

# Teaching Gender through Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Texts and Cultures

Leila Gómez, Asunción Horno-Delgado,  
Mary K. Long and Núria Silleras-Fernández (Eds.)



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## **Teaching Gender through Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Texts and Cultures**

# Teaching Gender

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*Edited by*

**Leila Gómez, Asunción Horno-Delgado, Mary K. Long  
and Núria Silleras-Fernández**

*University of Colorado at Boulder, USA*



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**ADVANCE PRAISE FOR  
*TEACHING GENDER THROUGH LATIN AMERICAN,  
LATINO, AND IBERIAN TEXTS AND CULTURES***

*Teaching Gender through Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Texts and Cultures* makes a compelling case for the central role of feminist inquiry in higher education today. The volume's welcome focus on both teachers and students reminds us that the best humanistic teaching occurs in an environment of informed self-reflection and openness. Startlingly honest and deeply informed, the essays lead us through classroom experiences in a wide variety of institutional and disciplinary settings. Read together, these essays articulate a vision for twenty-first century feminist pedagogies that embrace a rich diversity of theory, methodology, and modality.

**Lisa Vollendorf, Professor of Spanish and Dean of Humanities and the Arts, San José State University; author of *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain***

*Teaching Gender through Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Texts and Cultures* makes a welcome contribution to the all too-slight bibliography on feminist pedagogy in this field of literary and cultural study. The twelve essays introduce innovative approaches to reading gender in canonical and non-canonical texts with our students in the U.S. academy. The scholars manifest a careful and conscious engagement with theories of feminist pedagogy and with the challenges of their own local praxis. In the process they create a sophisticated and lively critical discourse that responds to the fundamental question of how to teach gender and feminism in ways that respect the historical and cultural specificity of diverse "Hispanic" societies from medieval times to the present.

**Beth E. Jörgensen, Professor of Spanish, University of Rochester; author of *Documents in Crisis Nonfiction Literatures in Twentieth-Century Mexico* and co-editor of *Libre Acceso: Latin American Literature and Film through Disability Studies***

What is it like to teach feminism and gender through Latin American, Iberian, and Latino texts? The rich collection of texts in *Teaching Gender through Latin American, Latino, and Iberian Texts and Cultures* provides a series of insightful and exhaustive answers to this question. A group of feminist scholars who teach Latin American, Iberian and Latino/a literatures in the US and British academia, grapple through the complex field of feminist theory, theoretical approaches, and primary texts in order to inspire a pedagogical praxis that deconstructs claims of universality, and

intertwines the personal, the political, and the intellectual. An essential book for teachers of Latin American, Iberian, and Latino/a texts, this volume will also spark new debates among scholars in Gender Studies.

**Mónica Szurmuk, Researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council of Argentina; author of *Mujeres en viaje* and co-editor of *The Cambridge History of Latin American Women's Literature***

This innovative volume tackles the complex subject of how to teach gender as represented by Latin American, Spanish, and U.S. Latino authors. Despite the seeming commonality of language and heritage, these texts are diverse in their expression and concerns even as they share commonalities of the female experience. Based on a feminist pedagogy that focuses on what texts we teach, how we teach them, and to whom, the authors of these twelve essays engage with works from the Middle Ages to contemporary times, and topics ranging from indigenisms, cultural icons, sexual violence, and Hispanic feminisms, to pedagogical theory. It's about time that we have at our disposal such a valuable tool that will surely enhance our teaching of literary texts through new perspectives and approaches, and that will help students read them with fresh expectations.

**Nancy Marino, University Distinguished Professor at Michigan State, author of numerous works on Medieval and Early Modern Hispanic Studies**

A fascinating critical and pedagogical volume on women, feminism, and gender construction for consciously gendered teachers of the twenty-first century, invested in combating phallocentrism and inequality through the study of Latin American, Latina/o, and Iberian literature and culture. Written from a historical perspective or as personal reflections that nonetheless combine theory and practice, these essays provide useful tools to teach multiple feminisms, the geopolitics of knowledge, identity conflicts, and numerous gender battles in a neoliberal era. Many of us will benefit from this book that makes us aware of where we position ourselves as educators, as we teach fiction, poetry, film, personal memoirs, and plays that successfully explore women and gender from the Middle Ages to an uncertain present of ongoing machismo and violence against women not only on the U.S.-Mexico border but across the Americas.

**Oswaldo Estrada, Associate Professor of Latin American Literature at UNC Chapel Hill; author of *Ser mujer y estar presente. Disidencias de género en la literatura mexicana contemporánea***

To all teachers who have dared to challenge the construction of gender.





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LEILA GÓMEZ

## INTRODUCTION

*Gender Pedagogy through Latin American, Iberian, and Latino Texts—  
The What, How, and Who*

This volume has arisen as a response to the questions that department colleagues and I had a few years ago about how to teach gender issues and feminism today.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, some of us had experienced the skepticism of some students regarding the validity of feminism and gender awareness nowadays. These students perceived feminism as something from the past, tied to the historical struggle of women over suffrage, legal status and reproductive rights. Some of them even refused to be labelled as feminists. I remember on one occasion, when asking my students if they considered themselves to be feminists or if they agreed with feminism and gender criticism, one of them answered, “I want to find a husband.” On the other hand, many times there were also students who were very aware of gender inequalities, and we wanted to be able to address these students as well, and to support and channel their concerns and activism in effective ways. I have had several students who, after taking my classes or seminars, reoriented their career paths and went on to take classes in the Women and Gender program at my university and wrote their theses and dissertations on gender topics. More often than not they want to go beyond academic feminism and engage in activism and political practice.

The denial of or refusal to acknowledge feminism seems to be a general concern for instructors in US academia and beyond, as described in Toril Moi’s (2006) article in the Modern Languages Association’s Journal, *PMLA*, “I’m not a feminist, but ... How feminism became the F-Word,” in which the author examined the situation of classroom debate on feminism, and reflected on the disavowal it had suffered on both the right and the left during the 90s. Although it seems that equal rights for women became more accepted and made progress during the period, there was at the same time a pervasive discourse against the very movement that had fought for these rights. As of the 90s, “feminists are presented as irrational extremists who want far more than equal rights: they hate the family, detest their husbands (if they have any), and go on to become lesbians” (Moi, 2006, p. 1736).

This certainly generates anxiety in younger generations, who still believe that gender struggle exists and that it is important to recognize this fact. As Moi puts it, “my students take the strident, aggressive, man-hating feminist to be an image of what they would turn into if they were to become feminists. What they all see, I fear, is a woman who cannot hope to be loved, not so much because she is assumed to be unattractive (although there is that too), as because she doesn’t seem to know what love is” (p. 1739). However, they all express their complete adherence to freedom, equality and justice for women. The main question for Moi is how it is that feminism became so distant from its ideals and goals in the mind of society and our students. One of the main questions of this volume is how, as teachers, to reestablish the links between the ideals of feminism and feminist (and gender) discourses and praxis in our classrooms.

What is it like to teach feminism and gender through Latin American, Iberian, and Latino texts? A completely new and different set of challenges emerges in the non-Anglo-Saxon tradition to which these texts belong. Without exception, all authors in this book work in the US and European academy, even though 50% of them are originally from Latin America and Spain. The audience of this book are also US and European sectors of academia that teach these texts as part of the curriculum in departments of foreign languages and cultures. This posits another challenge for feminism and teaching feminism, as the cultural difference bears evidence against the alleged universality of its claims. Moreover, although they tend to be grouped together, Latin American, Iberian, and Latino texts differ substantially from one another, and sometimes do not even share Spanish as the same language. It is probably important to remember here that the grouping of these texts into a single curriculum of “Spanish language and cultures” expresses once more the lingering old-fashioned demarcation of the (decadent) Castilian empire encompassing both its ex-New World colonies as well as other languages in the Iberian Peninsula itself. The “Hispanic” umbrella traditionally subsumes languages as far-flung from one another as Quechua, Aymara, Guaraní, Galician, Catalan, Basque, etc. Clearly, the internal cultural diversity within this vast demarcation is by no means just linguistic, but also encompasses ethnic, class, religious, political, and of course gender differences as well.

In addition to the hegemony of Spanish over other languages in the Americas and Iberia, the different facets of Hispanism, as a cultural model for interpretation, as a discipline’s object of study, and as an academic institutional organization, have from their very beginnings involved erasure and been marked by their imperial origins. The hegemony of Spanish also had the aim of creating a homogeneous cultural essence. From the time of

the very first book of Spanish grammar, written by Antonio de Nebrija in 1492, Hispanism—after the Christian Reconquest of Southern Spain—was used as part of imperial expansion into the New World. The grammar’s motto, “it cleans, sets and makes shine,” points to the linguistic and cultural standardization of Spanish throughout its colonial expansion. Directly or indirectly, the studies compiled in this collection seek to dissect the supposed unity of the definition of Hispanism, and its versions of “Hispanic feminism,” through careful historical inquiry. Doing so, they reveal the complex and conflicting plurality of the societies and cultures involved.

Far away from the respective national academic institutions of Argentina, Mexico, Spain, etc., in the United States or Europe the practice of grouping the object of study under the label “Hispanic” is more frequent, though not necessarily less ideological. Against this practice, the present volume breaks its title down into teaching gender in “Latin American, Latino and Iberian” texts and cultures, for the purpose of evoking realities that are more complex and contradictory, without overlooking this breakdown’s own incongruities. Of course, it continues to subsume other internal differences and antagonisms, as does any classification.

Another challenge to writing on and teaching our object of study using this classification is its relatively marginal position in US and European academics. Some of the authors in this book, and also other colleagues who are critics in the field, often employ French and US feminist critical theory to analyze feminism and the work of female writers in Latin America and Spain: Simone de Beauvoir (mostly in English translation), Judith Butler, Elaine Showalter, and Toril Moi are among the most cited. This speaks to the politics of knowledge-power and the dynamics and circulation of theory in academia, and also to the complexities of using the English language to study texts that belong to a foreign tradition. I myself have started this introduction with Moi’s view on the condition of feminist teaching nowadays, where she was clearly referring to the situation in the United States, since for her the “here” for “us” is the United States academy. It is important to be aware that we run the risk of subsuming differences under the rubric of an Anglo-French feminism that is not always the same as the feminisms studied by the authors in this book.

It is also important to note here that there are several commonalities between Latin American, Iberian, US and other European feminisms, for example in the first wave’s fight for the right to suffrage. It was a widespread movement in Latin America in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with women that founded feminist parties, such as Alicia Moreau in Argentina, and Estela La Rivera de Sanhueza and Elvira de Vergara in Chile, to name just a few. In those decades there were also women workers



(laundresses, miners, teachers) who organized strikes and protests to better their conditions at work and for their families. Second wave feminism, which reflected on and sought to change women's life in marriage, family and professions, was also evident in the writing of female intellectuals such as Latin American authors Rosario Castellanos, Rosario Ferre, Elena Poniatowska and Elena Garro, to name just a few of the important feminist writers who also criticized the marginal situation of women in the literary field and their place in the canon. Third wave feminisms, with their emphasis on ethnicity, class, education and other aspects that define women's subjectivity and place in society, were part of the debate as early as the mid-seventies, for example with Bolivian miner Domitila Chungara's talk at the Foro Internacional de la Mujer in Mexico. In US academia during the eighties we find what is now called "postcolonial feminism," which considers issues of race, ethnicity, cultural borders and hybridity against western feminism, colonial situation and its effects. In Postcolonial and Chicana theory, a landmark book was *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, by Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa (1942–2004), where the author incorporates her experience as a woman growing up on the Mexican-Texas border.

As far as activism goes, in Latin America the feminism of the seventies played a fundamental role in the fight against authoritarian regimes, often in alliance with leftist movements, political parties, and militant and revolutionary groups. Because of their links to these organizations and their leftist orientations, feminists usually worked clandestinely during this period, especially in countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Chile. In Mexico and Argentina, feminism was embraced mainly by the middle classes, in universities and progressive circles, and maintained its distance from grassroots movements (Ixxic & Bastian Duarte, 2012, p. 156). Feminist groups also played an important role in the transition to democracy and the fight for human rights (Jaquette, 1994, p. 1989). Starting in the nineties, feminism has gone through a process of institutionalization, forming alliances with governments and agencies such as the World Bank that support neoliberalism in Latin America (García Castro, 2001 p. 17). Some critics have analyzed the interconnection of these alliances with processes of standardization in the language of feminism, and a subsequent "depoliticization and a clear loss of radicalism within these increasingly hegemonic feminist circles. The new NGOs were forced to standardize their language in accordance with the universalizing criteria of the United Nations and to follow the agendas set by donors, which are not always mindful of the priorities of local organizations" (Ixxic & Bastian

Duarte, 2012, p. 156). Indigenous feminism and lesbian feminism are still marginal in main stream feminism.

Academic feminism and political feminism encompass a wide variety of goals, and between and within them one finds numerous internal conflicts and tensions. A landmark in Latin American feminism was Domitila Barrios de Chungara's (1975/1977) remarks at the Foro Internacional de la Mujer, held in Mexico in 1975, where the Bolivian female miner and activist questioned the essentialist perspective on "woman" implicit in the congress's agenda by emphasizing the radically different condition of women workers across Latin America. "What equality can we speak of between us women, when you and I have little in common, when you and I are so different? We cannot, at this time, be equals, even as women [...]" (Moema, 1977, p. 225; my translation). With her remarks, Domitila Chungara gave a fundamental twist to the way gender struggle was understood at the time, mainly from a bourgeois, intellectual, white-creole perspective. Domitila Chungara spoke of these differences, however, using the gender awareness that the Foro made possible as platform for debate, because it was a context for female expression. At this point it is useful to remember with Jean Franco (1992) that gender is a category that cuts through others, such as ethnicity, race, and class:

The distinction between masculine and feminine is not just one more distinction among others. Rather, it supports a whole series of dichotomies—mind/body, order/disorder, sun/moon, spirit/material, active element/passive element—upon which hegemonic cultural and political practices have been based during both the pre-capitalist period and under capitalism. It is mixed up with the entire cultural field, sometimes defining the limits of the discursive genres and the dichotomies that have structured thought, giving rise to an extensive set of symbols. To understand the workings of the masculine/feminine distinction at a given moment leads us to an understanding of the articulation between knowledge and power. Thus, "phallogocentrism" or "phallogocentrism" does not have to do with the exclusion of women from power, although it may indeed come to bear on this exclusion, but rather alludes to an institutionalized system with its own practices and its own discursive genres. (p. 112, my translation)

Based on Franco's statement as to the unavoidable phallogocentrism (or phallogocentrism) that shapes language and institutions, the next question is to elucidate the specific historical struggles, definitions of identity, and political contexts of women in Latin America, Europe, and North America, as well as in academic settings elsewhere on different continents. In her

article in this volume, Sara Castro-Klarén speaks to such differences and warns of the “illusions of continuity” between, for example, gender and feminist struggle in the United States and Latin America. To avoid this “illusion of continuity” Castro-Klarén advocates for the recognition of a plurality of feminisms, and for making explicit, as teachers and intellectuals in the United States (and Europe), our own *positionality* in relation to the material taught and discussed in our classrooms. This positionality should include an awareness of the dynamics of disciplines and departments in relation to economic and political mandates.<sup>2</sup>

Reflection on our own *positionality* is embedded in feminist pedagogy. For Robbin D. Crabtree, David Alan Saap, and Adela C. Licona (2009) feminist pedagogy includes a serious consideration and questioning not only of what we teach and how we teach it, but also of who we are in the classroom. Although their book, *Feminist Pedagogy*, does not consider Latin American, Latino or Iberian texts in the US academy, the general principle that the authors have established for feminist pedagogy supports a true understanding of agonist respect<sup>3</sup> for a plurality of feminisms and historical gender struggles around the world:

Like Freire’s liberatory pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is based on assumptions about power and consciousness-raising, acknowledges the existence of oppression as well as the possibility of ending it, and foregrounds the desire for and primary goal of social transformation. However, feminist theorizing offers important complexities such as questioning the notion of a coherent social subject or essential identity, articulating the multifaceted and shifting nature of identities and oppressions, viewing the history and value of feminism consciousness-raising as distinct from Freirean methods, and focusing as much on the interrogation of the teacher’s consciousness and social location as on the student’s. (p. 3)

Teachers’ awareness of social/cultural location is as important as their mindfulness of locus of enunciation in the academy’s dynamics of power/knowledge. These encompass the questions and self-reflection typical of a serious inquiry into our identity and positionality as teachers. The authors in this volume follow the principles of self-reflective and constantly monitored feminist pedagogy, and some of them make explicit their own and their students’ positionality in the classroom, in academia, and in life. The goal of this book is exactly this one: to promote, as consciously gendered teachers, self-reflection and dialogue about our position and praxis in the classroom and academia on the matter of gender through both texts and contexts. For us, it is as important to discuss and

produce a fruitful conversation on the what, how, and who. The question of *who* is particularly relevant in the context of post-colonial feminism, where the gender struggle's claim to universality is contested by adding not only the categories of race, ethnicity, age, class and education, but also, as stated above, the geopolitics and dynamics of knowledge in academic settings. It is not the same to teach gender in Argentina or Bolivia, as it is to teach gender in the United States or the United Kingdom. Even within the United States, location and positionality matter, as is shown by Amanda Petersen's article on her own praxis as a woman from the Midwest teaching in the border zone of San Diego and Tijuana to students from diverse backgrounds.

The authors in this volume focus on the what, the how, and the who, and some of them not only reflect on their practice of teaching, but also elaborate on it through the use of theoretical tools. Theory and praxis, are intertwined with our personal experiences as teachers throughout the book, in which activism is also encouraged alongside critical thinking. In this regard, this volume is about the lived experience of women teaching women and gender (and also their historical and experiential situation) through Latin American, Iberian and Latino texts. The editors have chosen the word "gender" for the title of the volume instead of "women" or "feminism" consciously, because it expresses not so much the constructional or cultural condition of gender vis-à-vis sex or the essentialism of sex—as Judith Butler (1990) has shown, sex and sexual identity are also a cultural construction—but because it leaves the door open to explore women and the female condition, and their situatedness in history, in relation to other forms of sexual identity.

Although centered mainly on feminism and female writing, this book envisions a wider concept of gender and, of equal importance, it seeks to ensure historical and cultural awareness of the multiplicity of gender experiences and identities in Latin American, Iberian, and Latino contexts. Thus, this volume thoroughly explores a fundamental corpus of study, running from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, through a variety of writings and discourses such as fiction, poetry, theater, essays, personal memoirs, first-hand accounts, cinema, and course syllabi and practical guides for gender awareness in the workplace. More importantly still, it includes not only Latin American, but also US-Latino and Spanish peninsular writers and intellectuals, in an effort to better represent both the coexistence and the lack thereof that characterize Hispanic Studies departments, especially when it comes to teaching. The volume is divided into five parts. The first part includes Sara Castro-Klarén's discussion of the aftermath of feminism in relation to Latin American (and Iberian and

Latino) studies. Each of the remaining four sections contains theory, praxis and personal experience, although the focus varies according to the authors' emphasis on the following areas: opening up the canon to include female writers (section 2), different approaches to reading against monologist critical perspectives (section 3), teaching difficult subjects in relation to gender such as violence and border identity (section 4), and teaching gender in interdisciplinary and dynamic settings (section 5).

## I. FEMINISM IN THE AFTERMATH IN LATIN AMERICAN, IBERIAN AND LATINO STUDIES

The chapter that opens the book, "Mobilizing Meanings: Questions for a Pedagogy of Women's Writing," by Sara Castro-Klarén, discusses the role of the academic intellectual, feminism and the construction of the literary canon, re-examining the controversy around Hispanism and Hispanic feminism, and the ideological uses of the term. Castro-Klarén analyzes in detail McRobbie's (*The Aftermath of Feminism, Gender, Culture and Social Change*, 2009) proposal on the way media and consumerism have forged a feminism that is personal and has turned its back on alliances with other groups that resist capitalism and patriarchy. Castro Klarén then moves on to analyze the way in which feminism in academia is subjected to the same criticism and, delving deeper, she examines the question of how feminism made its way into academia in the first place. In her analysis, she draws upon Foucault's explanation of the way disciplines have circumscribed themselves in response to and in negotiation with demands of power. In terms of positionality, she discusses the historically different nature of feminism's demands in the US, in Europe and in other parts of the world. Lastly, Castro-Klarén proposes that the fact of recognizing that there is a plurality of feminisms does not prevent the subject from coalescing around a hegemonic position, and the temptation to speak with one sovereign voice. Thus, Castro-Klarén proposes, following Connolly, an agonistic subject that is always in tension and flux, in order to understand the other.

## II. NEW CANONS, NEW READINGS IN THE CLASSROOM

The chapters that make up the second section propose a revision of the canon in traditional areas of study, such as medieval and Golden Age literature, Latin American 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature, and contemporary Spanish, Latin American and Latino literatures. They propose courses that include reading material that had previously been excluded or overlooked.

Their courses give preeminence to female authors, feminist theory, and linguistic dissidence. Núria Silleras-Fernández, for example, opens up the canon and includes less renowned authors such as Leonor López de Córdoba (c. 1362–1420), and Clarissan nun and abbess Isabel de Villena (1430–90), who wrote a *Vita Christi* in Catalan, in which she gave the Virgin Mary, rather than Jesus Christ, center stage. Silleras-Fernández proposes that we “historicize gender performativity,” considering the relationship between authors, patrons, and audiences, and also the linguistic situation in Iberia at the time such texts were written and circulated. She reminds us that multilingualism was more of a norm than an exception in the peninsula, and that authors belonged not only to several linguistic communities, but also to different ethno-religious communities. Silleras-Fernández further analyzes the role of Augustinian friar Martín de Córdoba’s *Jardín de nobles doncellas* as a pedagogic text written for the future Queen Isabel the Catholic when she was seventeen, and which exhorted her to practice man’s virtues. This text, that intended to masculinize Isabel, was disregarded by the queen, showing that medieval women—particularly aristocratic women—had far more agency than students tend to think. For Silleras-Fernández, “analyzing how a remote and foreign society conceived of and constructed gender, femininity, masculinity, sexuality, the body, and feminism, can help students to think not only about a foreign past, but also about their own present, and how their own society and culture treats the same issues.”

Along the same lines, Vanesa Miseres, in “The Personal is Political: Teaching Gender and Nation through Nineteenth-Century Texts,” recovers for her classes figures and writers who show the importance of historicizing gender in order to avoid stereotypes in the Latin American gender struggle. Miseres teaches, for example, Colonel Juana Azurduy (1780-1862), a patriotic mestizo woman who fought in the Upper Peru independence wars alongside her husband, Commandant Manuel Ascencio Padilla, and founded her own army against the Spanish forces after his death. This example and others showed how women who were excluded from the legal-political sphere for the most part, many times assumed active roles on the battlefield and as part of independence campaigns. Miseres also explores in her classes how in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women like Juana Manuela Gorriti, Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, Clorinda Matto de Turner, and Teresa González de Fanning also hosted *tertulias*, or intellectual salons, where the ‘imagined communities’ of nations “were rooted in the social interactions of these smaller but more tangible communities of writers, readers, conversationalists, and political conspirators” (Sara Chambers, 2003, p. 60, quoted by Miseres). Besides

organizing *tertulias*, and through them acting in the political sphere, these women proliferated in print culture. Their writings appeared in journals and newspapers and reflected their strong commitment to the project of building the nation and citizenship. They also founded their own publishing houses, in addition to writing novels, short stories, and essays. Miseres's article shows the importance of understanding and becoming aware of the role played by women in the beginnings of the Latin American nations, and how gender and nation intersect.

The third article of this section, "Teaching Hispanic Feminisms: From Academic Consciousness Raising to Activism" by Ellen Mayock, proposes four syllabi and course material to incorporate new Iberian, Latin American, and US-Latina female voices and gendered readings of their work in the classroom. For example, in her course, "*Voice and visibility in Escritoras mexicanas y mexicoamericanas*," Mayock and her students examine Mexican and Mexican-American authors, from Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to Sandra Cisneros, and explore questions related to gender and history, gender and genre, and the relations between Mexican and Chicana authors, rethinking the uses and demarcation of Spanish and English in the Spanish-language literature classroom. In her classes, Mayock does not lose sight of the intersection between literature, theory and activism, and she promotes, through "a series of feminist pedagogical practices—taking turns being discussion leaders, shared journals, invited speakers, round table discussions—" experience in leadership for her students, an active role in their own learning and feminist activism. It is worth pointing out that throughout her article, Mayock reflects on her own positionality as an academic in a well-respected small Southern liberal arts institution in the United States, aware that "How we teach the gender question in our colleges and universities is heavily influenced by geographic region, institutional history, pre-existing curricula, and the intellectual interests of departments, students, and professors." Moreover, she introduces a problematization of the "aftermath" of feminism and women's studies vis-à-vis LGBTQ demands and critical discourses in academia and the public arena.

In their chapter, "Gendered Matters: Engaging Early Modern *Dramaturgas* in the Classroom," Valerie Hegstrom and Amy Williamsen reconstruct their work at GEMELA (Grupo de Estudios sobre la mujer en España y las Américas Pre-1800), in which they have successfully advocated for expanding the corpus of Golden Age *dramaturgas*, and other female writers for the most part unknown and under-taught in the Spanish curriculum. The authors provide a valuable appendix of the recent anthologies and critical studies about these—until few years ago—forgotten

female writers to make the case for this flourishing field. The authors analyze the gender issues that arise in the Early Modern *dramaturgas*' work, and the productive discussion about these texts in the classroom around topics such as female and male cross-dressing, passing, female agency and patriarchal authority, and gendered violence, among others.

### III. SHIFTING THE GROUND WHEN READING

The authors in this section propose ways of reading traditional and non-traditional texts in order to shake fossilized critical approaches and unveil stereotypical and non-historical perspectives in literary criticism and in the classroom. In my chapter "How to Read a Masculine Canon: Gender and *Indigenismo*," I propose following gender approaches to Indigenism. This prominent Latin American movement, which is part of most graduate examinations' reading lists, has represented mainly patriarchal societies without questioning them from a gender perspective, but rather from the points of view of race and class. Among the few women who did cultivate *indigenismo* was Mexican writer Rosario Castellanos, who did so following the explicit coordinates of gender. However, she went about introducing the perspective of women and gender struggle in her novels in both explicit and implicit manners. While other of Rosario Castellanos's readers have already pointed out her inclusion of female characters and representation of gender, the aim of my proposal, of reading Castellanos vis-à-vis other Indigenista writers, such as José María Arguedas and Miguel Ángel Asturias, is to explore the way Castellanos reworks typical characters of patriarchal Indigenism, undermining it from inside the genre and the movement themselves through figures such as the landowner. This type of reading is not always easy when a movement has many established trends; however, it is worth noting how feminist perspective can rewrite the canon from within. My proposal is to deeply explore the positionality of Castellanos's feminism in the history of this important literary and social movement in Latin America. In a word, I propose to read feminism at the intersection of social and literary history.

Cynthia Tompkins explores a true practice of feminist pedagogy through the presentation of the same topic and literary work under different theoretical perspectives. Following Patti Lather's seminal pedagogical strategy that consists of focusing on an event from different ideological standpoints so that students may become aware of the implications of each paradigm, Tompkins offers a variety of feminist approaches to analyze María Victoria Menis's *Cámara oscura* [*Camera Obscura*] (2008), and Albertina Carri's *La rabia* [*Anger*] (2008). The lenses are: cultural



feminism and its condemnation of the overemphasis of masculine values, French feminism and its exploration of the feminine unconscious, radical feminism and its discourse of patriarchal oppression, and lastly social feminism, which holds that the causes of oppression are multiple, resulting from class, race, and gender, embedded as they are in institutional structures. In her article, Tompkins also establishes the importance of history and the positionality of texts and authors regarding feminism, particularly in texts that reflect on the condition of women in the circumstances of European immigration to Argentina at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*Cámara oscura*), and the gender power dynamics in rural settings, also in Argentina (*La rabia*). Tompkins demonstrates the richness of a text that goes through different analytical perspectives and reading lenses, making them establish a dialogue rather than imposing a monological version of a given text. As Tompkins remarks, “pedagogically, it may empower students to question the attempt to impose any one interpretation.”

#### IV. BREAKING THE AGREEMENT OF SILENCE, TEACHING UNCOMFORTABLE SUBJECTS

In “Interrogating Gendered Mexican Cultural Icons in a ‘Border’ Classroom,” Amanda Petersen talks about the discomfort of discussing certain subjects in the classroom as a learning experience for teachers and students alike. Describing what Laura Rendón (2006) calls an “agreement of silence”—“a refusal to discuss difference for fear of creating discomfort” (p. 4), Petersen talks about the creation of a space in her classroom where teacher and students can notice nuance and articulate difference, and “actively break said agreement of silence.” The author explains her experience as a white woman from the Midwest teaching at a private university in San Diego, on the Mexican border. She specifically discusses a class where she teaches gender and border identity through the analysis of cultural icons and symbols: the revolutionary hero Pancho Villa, the revered Virgin of Guadalupe, and the highly controversial figure of “Tía Juana,” (Madam Tijuana). These symbols and icons allow her students to question traditional notions of Mexican masculinity and femininity, deconstructing seemingly unquestionable nationalistic and religious figures. What makes her teaching experience more challenging is not only the questioning of sacred or controversial icons but also, and more importantly, doing so in the border setting, where students from different social, economic, national, and religious backgrounds are engaging in the conversation. Following Mary Louise Pratt (1991), Petersen envisions her

classroom as contact zone: a “classroom that function(s) not like a homogenous community or a horizontal alliance” (p. 39). Pratt’s concept directly links to the notion of the border as studied by Robert McKee Irwin (2007) and Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez (2006), who move away from a notion of border understood just in the binary terms of US-Mexico. Petersen is aware of this and recognizes that “each student has something at stake in the classroom [...]: the American reads the anti-gringo rhetoric, the Mexican American student both reads about and shares personal experience with being seen as neither from the US or from Mexico, and the Mexican student both shares her personal experience of life in Tijuana and rejects and/or accepts literary descriptions of it.” Following McKee Irwin, Petersen remembers that cultural icons in the borderlands “can only be constructed around the inevitable tensions, conflicts, and debates that determine the cultural complexity of a contact zone” (p. xix).

In “Approaches to Teaching Rape in the Spanish Literature Classroom: Alicia Giménez Bartlett’s *Ritos de muerte*,” Shelley Godsland likewise discusses her experience with “breaking the agreement of silence,” but in her case around the topic of rape. Specifically, Godsland describes the reaction and comments when analyzing Giménez Bartlett’s novel *Ritos de muerte* [*Death Rites*]. The detective novel provides good material to analyze rape and the circumstances around it: domestic violence, physical and psychological, family abuse, the disciplinary institutions of the law and the police, and stereotypes surrounding criminal and victim in all of these settings. Through this lens, gender struggle becomes more evident, as for Godsland, rape “constitutes a fundamental control mechanism that underpins the wider patriarchy within which my (mostly female) students and I must operate on a daily basis.” Godsland follows Marco Abel’s (2007) work about the portrayal of violence in literature and film and “the obvious importance of analyzing [them] because [...] they bear the *pedagogical* potential for activating an *ethical* mode of encounter with violence” (p. 189, original emphasis).

## V. INTERDISCIPLINARY AND CROSSROADS

In “Teaching Gender for the Multicultural Workplace,” Mary Long discusses her experience as director of the Spanish for the Professions major at the University of Colorado. Long talks about the challenges of intertwining the principles and goals of the humanities and liberal arts, where the academic foundation is aimed at life skills, with the more pragmatic and applied vision of business schools, which aim to “prepare students with specific, job-oriented ‘hard’ skills” (Kelm, 2005). The

interdisciplinary approach of the program and the bridge it constructs between the business sector and the humanities provide the students with not only linguistic proficiency in courses such as business translation, but also with historical, literary and cultural knowledge to understand the richness and complexity of Latin American, Latino and Iberian cultures. For Long, it is fundamental to educate students on the self-awareness and questioning of gender dynamics in the classroom and their own society, in order to compare and contrast with other cultures and dismantle stereotypes. Through specific classroom activities, in her courses Long also studies the role of women of all classes, backgrounds and education, and their leadership in the business practice of Latin America and Spain, in order to fully grasp the complexities of business in global contexts.

“Performing Gender in the Classroom and on the Stage,” by Debra Castillo, proposes to analyze a similarly challenging situation in online courses applied to the humanities, and more specifically to her theater project (Teatrotaller) at Cornell University, “particularly in these days of burgeoning pressure to move our classrooms to a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) environment.” Among other plays, Castillo talks about Teatrotaller’s performance of *Las mujeres de Ciudad Juárez*, by Mexican actor and playwright Cristina Michaus (a very stylized social drama focused on the femicide in the border city) and the connection and affective reaction of the audience, something that is very difficult to convey and grasp in online courses. Following Marshall McLuhan (1964), Castillo argues that the message is not the content in our communicative exchanges but that the medium: “This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium [...] result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology” (p. 35). For Castillo there are important signs and implicit discourses in face-to-face communication and performance that trigger an affective and emotional connection between the performers and the audience, and among the members of the audience itself, and that these fade away in online media. Castillo reminds us that affect theory in the humanities teaches us of the importance of “the kinds of values that we associate with gender-conscious scholarship and forms of academic organization, as well as with the structure of the traditional seminar class; a kind of pedagogy, in Julia Woods’ succinct formulation, in which ‘teaching involves hearts as well as minds’” (p. 138).

Latin American, Iberian and Latino feminism and gender studies have frequently been overlooked in academia in favor of their French, English or American counterparts. The aim of this book is to fill that gap. Fundamentally, this book is a reflection on our own praxis as intellectuals

in university classrooms. This is of particular interest in an era when academic international feminism, be it critical or pedagogical, is examining younger generations' responses to gender issues and feminism, both within and beyond the framework of nostalgia, and in relation to current debates over the term itself and labels. Along these lines, this book answers a wide range of questions such as: "Does feminism exist in the university classroom?" "How do we talk with our students about 'the gender question' through Latin American, Iberian, and Latino literature and cultural texts?" "What direction has the debate taken in academia and beyond?" "What are our criteria for selecting authors, topics and approaches in the classroom?" "How is the traditional canon contested?" "What is our own *positionality* in US and European academic settings in relation to these texts?" "How do we embrace a feminist pedagogy?" "How do we acknowledge the conflicting plurality of feminisms and gender issues in Latin America, Iberian Peninsula and Latino culture?" Although based for the most part on empirical approaches to the above questions, the fundamental aim of this book is to rethink and open new lines of debate in the theoretical field of international gender studies at large. In terms of a philosophy of teaching, the book aims to suggest new approaches to these subjects in learning/teaching settings.

If it is true, as Sara Castro-Klarén declares in this volume, that both academic feminism and feminism at large are situated in an aftermath matrix, and that there is backlash to academic feminism, how do Latin American, Iberian, and Latino gender studies situate themselves in this allegedly exhausted or attacked discussion? The critical essays in this volume propose different ways to revive that debate. Thus, the authors in this volume are promoting texts and authors that are new and in some cases unknown even within the canon, and are reflecting on still veiled gender challenges and current political disputes for women and sexual minorities. An important aspect of this volume is that it is not centered on a single author, period or specific movement, but, on the contrary, covers an ample spectrum of texts that are under-represented in literary histories and bibliographical resources. This book does not offer a single or homogeneous perspective on women and gender issues. Instead, the articles it contains seek to provide a deep historical contextualization of the texts and cultural phenomena that they study, by understanding the importance of the specificities of the different cultural milieu in which they arose. For such an approach, one must inevitably deal with the inextricable differences in class, race, ethnicity, language and politics that make up the patchwork of Latin American, Iberian, and Latino communities.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The editors of this volume first put together and presented papers as part of the workshop *Teaching the Gender Question: Towards New Solutions* at the symposium *University of Colorado Women Succeeding Symposium* organized by the University of Colorado at Boulder (2011). One year later (2012) we organized a symposium *Teaching “Women”:* *Gendered Perspectives through Hispanic Texts* on our university campus with the support of the Spanish and Portuguese Department, the Women and Gender Studies Program, the Women’s Resource Center, the Latin American Studies Center and the Faculty Conference Award. Our Keynote speakers were Sara Castro-Klaren, Cynthia Tompkins and Debra Castillo. The symposium was a great opportunity to discuss the ideas that appear in this volume with our colleagues and graduate students.
- <sup>2</sup> Expanding outside academia, it is also important to consider the voices of women excluded from the main stream culture. For example, in her book, *Feminismos desde Abya Yala, ideas y proposiciones de las mujeres de 607 pueblos en nuestra américa*, Francesca Gargallo Celentani collects accounts of struggle and reflection from indigenous women, and reminds us that: “For years white and whitewashed—as Rita Laura Segato defines the thinking of people who, though not white, share white people’s systems of values—feminism, which today has achieved significant institutionalized spaces, has only listened to the demands of women who live and want to liberate themselves within a binary and exclusive gender system, which organizes both their knowledge and their market economy equally. Therefore, when it addresses women from other nations, it seeks to educate them according to the standard parameters of its own system, without listening to their demands, without learning about their history of struggle, without acknowledging the validity of their ideas. It organizes ‘leadership schools’ without realizing that the very idea of leadership wreaks havoc upon the political identity of those who think collectively, being capable of individual contributions shared with society. It proposes equality with men, when in dual, non-binary processes equality is not a guiding principle of political organizing that women demand. It is irritated by the idea of multiple complementarity, which the feminists of many peoples study in order to see themselves once more as builders of a history of the Americas that is neither white nor whitewashed, where neither women in the face of men, nor their people in the face of the nation-state that contains it, experience any form of subordination, but rather interact in the historic building of their wellbeing.” (p. 11, my translation)
- <sup>3</sup> Following Nietzsche and Foucault, Connolly (1993) defines agonist respect as a sort of “spiritualization of the enemy” (Nietzsche): “Agonistic respect differs from its sibling, liberal tolerance, in affirming a more ambiguous relation of interdependence and strife between identities over a passive letting the other be. The latter may be desirable on occasion, but it is less available in late-modern life than some liberals presume. It is not sufficient to shed ‘prejudice’ because our identities are bound up with each other in a world where pressures to enact general policies are always active. It ‘cuts’ deeper than tolerance because it folds contestation into the foundations of the putative identity from which liberal tolerance is often derived and delimited. But, still, it remains close enough to liberal tolerance to invite comparison and critical negotiation, pressing its debating partner to fold the spirit of genealogy more actively into its characterization of ‘the individual’ and arguing against the spirit of complacency so often lodged in bifurcations between the private and the public” (Connolly, 1993, p. 382).

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*Leila Gómez*  
*University of Colorado at Boulder*



**I.**

**FEMINISM IN THE AFTERMATH IN LATIN  
AMERICAN, IBERIAN AND LATINO STUDIES**





SARA CASTRO-KLARÉN

## 2. MOBILIZING MEANINGS: QUESTIONS FOR A PEDAGOGY OF WOMEN'S WRITING

### INTRODUCTION

There is no question that both academic feminism and feminism at large are now situated in an “after” matrix. Theorists have been writing about the end of the first and second wave of feminism since the 1980’s, albeit with different emphasis and twists. Journalists in the United States have documented the neo-liberal backlash, and scholar-activists have characterized the aftermath of feminism in terms that spell both the exhaustion of a powerful discourse of gender liberation and a no-exit situation for many of the key convictions of gender theory. In this essay I analyze Angela McRobbie’s (2009) critical account of the “aftermath” and I return to Michel Foucault’s (1977/1980) questions on the production of truth in relation to power in order to refresh the importance and relevance of his questions on the problem of the author, literature as a discipline and gender studies as a discourse enmeshed in social and academic power struggles. I end with a reflection on the feminist canon formation of Latin American literature in the United States Academy. I will argue, that in the conceptualization of the field of inquiry as well as in the elaboration of syllabi for the classroom it is necessary to problematize the temporal line that continues to posit “Latin American Culture” with an “origin” in Medieval Spain. This is of course part of the problem with “Hispanism,” a construct that has its beginning in the post-independence nineteenth century in which the Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento categorically rejects such “origins” and the Venezuelan-Chilean Andrés Bello endeavors to retain them. After Spain lost its colonies to the wars of independence of 1810–24, Spanish intellectuals such as Menéndez Pidal and Menéndez Pelayo, under the sponsorship of the Spanish state, tried to recover the lost colonies with a “cultural” move of appropriation in a subaltern hierarchy where Castilian letters are featured as origin and past as well as future model. History and the construct “Latin American Literature” have of course proven things to be quite different. Disposing of this fallacious “origin” as well as presumptions of kinship due to the common use of Castilian is just as urgent as the problematization of space, for the troubled temporal line tends to reappear under the guise of transatlantic studies or

even “global” feminism. On the confusion permitted, although fallacious and unnecessary, by the common use of Castilian I refer the reader to Jorge Luis Borges’s articles on (1932) “El escritor argentino y la tradición” and (1952) “Las alarmas del Dr. Américo Castro.”

#### FEMINISM’S AFTERMATH

Angela McRobbie’s (2009) *The Aftermath of Feminism, Gender, Culture and Social Change* stands out for the clarity of its arguments and its political positions. It allows for the points of discussion to emerge with almost stark singularity. The fact that it squarely, from its Marxist perspective, takes on neo-liberalism’s conflictive relation to certain aspects of feminism’s three waves, provides a good contrast with Josephine Donovan’s (2012) focus on gynocentrism and ecofeminism as portents of the future in an uninterrupted continuum of struggles and gains.<sup>1</sup> The recent date of publications of both books is also helpful in measuring the place of the aftermath in both space and time. The object of McRobbie’s study is not exactly feminism or gender studies in the academy. What concerns her inquiry is the conceptual and political framework within which “popular culture,” especially women’s magazines and film, has played a decisive role in the “undoing of feminism” (p. 11). She argues that “popular culture through an array of Machiavellian elements” (p. 11) has perniciously and effectively brought about the demise of feminism. While studies like *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration* critically point to the “consumerist a-political bent of third wave theory” (Donovan, 2007, p. 201), identifying it as part of the cultural logic of late capitalism, they do not, like McRobbie analyze and decry the loss of feminism’s capacity to ally itself and become solidary with other movements for liberation (from capitalism and patriarchy) occurring on a worldwide basis. Indispensable for any concerns over the struggles of canon formation is McRobbie’s focus and discomfort with the pervasiveness of a powerful and popular post-modern culture that disparages feminism, and at the same time constitutes today’s fulcrum in which subjectivities and interpretative horizons of college and university readers are forged, not to mention the globe’s population.

What is most striking and puzzling about McRobbie’s (2009) account of the aftermath is the capacity of those purveyors of popular culture to have brought about the undoing of feminism by deploying and appealing to the very central positions of feminism: freedom of choice and equality for the individual (p. 11). McRobbie, following Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (pp. 25–27), finds that, while the first and second waves of feminism and

gender politics were part of a chain of solidary struggles linked to chains of equivalences for liberation in which feminism played an important role, feminism in the hands of magazine publishers, film and television producers has been separated from these other struggles and re-presented or resemanticized as a matter of individual behaviors. The links in the chain were broken. These choices portend the liberating capacity that resides in offering infinite freedom of personal selections from a limitless menu of desires and behaviors. This freedom is well articulated and better visualized with slick photography in women's magazines and glamorous film narratives in order to convey consistently the same message: be sexy, be professionally successful, practice sexual freedom, be a successful consumer of desires and eventually marry and settle down.

In retrospect, we can see that feminism, born out of capitalism itself, but paradoxically understood by some of its proponents as a defining force in the undoing of capital, did not anticipate that in deploying "freedom of choice," and "equality"<sup>2</sup> in tandem with the supremacy of the individual as the rock of liberating social formations, liberation became what Laclau (2005) conceptualizes as a "floating signifier" in his *On Populist Reason*.<sup>3</sup> As such the signifiers "freedom," "do your own thing," sexual liberation, sexual equality, and equal pay for equal work, could be appropriated and redeployed for and from rival discourses. For McRobbie (2009), this resemanticization of the once rebellious discourse of culture and politics of choice and liberation amounts to nothing less than "the re-instatement of gender hierarchies through new subtle forms of patriarchal power ... a kind of return to older pre-modern family based units" (p. 47). Nothing, not even Judith Butler's attempt at dismantling kinship (not just the nuclear family) as a principle of social organization can, for McRobbie, stem the victory of neo-liberalism (capital, marriage, the family, consumerism) in its battle for meaning and power with post-socialist radicalism (p. 49), the latter being the perspective which McRobbie assumes and from which her critique of the undoing of feminism departs.

Popular culture as the site where "common sense," where power is remade and re-enacted every day (Butler, Laclau, & Žižek, 2000, p. 14), is particularly disturbing to McRobbie's (2009) sense of loss of the promise of her vision of feminism for she feels that the media (film and television) dispense stories that posit marriage as happiness for a girl and thus reinstates the patriarchal order that feminism, in her view, set out to overturn (p. 12). This critic particularly laments her own observation that popular culture does not posit any other kind of alternative family arrangements as the conveyors of happiness for girls and women and thus closes the horizon of possibilities for social experimentation and liberation

(p. 12). It is interesting to note the fact that Intentional Communities—unrelated people of all ages banding to live together under a particular faith, program or community ideals—are beginning to appear again in the United States. Though none with a particular feminist bent, the *Washington Post* reports on several local communities, the oldest being the Assisi Community and one of newest bearing the name of The Green Vine Co-op.<sup>4</sup>

Underlining McRobbie's (2009) observation and valuation of the "loss" suffered by feminism is the assumption that marriage constitutes a less than positive social and personal condition for women in general. Liberation is taken to mean forms of sexual, gender and political organization that exclude marriage as desired, necessary or prescribed. This particular point is important to keep in mind, as it is pivotal for any discussion of the relationship of feminist theory and the formation of a canon of Latin American women writers to be taught in the United States academy. "Marriage" or "kinship" has simply not been theorized in Latin American literary or socio-political discourses. So that to introduce this discussion when analyzing any text proceeding from Latin America calls for great caution lest the interpreters violate the text's own horizons of intelligibility. In regretting the pro-family feminism theorized by Jean Bethke-Elshtein,<sup>5</sup> McRobbie points out this re-valuing of marriage is under-theorized (p. 31). Certainly, divorce, which had remained under-theorized but has now received a thorough longitudinal examination by Andrew Cherlin, (2009) does not appear to be particularly recommendable for any one's well-being. Well-being is, of course, another area that remains under-theorized or mis-theorized not only by feminist scholars, but by psychologists, cognitive scientists, economists and a host of other specialists in various disciplines. The point here is that we do really not know with much certainty about what kinds of social and affective arrangements are full proof "good" for human beings and thus caution and humility are in order when it comes to recommending experimentation.

Moving on from her critique of the dismantling work carried out by purveyors of popular culture (magazine editors, film makers, television producers, that is to say the educated liberal corporate elite) and citing the neo-liberal attack on feminism known as the "backlash," well documented in Susan Faludi's (1992) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*, McRobbie (2009) turns to an analysis of academic feminism. Academic feminism, she argues, became susceptible to the influence of Foucault and thus proceeded to "dismantle itself" (p. 13). The British critic writes that "under the prevailing influence of Foucault, there is a shift away from feminist interest in centralized power blocks, e.g. the state, patriarchy, law,

to more dispersed sites, events and instances of power conceptualized as flows and specific convergences and consolidations of talk, discourse, effects” (p. 13). Thus for McRobbie, feminism morphed into cultural studies under the influence of Foucault and therefore lost its thrust as a political movement in both the academy and the culture at large.

Nevertheless she takes note of the fact that it is this Foucauldian shift that opens the way for the influential and radical work of Judith Butler on the central questions of gender, its cultural production and the discourses that sustain or undermine it, as her work itself testifies. The inclusion of Judith Butler’s work on the body, while admired by readers in general, and credited with much radical thinking, is decoupled from Foucault’s own influential inquiry into the genealogy of sexuality and its impact across disciplines, not just feminism. In fact, McRobbie (2009) makes a point of rejecting Foucault’s genealogical approach. It is curious to see this occlusion on McRobbie’s part for it is an occlusion that invites speculation. One wonders, for instance, in which way does the Foucault-Butler connection disturb the theses that McRobbie puts forth on the dismantling of feminism by neo-liberalism alone in the realm of popular culture (It did not reach the academy? The culture of “choice” and self-fashioning did not pervade the academy? Are there no correspondences between the academy and popular culture? Did not the proliferation of the idea that the personal is the political guide many a scholarly project and publication?). The dismantling of feminism under the pressures of cultural studies is theoretically acceptable but it cannot occlude the fact that a considerable amount of feminist scholarship gained traction and influence in its convergence with the spidery micro-topics of cultural studies and its capacity to command the cultural pages of the *New York Times* and many highbrow liberal magazines, not just the glossy pages available at the hair dresser or the dentist. These are points of inflection that impact any consideration for thinking and practicing pedagogy about texts authored by women in geo-cultural zones other than Euroamerica.

While McRobbie (2009) gives full credit to the impact of Butler’s work on gender studies, the author of *The Aftermath of Feminism* remains uncertain as to the connection of such radicalizing inquiry into gender (gender trouble and gender bending, gender performativity) and the future of a feminism that she understands to aspire to represent a more general struggle against capitalism and especially patriarchal institutions (p. 13). She particularly laments the “fact” that the media manages sexual conduct today and that as a result of the campaign against Big Feminism, as in *Fatal Attraction*, (pp. 34–37): “young women [today] recoil in horror at the idea of feminists” (p. 16). She further fears the prospect of a new conservative

feminism that posits marriage as a good outcome for a girl's or boy's life (p. 31). McRobbie argues that what she terms the "new sexual contract" (p. 54)—women are offered opportunities to gain professional credentials, good jobs, and fertility control—leads to a new feminized citizenship that has been excised from feminist political struggles at home and abroad (pp. 54–55).

Clearly the "new sexual contract" is not satisfactory for McRobbie (2009) and in a way brings up Freud's question again: What do women want? This question is being pursued with great vigor by sexologists, whose disinterest in monogamy and heterosexuality might be of interest to a radical inquiry into the aftermaths of feminism. Freud's puzzled question is now the title of a book by the journalist and prize winning fiction writer Daniel Bergner (2013). In his *What do Women Want? Adventures in the Science of Female Desire*, he reports on the laboratory experiments being carried out by sexologists in quest of a pre-cultural answer to women's desire. Here again we see the specter of Foucault whose *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973) anticipates the cyborg medicalization of women's desire and the scientific passion for metrics guiding the experiments conceived and described in *What do Women Want?*

McRobbie (2009) acknowledges in passing that the neo-liberalism in popular culture is not only a threat and obstacle to, but rather accounts for the current impossibility of restoring to feminism its original liberating thrust. There are other threats as well, and they vary in the degree of virulence that they represent. While she indicates a positive role played by post-colonial feminist critique of Eurocentric feminism as practiced by the influential voice of Gayatri Spivak, she does not even mention the earlier challenge to Eurocentric feminism leveled by Domitila Chungara<sup>6</sup>. This second occlusion is in and of itself interesting for two reasons. First, it points to a curious general dismissal or absence of any thing Latin American on the part of a British theoretician, who ironically, sees feminism's own fulfillment in its capacity or possibility of establishing chains of solidarity with other movements of liberation as theorized by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) in their *Hegemony and Social Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. Second, such a dismissal of thought in Latin America, although not unusual in the United States Academy, should give pause to the question of the elaboration and composition of the canon in courses offered in Spanish departments (constituted by the common use of Castilian) on Latin American women writers and the history of feminism south of the border.

Finally, it is important to note here that McRobbie's (2009) analysis of the aftermath of feminism and the forces that have brought it to its

weakened present situation, include the rise of conservative feminism, a movement that she specifically decries for believing that marriage is not to be disparaged as a lifestyle for women and men. This tension too, I find important in the discussion of cultural histories and trends in Latin America and its relation to gender studies for while there has always, from Sor Juana on, been a critique of marriage and its subalternization of women in the sphere of domesticity, there has not been a theorization of marriage as per definition an institution or practice antagonist to women's freedom, fruitful organization of affects or well-being in general. Eventually, McRobbie's inquiry concludes that what we have now are *many* feminisms. While she does not delve into how and why they struggle or where they converse with each other and in relation to wider and more multiple struggles for power, she shows particular concern over the "dismantling" of feminism in the Anglo-american academy. The presence of multiple (dismantled and reemerging) feminisms in the academy, a strong aftermath in the culture at large and the globalized communication environment that McRobbie sees as the present horizon of possibilities bears directly onto the project of feminine/feminist canon construction. Plurality of feminism and plurality of locations and actors is then the lesson that the practice of canon construction needs to keep in mind at all times.

Before we go into the inquiry posed by Foucault's take on the imbrications of truth and power and the question of the intellectual (i.e. professors of gender studies, women's literature, public intellectuals, etc.), let us pause to ask a few further questions that McRobbie's (2009) study invites. Let us consider the following: 1) To what extent does this reading of the demise of feminism inform or trouble the categories of gender, gendering of authors and gendering of writing that prevail in the classroom today? 2) How do we understand, and where do we situate, the relationship of these challenged categories and their cultural matrices, with respect to our students, who, according to McRobbie are subjects molded by the hijacked feminism of popular culture? In other words, what epistemological realm do the readers of *Seventeen* or *Cosmo Girl* inhabit and in what way are they constituted as possible readers of Maria Luisa Bombal, Rosario Castellanos, Alejandra Pizarnik, or Nélida Piñon? 3) Should we not pause to ask with Hans Robert Jauss (1982): what is the horizon of expectations at play in these classrooms? Finally, how do we, students of Latin American culture, circulate the major tenets of gender studies into the formation of the canon of Latin American women writers? What precautions have we taken in light of the fact that there are always multiple gender formations and multiple ways of inhabiting the feminine?



FOUCAULT AND THE CANON

In this section I want to address the other part of the question posed by the editors of this volume, namely, the position of women intellectuals in the academy. My space is now short, but I will briefly pose some of the questions stemming from Foucault's own interpellation on the production of truth and power. What follows will be more in the form of statements for formulating questions since I do not have the space to present the evidence and arguments.

In the interview with Pasquale Pasquino, better known today as "Truth and Power," Foucault (1977/1980) remarks on the resistant reception that his early questioning of the relationship of psychiatry to power and the production of truth had come to represent not only in the Soviet Union but also in liberal democracies such as France. In retrospect, he feels that he should not have been surprised at such resistance, given the very tenets of his own thesis on the indissoluble and constitutive relation of truth to power as inscribed in practices and institutions. Foucault states that he chose psychiatry rather than physics to explore the relationships of knowledge to power because "the epistemological profile of psychiatry is a low one and psychiatry's practice is linked with a whole range of institutions, economic requirements and political issues of social regulation" (Foucault, 1977/1980, p. 111). In our inquiry into intellectuals and feminism in the United States academy, we might want to keep in mind the epistemological contours of feminism/gender studies and its acclimatization in the academy in both the development of curricula, syllabi, and certificates and degrees in order to ascertain the complexity of the position occupied by gender theory and gender academic practices in the production and distribution of power-knowledge. The history of this cultural formation has not been written yet, but we could gain some insight from looking at other related discursive formations. For example, humanists can observe with detachment the development of sexology as portrayed in *What Do Women Want?* (2013), since it occurs within the realm of the sciences. We could reflect on how the science of sexology—project proposals, grant competitions, experts with advanced academic degrees in medicine, psychiatry, biology, government and private sector grants for laboratories, pharmaceutical companies interested in developing the Viagra for women—moves along making its findings and securing an indispensable place for itself on "women" episteme and any future discussions about their "happiness."

From this empirical and discursive perspective, McRobbie (2009) is correct. The introduction of Foucault across the disciplines but especially in gender studies, in the United States academy, has steered feminist studies

and feminism itself into the field of cultural studies. Analyzed from the theoretical perspective of “Truth and Power,” feminism loses its “aura” in Benjamin’s (1969) sense of the term, and appears as an object of study as any other important but not unique development in a socio-intellectual history of the West, or as McRobbie decries, an aspect of the history of capital and its capacity to absorb challenges and reinvent itself. The question is then, to what extent should a reflection on the pedagogy of gender view the development of gender studies as one “event” among others, in Foucault’s sense of the term, in the dynamics of the power-knowledge grid that saw the formation of new subjectivities in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it became the site of the dissolution of modern epistemologies and modern empires?

As a third instance, we could ask, how and in which ways did the feminisms of the first, second and even third wave (post-feminism) become hegemonic in the United States academy and how did the gender theory knowledge complex also become hegemonic in the pedagogy of Latin American literature and culture? What have been the corridors of transmission, how and to what extent have interdisciplinary knowledges chiseled away, if at all, the assumptions about the identity of authorship with the text, the assumption of gendered writing and practices, and above all the construction of a canon in which women writers are separated from their male counterparts, so that the unspoken cultural representation given in such course syllabi, is that women exist, work, dream and create in a sort of parallel universe. Many a syllabus’ unspoken assumption is that it is unproblematic to compare Clarise Lispector to Damiela Eltit or Nélide Piñon but not to Machado de Assis, the master of Brazilian prose who obviously looms as large as Virginia Woolf does for Lispector’s own definition as a writer. I think that a return to some of the problematic explored in “What is an Author” by Foucault (1998) and Hans Robert Jauss’s (1982) concept of horizon of expectations (*Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*) would provide an invigorating injection into the hermeneutics of the pedagogy of gender.

Clearly much more can be done with the questions Foucault poses in this and other essays on the production of truth and power. The specific historical position of the intellectual allows us to touch not only on women writers and filmmakers but also on academics. Very early on in his thought on culture Foucault remarks on the definitive eclipse of the public intellectual as modeled by Jean Paul Sartre. The sad retreat of the intellectual and his/her replacement by the expert has been aptly studied in both English-based scholarship and in Latin America. This phenomenon too is food for thought, for our questions about gender pedagogy for

women—given the conditions of literacy and access to higher education in Latin American history—have always had to wage a huge struggle for public recognition, for a voice in the very *machista* public spheres of the nation states where they were born. Often, while their male contemporaries were busy establishing national literary canons that did not include women—José Ingenieros, Ricardo Rojas—or fighting over the place of the *gauchesca* in the making of the national canon—Borges and Leopoldo Lugones—women like Bombal and Gabriela Mistral were writing and struggling to be recognized as people sitting at the same table.

#### MOBILIZING MEANINGS AND NEW POSITIONS AND DEPARTURES

The problematic concerning women writers, feminisms, testimonio, the canon, and questions in subaltern studies devolves into questions of temporal and spatial positionality as well as the geopolitics of before and after. I bring back for discussion the problem of positionality together with the questions of foundational authority in order to move on to a reflection on mobilizing meanings, a reflection that will enable us to avoid problems of sovereign subjects, hegemonic truths as well as congealing or passing orthodoxies. It would seem that any discussion of feminism today is not served well enough by simply accepting that there is or there was not just ONE feminism but rather there are and there will be a plurality of ways of being/acting female-feminist in different historical and epistemological sites. Such an acknowledgement of *feminism in the plural* requires a careful and considered theorizing of the question of positionality, a discussion absent in McRobbie (2009) and many other texts concerned with the well-being of women. It seems that positionality tends to afflict both examinations of feminisms on the ground and declarative feminist epistemologies.

There is no doubt that a univocal feminism, as Domitila Chungara reminded us in the 1980s, is simply not possible. However, the temptation of “speaking with one voice” in the sphere of immediate political struggles glimmers as the most effective strategy to affect change and to bring about the emancipation and well-being of women the world over. And yet it remains fraught with the perils of enunciating yet again a new sovereign subject. For instance, how do we go about pursuing one of the goals of global and radical feminism of connecting feminist Latin Americanist studies in the United States with the political reality of women’s movements in Latin America, without critically revamping earlier discussions on positionality as well as the making of identities in the long *duréé* of Latin America’s history? As Hernan Vidal’s (2009) and Jean

Franco's (2009) interventions on human rights evidence,<sup>7</sup> entering the field of human rights in relation to feminism brings up a very healthy but also vexing discussion of what indeed is today understood as "human" as in "human rights." If we want to avoid working with an uncritical extension of the conception of the male subject in the Enlightenment and later in the Human Rights United Nations declaration of 1948 as modified by women activists, we need an acute and accurate historicism of the concept of being human imbedded in "human rights" (individual rights) so that when its reach becomes global it does not trample over well sedimented cultural differences<sup>8</sup> and does not ignore its inception in the Catholic thinking that ensued soon after 1492 with the conquest and the holocaust of the Amerindian populations (as the MLA 2006 Special Issue on Human Rights did when it ignored all of the items highlighted above in planning and choosing articles for this Special Issue, thus de-historicizing the problem to the detriment of our understating of "other" traditions on the subject of being human and beginning the process of solidarization with women at a truly global range). Thus, in the consideration of feminisms, canon formation, and the trans-national, positionality and its convergence with feminism in the plural becomes an indispensable first step.

This is, of course, a problem of language and rhetoric: how to write in and of the acknowledged plurality without seeming incoherent? Cynthia Tompkins resorts to the form and the figure of the kaleidoscope in her "Imagining New Identities and Communities for Feminisms in the Americas" (2008, pp. 1–33). No doubt, it is also a political problem in that speaking of the ONE or of the MANY in feminism has always implied allegiances and, allegiances call for firm identifications. Such implicit call for identification and allegiance raises the question of representation even before the dictum of the "personal is the political" made its appearance in feminist discourse. It would seem that, just as it was with the controversy over *testimonio* and the salient problem of representation in the heuristic practices brought to *testimonio* readings, a great many habits of reading need to be questioned and even unlearned in a search for new departures in feminist thinking in the age of trans-national globalization (*imperium*) and canon formation in the United States academy.

One of the new directions in which to embark might be the exploration of a terrain of thinking that would be capable of avoiding the congealment of subject positions as well as resisting the epistemological hierarchy of such subject positions. Such a move might afford more comfort and less anxiety with a lesser number of certainties. This path could offer greater openness to a permanent state of self-revising theorizing (rather than "feminist theory" in capital letters, which rushes to the newest orthodoxy of

monogamy, polygamy or celibacy, or pre-cultural desire). Positing an agonistic subject position might turn out to be a good way of avoiding the pit falls of the past and of avoiding flare ups in the present. An agonistic subject could be capable of assessing and acting in less defined and thus less restrictive ways. A less certain and less sovereign subject would be more open to dialogue, less anxious about critically considering a catholic feminism in Latin America not necessarily as bad or backward or inimical thing for after all Latin America is a region of the world where Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism are deeply imbedded in the living cultural matrix. An agonistic position might be better equipped to open up to the promise of solidarity not only in the plurality of feminisms, but even with other less obvious, forgotten or even misperceived allies.

But before such endeavors can be attempted, it is important to say a word about the very active set of misrecognitions and misidentifications operating in the conversations among Latin Americanists working in the United States in departments of literature. In a previous intervention on *testimonio* ("Interrupting the Text of Latin American Studies: Problems of (Missed) Recognition" (1998, 2011). I tried to point out the obvious fact that some of the heated debates on *testimonio* in the field that studies Latin American culture and literature in literature departments had to do with a kind of misrecognition and misidentification given in the position assumed by the researcher. This mis-recognition is not unlike McRobbie's (2009) own as carried in her tone and rhetoric for she assumes that she speaks for all women and their (universal) liberation.

In these departments there is a rich and productive mixture of scholars and students who hail from different parts of the globe (mainly Latin America, the United States and Spain) and whose identities have formed at different historical times in different locations. The object of study shared is Latin American culture and literature. However, besides coming to the study of the object from different national and regional identitarian processes, they also bring different scholarly traditions and understandings to bear on the very making of the object of study. For instance, it is one thing to study in Argentina its women's movements from a national perspective for a publication to be done in Spanish and mostly for Argentine readers. It is quite another thing to study the "same" (they are not the "same" once cast from another perspective) movements from the perspective of a national United States scholar for a publication in English. Both subject positions are different from yet a third one: the Argentine citizen working in the United States academy and preparing a publication in English for the American academy. While recognizing that these positions are empirically different with respect to approach, constitution of the object

of study, and audience of interpreters (authorizers), it is not always equally apparent how these differences in positionality affect an unspoken and readily assumed *continuity* of identity between subject of enunciation and object of study. Thus the puzzling complaint (*reclamo*) that feminist studies in departments of literature have not had any effect in the feminist struggles in Latin America. Often in feminist and *testimonio* scholarship one finds an assumption of a continuity and even identification between the three different subject positions and the object of study. This may be so because these fields of inquiry are clearly political, deal with living subjects, and are thus traversed by a sense of advocacy: an allegiance with the cause for women's emancipation, a struggle for justice for those whose only treasure is the *testimonio* of their oppression.

This unexamined assumption of continuity has led to many polemics and misunderstandings among North and South feminists who not only do not see (or produce) the object of study—Latin American women and feminisms—under the same light and within the same parameters of understanding, but who also, in fact, respond very differently to their distinct (and unacknowledged) insertion in the knowledge-power games. When we look at the mirror image (South/North) of the situation we clearly perceive the deep positional problematic. There are almost no Latin American scholars working in Latin American universities who study United States feminism and women's movements and who reflect and write on how to affect change in the situation of women in the United States. No such Latin American scholar can be thinking and expect to have an audience with respect to trans-national feminism in the United States social or political sphere and indeed her own individual life. This differential subject-object relation needs to be recognized so that American scholars working on Latin American feminisms do not assume an easy continuity between their own feminist understandings and allegiances and those of women's movements or women writer's workshops in Latin America.

The same should be said about Latin American scholars working in the United States. What, for example, should be the reception accorded to and the authority invested in treatises such as McRobbie's (2009) book on the aftermath of feminism, Judith Butler's (2002) attempted theoretical dismantling of kinship, Sofie Fontanel's (2013) sensational claims on the benefits and empowerment of celibacy in *The Art of Sleeping Alone*, and the laboratory experiments in search of the sweet spot reported in *What Do Women Want?* (Bergner, 2013).

Such awareness of the problems of misrecognition and misidentity permeate the deployment of a trans-national feminism that emanates from the North. This is a situation that calls for an unlearning in a greater process

of decolonizing knowledge and sensibilities. Such recognition of misrecognition demands that instead of assuming a seamless continuity between United States feminist scholars and feminist discourses and acts in Latin America, a reflection on epistemological privileges and discontinuities must take place before we move forward assuming unexamined continuities and representations. In this sense I am heartened by Cynthia Tompkins (2008) intervention in the Minnesota debate, for she signals the need to focus on the limits of feminist theory and its insufficiency when it comes to representing subaltern subjectivities, groups and cultures other than the liberal subject of feminism (p. 5). But I am also wary of falling into the essentializing of the Other that occurred with *testimonio* and the sequel of studies in which the other became so preciously different that only a few privileged interpreters could have cautionary access to such otherness. In this case I would recommend a renewed critical self-awareness even in considering the recommendation that feminism move in the direction of human rights, because like all instruments devised by the sovereign subject (Bartolomé de Las Casas in imperial Spain circa 1550), it contains the seeds for misappropriation when not relentlessly and suspiciously examined in all its possible consequences. (For example, the MLA 2006 *Special Human Rights Issue* mentioned above left out the entire Latin American tradition of political and philosophical thinking on Human Rights.)

In this regard I would like to return to Kirstie McClure's (1992) examination of foundational issues in feminist theory because I believe that these foundational problems have remained in feminist thinking and that declarations of a plurality of feminisms has not cleared them up. In "The Issue of Foundations: Scientized Politics, Politicized Science, and Feminist Critical Practice," McClure considers what kinds of epistemological moves could constitute a foundational ground for feminist thinking of the political. She shows that almost all proposals, when critically questioned, become indeterminate (p. 362) and thus affect directly the continuing unsettled state of the struggle for authority in feminist discourse (p. 362). Such a situation is, for McClure, "commensurate with the broader unsettling of the "political" in our time" (p. 362) in which "theories become something rather akin to ideal-type personifications of disciplined political parties, complete with loyal and mutually exclusive memberships as well as distinctive platforms, programs, campaign promises, slogans and the like" (p. 363).

In the face of such epistemological partisanship it is difficult to envision that the feminisms invoked at the meeting in Minnesota could do other than struggle for foundational authority, now on the ground of "human rights,"

and compete for the exclusive right to guide programmatic political practice. McClure (1992) goes on to observe that in these epistemological battles, “*theory* is 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” (p. 364). A very similar statement can be made about the task now given to human rights and also to the transnational forces charged with ensuring that the mandates of human rights claims as institutionalized in secular institutions do indeed come to fruition in the realm of the practical. Such a demand on theory, McClure argues, stems from the normative, transformational, explanatory and problem solving figuration of feminism developed within a scientific model. This model of feminism is still attendant in most discussions today and so it is worth quoting from Alison Jaggar’s (1983) *Feminist Frameworks*:

Feminists are people who demonstrate a commitment to improving women’s position in society. Feminist frameworks are systems of ideas, conceptual structures that feminists can use in explaining, justifying, and guiding their actions. Typically a feminist framework is a comprehensive analysis of the nature and causes of women’s oppression and a correlated set of proposals for ending it. It is an integrated theory of women’s place both in contemporary society and in the new society that feminists are struggling to build. (Quoted in McClure, 1992, p. 348)

McClure’s critical examination of such normative feminism remarks on the finding made by Sandra Harding (1986) in *The Science Question in Feminism*. Harding states that science is not the ground but rather the question, a proposition that should indeed be put in play when assessing the work of sexology as reported in *What Do women Want?* (Bergner 2013). McClure thus concludes that “if theory is not to be held accountable for the dominant criteria of scientific adequacy, both its capacity to authorize the production of feminist political knowledge and its bearing upon feminist political practice become not questions of epistemological allegiance, but sites of political contestation in the broadest sense” (p. 364). It follows that theory itself is not the guarantor of our desire for foundations and that we inhabit a space and moment of contestation before which the only possible attitude is the making of “breathing room for the articulation of new knowledges ... and new configurations of the political” (McClure, 1992, p. 365).

Among the new sites of political contestation are, for instance, the questioning of liberal, post-modern and Marxist feminism that women’s discourses positioned elsewhere—Bolivia, Cairo, Algeria—have been



leveling to the brand of United States academic feminism. In his *The Augustian Imperative: A Reflection of the Politics of Morality*, William E. Connolly (1993) examines the dynamics of the invariable congealment of subject positions into sovereign subject positions even in environments suffused with the ethos of plurality. Connolly (1993) investigates the possibility of passing from sites of morality to an ethical sensibility (p. 140), an ethics of cultivation (p. 141), where what is “cultivated is not Law or a categorical imperative, but the possibility of being imperfectly established in institutional practices” (p. 141). This ethical sensibility is based on the development of “competitive relations of agonistic respect” (p. 142), an ethics which to my thinking sustains the possibility of moving beyond the precarious protocols of *testimonio* and the paradoxes of the feminism in the plural. An agonistic subject position guards against the congealment of hegemonic definitions and discourses and as such it is of particular interest for the play of feminisms in the dynamics of a North-South academy where both the object of study and the subject position of the researchers and interpreters of the “culture” at hand are always in flux.

As we look back into the many ways in which theorists have brought the transformation of big feminism into feminism in the plural, the question of positionality plays a significant role as it inquires into the problematics of subject formation and the practices of power knowledge within which we operate. Positing an agonist position—not as novel in Latin America’s philosophical tradition as it is for the Anglo-American intellectual milieu—goes a long way in insisting on thoughtful and cautious reflection and preventing the congealment of new hegemonies. Such caution and pause is indispensable in thinking not only about new and old paradigms and how they can lead into blind allies, but it is particularly useful in thinking about cultural heterogeneities that involve unavoidable questions of choice which by themselves come to constitute canons. In conclusion, this paper argues that the pedagogic practices that by themselves necessarily entail canon formation would be well served by three major critical considerations: the problematization of positionality, the problem of truth/power and the plurality of feminism. Without these three major considerations at play all the time, scholars and students run the risk of constructing and adhering to new hegemonies and orthodoxies which by necessity imply uneven power positions imbricated in the play of knowledges and pedagogies.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Josephine Donovan’s (2012) *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions* is now in its fourth edition—a fact which attests to its solid position and positive reception in gender studies. Catherine Simpson (2012), one of the pioneer theorist and activists in the various

waves of feminism that the U.S. academy has seen, endorses Donovan's book. Simpson, on the back cover of the book, states that it is a "superbly intelligent, lucid guide to one of the great movements of the modern world." For references to feminist scholars, movements and theories I refer readers to this book for the purposes of the discussion in these pages. It is important to note that Donovan divides feminism's temporal line into eight sections, but these moments or movements do not include an "aftermath." In Donovan's temporal line feminism starts with the Enlightenment, it then moves through respective chapters on Marxist, Freudian, Existential and Radical phases to recapitulate with one chapter dedicated to the twentieth century and cultural feminism and another dedicated to the twenty first century, the latter centered on gynocentrism and ecofeminism.

- 2 See Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" (2004). Here Butler argues that gay and lesbian marriage—the couple—forecloses a radical critique of the family that could put forth other social formations and kinship arrangements as possible futures.
- 3 In Part II of *On Populist Reason* (pp. 129–156) Laclau deals extensively with his derridian reading of Marxist theory and Marxism movements in the twentieth century with special reference to the process of transformation of significations that he calls the empty signifier. Taking the push for democratic demands made by the Italian Communist party during the 1940s and 1950s that in the end made it less autonomous (129), he writes that in the case of the Italian demands which were always political any way, the "Same democratic demands receive[d] the structural pressure of rival hegemonic projects. This generates an autonomy of the popular signifiers different from the one we have considered so far. It is no longer that the particularism of the demand becomes self-sufficient and independent of any equivalent articulation, but that its meaning is indeterminate between alternative equivalent frontiers. I shall call these signifiers whose meaning is 'suspended' in that way floating signifiers" (p. 131). See Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).
- 4 See "The Zeal World" by Michelle Boorstein. *The Washington Post*. Metro Section: C6-8. Sunday, September 1, 2013.
- 5 Jean Bethke-Elshtain (1941–2013) was a political scientist, philosopher ethicist and professor at the University of Chicago who published extensively on topics related to women, family, politics and ethics and was also significant for her public role as a woman intellectual.
- 6 Domitila Barrios de Chungara (1937–2012) was a Bolivian labor leader and feminist. In 1975 she participated in the International Women's Year Tribune put on by the United Nations in Mexico and spoke passionately about lack of diverse representations of women's experience in the international Feminist movement.
- 7 For the interventions by Cynthia Tompkins, Hernán Vidal and Jean Franco at the Conference held at the University of Minnesota in the Spring of 2007, see *Hispanic Issue on Line*, Fall 2008.
- 8 On the problematic of Western feminism and its limited capacity for understanding women's religious movements in Islam see Saba Mahmood (2005), *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and Feminist Subjectivity*.

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*Sara Castro-Klarén*  
*The Johns Hopkins University*