

## ‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: intersectionality, assemblage, and affective politics<sup>1</sup>

Jasbir Puar\*

In response to my proposition in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* [1] that intersectionality as

<sup>1</sup> Este artigo é apresentado tal como originalmente escrito. This article is presented as it was originally written. Este artículo se presenta tal como fue escrita originalmente. Questo articolo é presentato nella stessa forma in cui é stato scritto. Cet article est présenté comme il a été écrit. Dieser artikel wird präsentiert, wie sie ursprünglich geschrieben wurde.

\* Jasbir Puar is Associate Professor of Women’s & Gender Studies at Rutgers University. Puar has an M.A. in Women’s Studies from the [University of York](http://www.yorku.ca), and completed her Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies at [University of California at Berkeley](http://www.berkeley.edu) in 1999. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, globalization; postcolonial and diaspora studies; South Asian cultural studies; and theories of assemblage and affect. She is the author of *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke University Press 2007), which won the 2007 Cultural Studies Book Award from the Association for Asian American Studies. Jasbir Puar has also authored numerous articles that appear in *Gender, Place, and Culture*, *Social Text*, *Radical History Review*, *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, and *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Her edited volumes include a special issue of *GLQ* titled, “Queer Tourism: Geographies of Globalization” and co-edited a volume of *Society and Space* titled “Sexuality and Space”. She is currently working on a new book on queer disability studies and theories of affect and assemblage. Her most recent publication from this project is “Prognosis Time: Towards a Geopolitics of Affect, Debility, and Capacity” in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* (vol 19, no.2, July 2009). A special issue of *Social Text* on “Interspecies,” co-edited with Julie Livingston, is forthcoming in Spring 2011. Jasbir Puar is also a contributor to the *Guardian*, as well as *Bully Bloggers* ([bullybloggers.com](http://bullybloggers.com)) and *Oh! Industry* ([ohindustry.com](http://ohindustry.com)).

an intellectual rubric and a tool for political intervention must be supplemented – if not complicated – by a notion of (queer) assemblage, I have been often asked to elaborate on the political possibilities of assemblages. A prominent concept in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the political applicability of assemblages appear less time-tested – as if intersectionality holds fast as a successful model of political transformation. Intersectionality is thought by many feminists to be the primary rubric for theorizing difference for the past two decades, and is now a prevalent approach in some strands of queer theory (increasingly known as “queer of color critique”). Intersectionality and assemblage are not analogous in terms of content, intent, nor utility, but they have at times been produced as somehow incompatible or even oppositional. While, as analytics, they may not be reconcilable they need not be oppositional, but rather frictional. In what follows, I offer some preliminary thoughts on the limits and possibilities of each and what might be gained by thinking them through and with each other. What are the strengths of each in the realms of theory, politics, organizing, legal structures, and method? Through the mapping of these two bifurcated genealogies, I offer some thoughts on the politics of feminist knowledge production – which has been driven, sometimes single-mindedly, by the mandate of intersectional analysis – to see what kinds of futures are possible for feminist theorizing.

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

It has been more than 20 years since Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote her groundbreaking piece titled, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics”[2] which, along with her 1991 piece “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,”[3] went

on to become seminal texts for the theorization of intersectionality. An activist and theoretical discourse about “difference” developed over many years by black feminists in the U.S. such as Audre Lorde and The Combahee River Collective, intersectionality became solidified as a feminist heuristic by Crenshaw’s analysis of anti-discrimination legal doctrine. Crenshaw mapped out three forms of intersectional analysis she deemed crucial: structural (addressing the intersection of racism and patriarchy in relation to battering and rape of women); political (addressing the intersection of anti-racist organizing and feminist organizing); and representational (addressing the intersection of racial stereotypes and gender stereotypes, particularly in the case of 2 Live Crew) Her intervention into mutually exclusive identity paradigms is one of rethinking identity politics from within, in particular, from within systemic legal exclusions.

A brief survey of these and other key texts makes clear that intersectionality emerged from the struggles of second wave feminism as a crucial black feminist intervention challenging the hegemonic rubrics of race, class, and gender within predominantly white feminist frames. But, in precisely in the act of performing this intervention, it also produces an ironic reification of sexual difference as a/the foundational one that needs to be disrupted – that is to say, sexual and gender difference is understood as the constant from which there are variants. As transnational, postcolonial, and critical race theorists have pointed out, the centrality of the subject positioning of white women has been re-secured through the way in which intersectionality has been deployed. The theory of intersectionality argues that all identities are lived and experienced as intersectional – in such a way that identity categories themselves are cut through and unstable – and that all subjects are intersectional whether or not they recognize themselves as such. But what the method of intersectionality is

most predominantly used to qualify is the specific “difference” of “women of color”, a category that has now become, I would argue, simultaneously emptied of specific meaning on the one hand and overdetermined in its deployment on the other. In this usage, intersectionality always produces an Other, and that Other is always a Woman Of Color (WOC), who must invariably be shown to be resistant, subversive, or articulating a grievance. And more pointedly, it is the difference of black women that dominates this genealogy of the term “women of color” (and indeed, Crenshaw is clear that she centralizes “black women’s experience” and posits “black women as the starting point”[4] of her analysis). Thus the consolidation of intersectionality as a dominant heuristic may well be driven by anxieties about maintaining the “integrity” of a discrete black feminist genealogy, one that does not necessarily resonate in terms of how intersectionality functions. For example, while Crenshaw’s work is about reconciling what are perceived to be irreconcilable binary options of gender and race, Audre Lorde’s seminal piece “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”[5] from 1984 reads as a much more dynamic, affectively resonant postulation of lived intersectional subjectivities.

This ironic othering of WOC through an approach that it meant to alleviate such othering is exacerbated by the fact that intersectionality has become cathected to the field of women’s studies as a primary, if not singular, feminist method, and the paradigmatic frame through which women’s lives are understood and theorized, a problem reified by both WOC feminists and white feminists. This is despite the fact that there are wide locational differences in the interest in intersectionality. As someone who works with graduate students at Rutgers, I encounter a variety of uneven and vexed responses to the importance of intersectionality, determined in part by variations among women’s and gender

studies programs and geographical regions – from students who have are well-schooled in the lexicon of intersectionality and presume a taken-for-grantedness of its effects, to those who have yet to encounter it as a central concept.

This claim to intersectionality as the dominant feminist method can be produced with such insistence that an interest in exploring other frames, for example assemblage, gets rendered as problematic and even produces WOC feminists invested in other genealogies as “race-traitors.” This accusation of course reinforces the implicit understanding that intersectionality is a tool to diagnose racial difference. Despite decades of feminist theorizing on the question of difference, difference continues to be “difference from”, that is, the difference from “white woman.” This is also then an ironic reification of racial difference as well – for example, Malini Joshar Schueller argues that most scholarship on WOC is produced by WOC, while many white feminists, although hailing intersectionality as primary methodological rubric continue to take gender difference as foundational. Much like the language of diversity, the language of intersectionality, its very invocation, it seems, largely substitutes for intersectional analysis itself.

Further questions arise when the viability of intersectionality as a theoretical frame is re-situated within a changed historical and economic landscape of neo-liberal capitalism and identity. What does an intersectional critique look like – or more to the point, what does it do – in an age of neo-liberal pluralism, absorption and accommodation of difference, of all kinds of differences? If it is the case that intersectionality has been “mainstreamed” in the last two decades – a way to manage difference that colludes with dominant forms of liberal multiculturalism – is the qualitative force of the interpellation of “difference itself” altered or uncertain? Let me qualify that my concern is not about the formative, generative, and necessary intervention of Crenshaw’s work, but

of both the changed geopolitics of reception as well as a tendency towards reification in the deployment of intersectionality. Has intersectionality become, as Schueller argues[6], an alibi for the re-centering of white liberal feminists? What is a poststructuralist theory of intersectionality that might address multicultural and post-racial discourses of inclusion that destabilizes the WOC as a prosthetic capacity to white women?

Such questions also bring to the fore the geopolitical problems of intersectional analyses. If, as Avtar Brah and Ann Pheonix have argued, “old debates about the category woman have assumed new critical urgency”[7] in the context of recent historical events, such as September 11<sup>th</sup>, and the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, transnational and postcolonial scholars continue to point out that the categories privileged by intersectional analysis do not necessarily traverse national and regional boundaries nor genealogical exigencies, presuming and producing static epistemological renderings of categories themselves across historical and geopolitical locations. Indeed, many of the cherished categories of the intersectional mantra, originally starting with race, class, gender, now including sexuality, nation, religion, age, and disability, are the product of modernist colonial agendas and regimes of epistemic violence, operative through a western/euro-american epistemological formation through which the whole notion of discrete identity has emerged, for example, in terms of sexuality and empire. Joseph Massad quite astutely points out, in his refinement of Foucauldian framings of sexuality, that the colonial project deployed “sexuality” as a concept that was largely internalized within intellectual and juridical realms but was not distilled as a widespread hegemonic project. So part of Massad’s point is that while we might worry, for example, about the globalization of the term queer, we deflect from the much graver problem of the generalization and assumed transparency of the

term sexuality itself – a taken for granted category of the modernist imperial project, not only an imposed epistemological frame, but also ontologically presumptuous – or in fact, an epistemological capture of an ontologically irreducible becoming.

These problems are reproduced in feminist and gay and lesbian human rights discourses. As Nira Yuval Davis points out, “the analysis and methodology of intersectionality, especially in UN-related bodies is just emerging and often suffers from analytic confusions that have already been tackled by feminist scholars who have been working on these issues for longer...”[8]. To further complicate the travels of intersectional theorizing, in the U.S. intersectionality came from a very specific set of social movements, whereas in Europe, where the term is currently being widely taken up, the interest in intersectionality does not emerge from social movements. Rather, this newfound interest in intersectionality signals a much belated recognition of needing to theorize race, and also functions as a form of the field of European women’s studies “catching up institutionally” with U.S. women’s studies. For these reasons, the category “nation” appears to be the least theorized and acknowledged of intersectional categories, rendered through a form of globalizing transparency. The U.S. is reproduced as the dominant site of feminist inquiry through the use of intersectionality as a heuristic to teach difference. Thus, the euro-american bias of women’s studies and history of feminism is ironically reiterated via intersectionality, eliding the main intervention of transnational and postcolonial feminist scholars since the 1990’s, which has been, in part, about destabilizing the nation-centered production of the category WOC.[9]

A final concern is that intersectionality functions as a problematic reinvestment in the subject, in particular, the subject X. Rey Chow has produced the most damning critique of what she calls “poststructuralist signifiatory incarceration”[10], seriously

questioning whether the marginalized subject is still a viable site from which to produce politics, much less whether the subject is a necessary precursor for politics. “Difference” produces new subjects of inquiry that then infinitely multiplies exclusion in order to promote inclusion. Difference now proceeds and defines identity. Part of her concern is that poststructuralist efforts to attend to the specificity of Others has become one, a universalizing project and two, always beholden to the self-referentiality of the “center”, ironic given that intersectionality has now come to be deployed as a call for and a form of anti-essentialism. [11] The poststructuralist fatigue Chow describes is simple: Subject X may be different in content, but shows up, time and again, the same in form. (We can see this in the entrance of both “trans” identity and “disability” into the intersectional fray.)

## CYBORGS AND OTHER COMPANIONATE ASSEMBLAGES

The literature on intersectionality has also been enhanced by the focus on representational politics, driven by Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* and also Gayatri Spivak’s *Can the Subaltern Speak*[12]. Rarely have scholars concerned with the impact and development of representational politics come into dialogue with those convinced of the non-representational referent of “matter itself” – Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Grosz, Elizabeth Wilson, Karan Barad, Patricia Clough, Dianne Currier, Vicky Kirby, Miriam Fraser, Luciana Parisi, to name a few. Divested from subject formation but for different reasons, these feminist scholars in science and technology studies inflected by Deleuzian thought have been concerned about bodily matter, claiming its liminality cannot be captured by intersectional subject positioning. They proffer instead the notion that bodies are unstable assemblages



that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations. Elizabeth Grosz, for example, foregrounding its spatial and temporal essentializations, calls intersectionality “a gridlock model that fails to account for the mutual constitution and indeterminacy of embodied configurations of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation.”[13]

Donna Haraway has been the most influential of this group. In a leading text from this literature she famously stated, as the very last line in her groundbreaking 1985 essay “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”[14] that she would rather be a cyborg than a goddess, favoring the postmodern technologized figure of techno-human hybridity – the body as an information construct – over the reclamation of a racialized, matriarchal past (thus implicitly invoking this binary between intersectionality and assemblage). While several theorists have critiqued Haraway’s use of the trope of woman of color to signify a cyborg par excellence, including Chela Sandoval and Malini Joshar Schueller (who has argued that women of color function as a prosthetic to the cyborg myth[15], which as I point out earlier, is not unlike how WOC function in relation to intersectionality), there has yet to be a serious interrogation of what these theories on matter and mattering might bring to conceptualizations of intersectionality. Indeed Schueller has argued that this focus on matter, driven by science and technology studies, produces and is produced by a desire to avoid theorizing race. This is most certainly a legitimate complaint, but it also bypasses the issues being raised here, namely a critique of linguistic performativity that presumes that everything resides within signification. For Haraway, even though cyborgs are meant to undermine binaries – of humans and animals, of humans and machines, and of physical and non-physical – a cyborg actually inhabits an intersection – of body and technology, as Vicky Kirby, Dianne Currier, and others have argued. Dianne Currier writes: “in

the construction of a cyborg, technologies are added to impact upon, and at some point intersect with a discrete, non-technological “body.” “Thus, insofar as the hybrid cyborg is forged in the intermeshing of technology with a body, in a process of addition, it leaves largely intact those two categories – (human) body and technology – that preceded the conjunction.” “effectively reinscribing the cyborg into the binary logic of identity which Haraway hopes to circumvent.” [16]. Haraway does not actually approach a human/animal/machine nexus, though more recent theorizations of the nature/culture divide, by Luciana Parisi for example, demarcate the biophysical, the biocultural, and the biodigital.[17] Still, the question of how the body is materialized, rather than what the body signifies, is the dominant one in this literature.

Assemblage is actually an awkward translation – the original term in Deleuze and Guattari’s work is not the French word *assemblage*, but actually *Agencement*, a term which means design, layout, organization, arrangement, and relations – the focus being not on content but on relations, relations of patterns. For *Agencement*, as John Phillips explains in a recent essay, specific \*connections\* with other concepts is precisely what gives concepts their meaning. As Phillips writes, the priority is neither to the state of affairs (essence) nor to statement (enunciation) but rather to connection.[18] The French and English definitions of *assemblage* lean more to collection, combination, assembling, and both are also used as a term signaling collage in avant garde art. (So one question which I cannot attend to but that haunts this traversal from French theoretical production to U.S. academic usage is, what are the productive effects of this “mis” translation?)

There are thus numerous ways to define what assemblages are, but I am here more interested in what assemblages do. For my purposes, assemblages are interesting because A. They de-privilege the human body as a discrete organic thing. As Haraway notes,

the body does not end at the skin. We leave traces of our DNA everywhere we go, we live with other bodies within us, microbes and bacteria, we are enmeshed in forces, affects, energies, we are composites of information. B. Assemblages do not privilege bodies as human, nor as residing within a human/animal binary. Along with a de-exceptionalizing of human bodies, multiple forms of matter can be bodies – bodies of water, cities, institutions, and so on. Matter is an actor. Following Karen Barad on her theory of performative metaphysics, matter is not a ‘thing’ but a doing. In particular, Barad challenges dominant notions of performativity that operate through an implicit distinction between signification and that which is signified, stating that matter does not only materialize through signification alone. Writes Barad:

“A performative understanding of discursive practices challenges the representationalist belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things. Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real. Hence, in ironic contrast to the monism that takes language to be the stuff of reality, performativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve.”[19]

Barad’s is a posthumanist framing that questions the boundaries between human and non-human, matter and discourse, and interrogates the practices through which these boundaries are constituted, stabilized, and destabilized. C. Signification is only one element of many that give a substance both meaning and capacity. In his latest book *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, Manuel DeLanda undertakes the radical move to “make language last.”[20] In

this post, post-structuralist framing, essentialism, which is usually posited as the opposite of social constructionism, is now placed squarely within the realms of signification and language, what Delanda and others have called “linguistic essentialism.” As Karen Barad claims, “language has been granted too much power.”[21] (The danger of her notion of “ontological realism” is that it may well privilege an essentialized truth produced through matter.) D. Finally, categories – race, gender, sexuality – are considered events, actions, and encounters, between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects. Situated along a “vertical and horizontal axis”, assemblages come into existence within processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari problematize a model that produces a constant in order to establish its variations. Instead, they argue, assemblages foreground no constant but rather “variation to variation” and hence the event-ness of identity.[22] DeLanda thus argues that race and gender are situated as attributes only within a study of “the pattern of recurring links, as well as the properties of those links.” [23]

## RE-READING INTERSECTIONALITY AS ASSEMBLAGE

One of Kimberle Crenshaw’s foundational examples – that of the traffic intersection – actually situates intersectionality as an event. As Crenshaw writes, “Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them.” And later: “But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts

to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back in their cars and zoom away.” [24].

As Crenshaw indicates in this description, identification is a process; identity is an encounter, an event, an accident, in fact. Identities are multi-causal, multi-directional, liminal; traces aren't always self-evident. In this “becoming of intersectionality,” there is emphasis on motion rather than gridlock; on how the halting of motion produces the demand to locate. The accident itself indicates the entry of the standardizing needs to the juridical; is there a crime taking place? How does one determine who is at fault? Intersectionality is thus a much more porous paradigm than the standardization of method inherent to a discipline has allowed it to be; the institutionalization of women's studies in the U.S. has led to demands for a subject/s (subject X, in fact) and a method.

Another of Crenshaw's primary concerns is with the structural prejudices of domestic violence: unequal access to services, representational and re-presentational biases in the legal system. I want to turn now to a moment in Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual* where he reads domestic violence through the “home event-space.” [25] For him, the event is not defined as a discrete act or series of actions or activities, but rather the “folding of dimensions of time into each other” [26]. This folding of time into and out of each other is a result of the “conversion of surface distance into intensity [which] is also the conversion of the materiality of the body into an event.” [27]. Interested in a purported increase in domestic violence during Superbowl Sunday, Massumi writes:

“The home entry of the game, at its crest of intensity, upsets the fragile equilibrium of the household. The patterns of relations between household bodies is re-problematized. The game event momentarily interrupts the pattern of extrinsic relations generally

obtaining between domestic types, as typed by gender. A struggle ensues: a gender struggle over clashing codes of sociality, rights to access to portions of the home and its contents, and rituals of servitude. The sociohistorical home place converts into an event space. The television suddenly stands out from the background of the furnishings, imposing itself as a catalytic part-subject, arraying domestic bodies around itself according to the differential potentials generally attaching to their gender type. For a moment, everything is up in the air – and around the TV set, and between the living room and the kitchen. In proximity to the TV, words and gestures take on unaccustomed intensity. Anything could happen. The male body, sensing the potential, transduces the heterogeneity of the elements of the situation into a reflex readiness to violence. The “game” is rigged by the male’s already-constituted propensity to strike. The typical pattern of relations is re-imposed in the unity of movement of hand against face. The strike expresses the empirical reality of situation: recontainment by the male-dominated power formation of the domestic. The event short-circuits. The event is recapture. The home event-space is back to the place it was: a container of asymmetric relations between terms already constituted according to gender. Folding back onto domestication. Coded belong, no becoming.”[28]

So what do we have here? First, an intensification of the body’s relation to itself (one definition of affect), produced not only by the significance of the game, Superbowl Sunday, but by the bodily force and energy given over to this significance (notice difference between signification and significance). Second, a focus on the patterns of relations – not the entities themselves, but the patterns within which they are arranged with each other. Not Assemblage, but Agencement. Third, household bodies: the television as an actor, an actant (Bruno Latour), as matter with force as determining who moves where and how and when. The television is an affective

conductor: “in proximity to the TV, words and gestures take on an unaccustomed intensity.” Fourth, “Anything could happen.” A becoming. A deterritorialization. Fifth, intersectional identity: the male is always already ideologically coded as more prone to violence – a closing off of becoming. Finally, the strike: the hand against face. Reterritorialization.

Massumi writes: “The point of bringing up this issue is not to enter the debate on whether there is an empirically provable causal link between professional sports and violence against women. The outpouring of verbal aggression provoked by the mere suggestion that there was a link is enough to establish the theoretical point in question here: that what the mass media transmit is not fundamentally image-content but event-potential.”<sup>[29]</sup> Thus this reading of Massumi’s is not a textual analysis of the possibility that watching violent television produces violence, or violent subjects. It is not a theory of spectatorship identification, but of affective intensification: the meeting of technology (good old TV, no need to always privilege the internet), bodies, matter, molecular movements, energetic transfers. Massumi insinuates that ultimately, the relationship of positionality to affect, feelings, and sensations is arbitrary. Thus, a politics of affect underscores subject positionings that are seemingly irreconcilable. Unlike Crenshaw, the focus here is not on whether there is a crime taking place, nor determining who is at fault, but rather asking what are the affective conditions necessary for the event-space to unfold. In the most basic of feminist terms, we can read Massumi’s interest in unraveling the script as offering a different way of thinking about the questions what causes domestic violence and how can we prevent it?

## DISCIPLINE AND CONTROL

There’s obviously much more to say about such an example; certainly it is true that these theorists (with the exception of Arun

Saldahna) have not had much to say about race. In closing, and as an effort to signpost the lines of flight this essay cannot fully follow given space restrictions, my own concerns about the limitations of intersectional frameworks go far beyond rethinking its contextual specificity (and Massad gestures to this – this is not only about epistemological incongruency but more importantly, ontological irreducibility[30]). As I have argued in *Terrorist Assemblages*: “No matter how intersectional our models of subjectivity, no matter how attuned to locational politics of space, place, and scale, these formulations – these fine tunings of intersectionality, as it were, that continue to be demanded – may still limit us if they presume the automatic primacy and singularity of the disciplinary subject and its identitarian interpellation.”[31] My interest in interrogating the predominance of subjecthood itself is driven precisely by the limitations of poststructuralist critique that Rey Chow foregrounds, the concerns about the nature/culture divide and questions of language and materiality that the science and technology feminists have outlined, the attention to power and affect that assemblage theorists centralize, and finally, my own relating of all of this to the debates on disciplinary societies and societies of control driven by the work of Michel Foucault and Deleuze’s extension of it. In the 2007 English translation of Michel Foucault’s 1977-1978 lectures titled *Security, Territory, and Population*, Foucault distinguishes between disciplinary mechanisms, and security apparatuses, what Deleuze would later come to call “control societies. On the disciplinary organization of multiplicity, Foucault writes:

“Discipline is a mode of individualization of multiplicities rather than something that constructs an edifice of multiple elements on the basis of individuals who are worked on as, first of all, individuals.”[32]

Many relations between discipline (exclusion and inclusion) and control (modulation, tweaking) have been proffered as a of



late. One, as various overlapping yet progressive stages of market capitalism and governmentality; two, as co-existing models and exercises of power; three, control as an effect of disciplinary apparatuses – control as the epitome of a disciplinary society par excellence (in that disciplinary forms of power exceed their sites to reproduce everywhere); and finally, as Foucault suggests above, disciplinary frames as a response to control. It seems to me, and I pose these as tentative questions and points that I am working through, that intersectional critique has both intervened in the legal and capitalist structures that demand the fixity of the rights bearing subject and also reproduced the disciplinary demands of that subject formation. As Norma Alarcon presciently asked in 1984, in her response to the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*[33], are we going to make a subject of the whole world? [34] At this productive impasse, then, is this contradiction – on the one hand, the heuristic of intersectionality has produced a proliferation of work on WOC while simultaneously excusing white feminists from this work, re-centering gender and sexual difference as foundational and primary. On the other hand, “we” might be reaching a poststructuralist fatigue around the notion of the subject itself.

Therefore, to dismiss assemblage in favor of retaining intersectional identitarian frameworks is to miss the ways in which societies of control apprehend and produce bodies as information, as matter that functions not or predominantly through signification, as modulation of capacities, as individuals in populations with any array of diverse switchpoints (rather than Althusserian interpellation per se), and surveilles bodies not on identity positions alone but through affective tendencies and statistical probabilities. But to render intersectionality as an archaic relic of identity politics then partakes in the fantasy of never-ending inclusion of capacity-endowed bodies, bypassing entirely the possibility that for some bodies – we can call them statistical outliers, or those

consigned to premature death, or those once formerly considered useless bodies or bodies of excess – discipline and punish may well still be the a primary mode of power apparatus. There are different conceptual problems posed by each; intersectionality attempts to comprehend political institutions and their attendant forms of social normativity and disciplinary administration, while assemblages, in an effort to re-introduce politics into the political, asks what is prior to and beyond what gets established. So it seems to me that one of the big payoffs for thinking through the intertwined relations of intersectionality and assemblages is that it can help us produce more roadmaps of precisely these not quite fully understood relations between discipline and control.

To return to the title of my talk, and the juxtaposition that Haraway (unfortunately, but presciently) renders, would I really rather be a cyborg than a goddess? The former hails the future in a teleological technological determinism – culture – that seems not only overdetermined but exceptionalizes our current technologies. The latter – nature – is embedded in the racialized matriarchal mythos of feminist reclamation narratives. Certainly it sounds sexier, these days, to lay claim to being a cyborg than a goddess. But why disaggregate the two when there surely must be cyborgian-goddesses in our midst? Now that is an becoming-intersectional assemblage that I could really appreciate.

[1] Puar, Jasbir K.: *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Durham 2007.

[2] Crenshaw, Kimberle: “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics“, in: *The University of Chicago Legal Forum Volume: Feminism in the Law: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, 1989, pp. 139–167.

[3] Crenshaw, Kimberle: “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color“, in: *Stanford Law Review*, 1991, No. 6, pp. 1241–1299.

[4] Ibid., pg. 1243.

[5] Lorde, Audre: "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference", in: *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Berkeley 1984, pp. 114–123.

[6] Cf. Schueller, Malini Johar: "Analogy and (White) Feminist Theory: Thinking Race and the Color of the Cyborg Body", *Signs: Journal of Women and Society*, 2005, No. 1, pp. 63–92.

[7] Brah, Avtar and Phoenix, Ann: "Ain't I a Woman: Revisiting Intersectionality", in: *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 2004, No. 3, pp. 75–86, here pg. 76.

[8] Yuval-Davis, Nira, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3), pg. 206.

[9] Cf. Kaplan, Caren and Grewal, Inderpal: *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*, Minneapolis 1994.

[10] Chow, Rey: *The Age of the World Target*, Durham 2006, pg. 53.

[11] Cf. Brah and Phoenix: "Ain't I a Woman", op. cit., pg. 76.

[12] Cf. Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble*, New York / London 1990; Spivak, Gayatri C.: "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in: *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988), pp. 271–313.

[13] Grosz, Elisabeth: *Volatile Bodies*, Bloomington 1994.

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