly Practices, Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Fuss, Diana. Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Grant, Judith. Fundamental Feminism New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Hanson, Karen and Philipson, Ilene. Women, Class and the Feminist Imagination: A Socialist-Feminist Reader. Philadelphia: Temple, 1990.
- Haraway, Donna. Simians, Cyborgs and Women. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Harding, Sandra. The Science Question in Feminism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986.

- Hartsock, Nancy. Money, Sex and Power. Boston: Northeastern University Press. 1983.
- Hegel, G.W.F. Phenomenology of Spirit translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Hennessey, Rosemarie. Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse. New Jersey: Routledge, 1993.
- Hirsch, Marianne and Evelyn Fox Keller, eds. Conflicts in Feminism New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Honig, Bonnie. Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- hooks, bell. Black Looks, Race and Representation. Boston: South End Press, 1992.
- . Feminist Theory from Margin to Center. Boston: South End Press, 1984.
- Horkheimer, Max. Critical Theory. New York: Continuum Publishers, 1986.
- Jaggar, Alison. Feminist Politics and Human Nature Totowa: Rowman and Allenheld, 1983.
- and Susan Bordo, eds. Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- James, Stanlie M. and Abena P.A. Busia, eds. Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Jardine, Alice. Gynesis: Configurations of Women and Modernity. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Jay, Martin. Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukacs to Habermas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Adorno. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Koedt, Ann, Ellen Levine and Antia Rapone, eds. Radical Feminism New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Mouffe, Chantal. Hegemony and Socialist Strategy London: Verso Press, 1987.
- De Lauretis, Teresa Technologies of Gender Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

- ed. Feminist Studies/Critical Studies. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.
- . Alice Doesn't. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Leidholdt, Dorchon and Janice G. Raymond. The Sexual Liberals and the Attack on Feminism. New York: Pergamon Press, 1990.
- Lukacs, Georg. History and Class Consciousness. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967.
- MacCormack and M. Strathern, eds. Nature, Culture and Gender. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- MacKinnon, Catharine Feminism Unmodified. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Towards a Feminist Theory of the State Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Mills, Patricia J. Woman, Nature and Psyche. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. Woman, Native, Other Indiana University Press 1990)
- Mohanty, Chandra, Russo, Ann and Torres, Lourdes, eds. Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Morrison, Toni ed. Racing Justice, Endgendering Power New York: Pantheon Books, 1992.
- Nestle, Joan. A Restricted Country. Ithaca: Firebrand Books, 1987.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Genealogy of Morals trans. by Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Nicholson, Linda ed. Feminism\Postmodernism New York: Routledge Press, 1990.
- Phelan, Shane. Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Politics of Community. Philadelphia: Temple University, 1989.
- Pratt, Minnie Bruce. Yours in Struggle: "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart" Long Haul Press, 1984.

- Pratt, Minnie Bruce. Yours in Struggle: "Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart" Long Haul Press, 1984.
- Rabinow, Paul. ed. The Foucault Reader. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Riley, Denise. Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Rose, Gillian. The Melancholy Science, an Introduction to the Thought of Theodor Adorno. London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1978.
- Russell, Diana E.H. The Politics of Rape, the Victim's Perspective New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1975
- Sargeant, Lydia ed. Women and Revolution. Boston: South End Press, 1982.
- Scarry, Elaine. The Body in Pain, the Making and Unmaking of the World. London: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Scully, Diana Understanding Sexual Violence, a Study of Convicted Rapists. Cambridge: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Senelick, Laurence. ed. Gender in Performance: The Presentation of Difference. Hanover: University of New England Press, 1992.
- Sherman, Lawrence Policing Domestic Violence: Experiments and Dilemmas New York: Free Press, 1992.
- Singer, Linda Erotic Welfare New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Smith, Barbara, Bell, Patricia Scott and Hull, Gloria T. eds. All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, but Some of Us are Brave. Old Westbury: The Feminist Press, 1982.
- Smith, Dorothy. The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987.
- Snitow, Ann, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson, eds. Powers of Desire. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.

Weber, Max. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism trans. by Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1958.

----- . From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Williams, Patricia The Alchemy of Race and Rights Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Wittig, Monique. The Straight Mind. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Young, Iris. Justice and the Politics of Difference New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

ARTICLES

Alcoff, Linda. "Cultural Feminism Versus Post-structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory" Signs 13(3) 1988.

Arato, Andrew "Georg Lukacs: The Search for a Revolutionary Subject" The Unknown Dimension, European Marxism since Lenin New York: Basic Books, 1972.

Bell, Vicki "Beyond the Thorny Question: Feminism, Foucault and the Desexualisation of Rape" International Journal of the Sociology of Law 19, 1991.

Benhabib, Seyla. "Modernity and the Aporias of Critical Theory" Telos (49) 5-31, 1981.

Berman, Russell A. "Adorno's Radicalism: Two Interviews from the Sixties" Telos 56:94-100, 1983.

Breines, Wini and Linda Gordon "The New Scholarship on Family Violence" Signs 8(3) 1983.

Buchwalter, Andrew. "Hegel, Adorno and the Concept of Transcendent Critique" Philosophy and Social Criticism 12(4):297-328, 1987.

Brown, Wendy. "Feminist Hesitations, Post-Modern Exposures" Differences 3(1) 1991.

Caraway, Nanci. "The Challenge and Theory of Feminist Identity Politics" Frontiers 12(2): 109-129, 1991.

- Clark, Michael. "Adorno, Derrida and the Odyssey: A Critique of Center and Periphery" Boundary 2 #16, 1989.
- Cover, Robert "Violence and The Word" Yale Law Journal 95, 1986.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color" in The Public Nature of Private Violence Martha Albertson Fineman and Roxanne Mykitiuk, eds. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Dallmayr, Fred. "Phenomenology and Critical Theory: Adorno" Cultural Hermeneutics 3:367-405, 1976.
- Di Stefano, Christine. "Who the Heck are We? Theoretical Turns Against Gender" Frontiers XII(2), 1991.
- Flax, Jane. "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious: a Psychoanalytic Perspective on Epistemology and Metaphysics" in Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science ed. Sandra Harding and M. Hintikka. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983.
- Freedman, Carl and Lazarus, Neil. "The Mandarin Marxism of Theodor Adorno" Rethinking Marxism 1(4):85-111, 1988.
- Gordon, Linda. "On 'Difference'" Genders 10:91-111, 1991.
- and Joan Scott, Signs Summer, 1990.
- Habermas, Jurgen. "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-reading Dialectic of Enlightenment" New German Critique (26) 13-31, 1982.
- Harding, Sandra. "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: 'What is Strong Objectivity?'" in Feminist Epistemologies eds. Alcoff and Potter, 1993.
- Harris, Angela. "Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory" Stanford Law Review (42) 581-616, 1990.
- Hartssock, Nancy. "Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories" Cultural Critique Fall #7, 1987.
- Hawkesworth, Mary E. "Knower, Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth" Sign 14(3): 533-57, 1989.

- Hewitt, Andrew. "A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment? Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited" New German Critique 56: 143-170, Spring-Summer 1992.
- Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. "Adorno Criticism Today" New German Critique 56:3-15, 1992.
- . "The Frozen Imagination: Adorno's Theory of Mass Culture Revisited" Thesis Eleven 34, 1993.
- Hullot-Kentnor, Robert. "Back to Adorno" Telos 81:5-29, 1989.
- de Lauretis, Teresa. "The Essence of the Triangle or, Taking the Risk of Essentialism Seriously: Feminist Theory in Italy, the US and Britain" Differences 1(2), 1989.
- . "Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness" Feminist Studies 16(1) 1990.
- Love, Nancy. "Epistemology and Exchange: Marx, Nietzsche and Critical Theory"
- Love, Nancy "Politics and Voice(s): An Empowerment/Knowledge Regime" Differences 3(1): 85-103, 1991.
- Lugones, Maria "Hispaneando y Lesbiando: On Sarah Hoagland's Lesbian Ethics" Hypatia 5(3) 1990.
- and Elizabeth V. Spellman "Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism and the Demand for the Women's Voice" Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy 6(6), 1983.
- "Does Sexuality Have a History?" Michigan Quarterly Review 1990
- Mahoney, Martha R. "Legal Images of Battered Women:: Redefining the Issue of Separation" Michigan Law Review 90(1) 1991.
- Marcus, Sharon "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: a Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention" in Feminists Theorize the Political eds. Judith Butler and Joan Scott, New York: Routledge 1992.
- Mills, Patricia Jagenowitz "Feminism and Ecology: On the Domination of Nature" Hypatia 1991.

- Nagele, Rainer. "The Scene of the Other: Theodor Adorno's Negative Dialectic in the Context of Poststructuralism" Boundary II 1983.
- Phelan, Shane "The Jargon of Authenticity: Adorno and Feminist Essentialism" Philosophy and Social Criticism 16(1) 1990.
- Rabine, Leslie Wahl. "A Feminist Politics of Non-Identity" Feminist Studies 14:11-31, 1988.
- Reagon, Bernice Johnson. "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century" in Race, Class and Gender. Margaret Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins, eds. Belmont: Wadsworth Press, 1993.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" in Powers of Desire Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983.
- Schneider, Elizabeth "Describing and Changing: Women's Self-Defense Work and the Problem of Expert Testimony on Battering" Women's Right Law Reporter 9(3&4) 1986.
- "Particularity and Generality: Challenges of Feminist Theory and Practice in Work on Woman-Abuse" New York University Law Review 67(520) 1992.
- Scott, Joan. "Experience" in Feminists Theorize the Political eds. Butler and Scott. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . "Commentary, Cyborgian Socialists?" in Coming to Terms ed. Elizabeth Weed. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Smith, Dorothy. "Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology" Sociological Inquiry 44, 1974.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. Champagne-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
- Sullivan, Michael and Lysaker, John T. "Between Impotence and Illusion: Adorno's Art of Theory and Practice" New German Critique 57:87-122, 1992.
- Thomas, Calvin. "A Knowledge That Would not be Power" New German Critique

Valverde, Marianne. "Beyond Gender Dangers and Private Pleasures: Theory and Ethics in the Sex Debates" Feminist Studies 15(2) 1989.

