

A Reading List in Minor Field 2: Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (Feminist Scholarship)

Gender, Life Writing, and Self-Making

This list is comprised of both works of fiction and theoretical pieces that focus on the diverse ways in which gender is inscribed and imbricated into narrating one's self and life writing. Gender informs strategies of resistance to various structures of domination, oppression, and structural violence, either directly steeped in or, by extension, derived from patriarchy as ostensibly the only imaginable—normative—symbolic order. More concretely, by *gender* I mean first and foremost the female as embodiment of difference, i.e. an agency in envisioning, advancing, and implementing radical alternatives in theory, arts, and societal practices. The ultimate goal thereby is to undo the entire epistēmē of MANKIND and thus decolonize and liberate entire realms of knowledge, heretofore subjugated to the diktat of patriarchy. It is in this sense that one needs to understand the third concept featuring in the title—self-making—as an ongoing struggle for both attaining narratability of one's self and visibility, acknowledgement, and recognition in society.

A bulk of these readings (e.g. Virginia Woolf's classic essay-manifesto *A Room of One's Own*) grapple with the nascent phenomenon of the woman writer as a hallmark of women's emancipation and liberation in the first half of the twentieth century. The iconic œuvre of Colette and Simone de Beauvoir, potently articulating the experience of female writers qua women in the first place, is indicative of this particular train of thought. On the other hand, the term *écriture féminine* (women's writing), coined by Hélène Cixous, challenges an automatic equation of non-phallogocentric writing with the gender identity of the writer (which explains the inclusion of Jean Genet into this section). Instead, *écriture féminine* predicates this inherently different mode of writing on a set of distinct characteristics, ranging from the medium (be that white ink or even menstrual blood) to its mediation through the body (*My body is dispersed writings*, to recall Cixous's quote from *Venue à l'écriture*). I intend to interrogate the potentialities and limitations of such a daring take on gendering literature and taxonomizing it via gender difference by wondering whether *écriture féminine* effectively operates as a theoretical wager, an incentive or even a provocation which ventures to reshuffle and dismantle Western literary canon.

The overwhelming majority of the literary works analyzed here narrate the self on the verge of an asymptotical convergence between the fictional and the factual (as in Charlotte Delbo's trilogy *Auschwitz et après*, Marguerite Duras' *La douleur* and *L'amant*, Francophone novels of Judeo-Maghrebi writers). These narratives, crafted under the dire conditions of wartime and various forms of assault on humanity in the middle of the 20th century, are densely inhabited by the female gender of their authors. Criticism has initiated many discussions as to whether these works equal purportedly fictionalized autobiographies (cf. the French term "autofiction"), by breaking what Philippe Lejeune calls *autobiographical pact*, or if they should be nonetheless read and interpreted as approximations of fiction. Recently published Sharpe's *In the Wake*, Preciado's *Testo Junkie*, Nelson's *The Argonauts* are gathered under the overarching

concept of *autotheory*, which claims to blur strict genre divisions by incorporating robust theories into a most intimate practice of life writing. With regard to both autofiction and autotheory, I intend to closely scrutinize the modus operandi of the narratorial stance and the very texture of these narratives.

In conclusion, theorizing difference as generic for feminism would remain incomplete without a recourse to the field of Black Feminism which systematically resists the coalescence of white supremacism with gender violence. The works of Hortense Spillers, Sylvia Wynter, and Saidiya Hartman expose the interplay of settler-colonial grammars and patriarchy in the femicidal un-gendering of Black women. Engaging Black feminists into this conversation, I feel compelled to draw some striking parallels between the experience of Black women, ubiquitously marked by the *afterlife of slavery* (S. Hartman) and persistent violence, and the complete un-gendering and dehumanization of Jewish women under the “Third Reich.” Bearing in mind C.L.R. James’ definition of Black Studies as an open and inclusive project of critique against the Western civilization, I am certain that referencing Black Feminism significantly enriches the genealogy of feminist life writing, offered in this reading list. Methodologically, the choice of readings relies on a strong comparative underpinning. Therefore, this collection of texts is inevitably multilingual and includes predominantly works of fiction and theoretical pieces, written in French, but also those in English (mostly non-fiction) and Italian.

I. Gender and Narrating One’s Self

- Beauvoir, Simone de. *Le deuxième sexe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- _____. “Giving an Account of Oneself.” *Diacritics* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 22-40.
- Colette. *La vagabonde*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1975.
- _____. *Le pur et l’impur*. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1991.
- *Conflicts in Feminism*. Edited by Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Delbo, Charlotte. *Auschwitz and After*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.
- _____. *Auschwitz et après. I. Aucun de nous ne reviendra*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970.
- _____. *Auschwitz et après. II. Une connaissance inutile*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970.
- _____. *Auschwitz et après. III. La mesure de nos jours*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1971.
- _____. *La mémoire et les jours*. Paris: Berg International Éditeurs, 1995.
- Felman, Shoshana. ”Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy.” *Diacritics* 5 (Winter 1975): 2-10.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Ce sexe qui n’en est pas un*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977.
- _____. *Je, tu, nous: Towards a Culture of Difference*. New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- Kristeva, Julia. *La révolution du langage poétique*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974.

- _____ . *Pouvoirs de l'horreur : Essai sur l'abjection*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980.
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1985.
- Rich, Adrienne. *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 243-261.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New York: The Fountain Press, 1929.
- _____ . *Mrs Dalloway*. London: Hogarth Press, 1925.
- _____ . *To the Lighthouse*. London: Hogarth Press, 1927.

II. *Écriture féminine*, its Horizons and Limitations

- Andermatt Conley, Verena. *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Cixous, Hélène. *Ayā ! Le cri de la littérature*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2013.
- _____ . *La venue à l'écriture*. Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1977.
- _____ . "Le rire de la Méduse." *L'Arc* 61 (1975): 39-54.
- _____ . *Voiles (avec Jacques Derrida)*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1998.
- *Écriture de femmes : Nouvelles Cartographies*. Edited by Marry Ann Caws, Mary Jean Green, Marianne Hirsch et Ronnie Scharfman. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.
- *Écriture féminine et violence : Une Étude de Marguerite Duras*. Edited by Janine Ricouart. Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 1991.
- Genet, Jean. *Querelle de Brest*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947.
- Jones, Ann R. "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of "L'Écriture Feminine"." *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 2 (1981): 247-263.

III. Mothers and Daughters, Mothering v. Motherhood

- Ferrante, Elena. *La figlia oscura*. Roma: Edizioni E/O, 2006. (English translation: *The Lost Daughter*. New York: Europa Editions, 2008.)
- Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/Daughter Plot : Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979.
- _____ . *Le corps-à-corps avec la mère*. Montréal: Éditions de la pleine lune, 1981.
- Muraro, Luisa. *L'ordine simbolico della madre*. Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1991.
- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born : Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: Norton, 1976.
- Rose, Jacqueline. *Mothers : An Essay on Love and Cruelty*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.
- Ruddick, Sara. *Maternal Thinking : Toward a Politics of Peace*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

IV. Autobiography, "Autofiction," and Autotheory

a).

- Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

- _____ . *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Cavarero, Adriana. *A più voci. Filosofia dell'espressione vocale*. Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 2003. (English translation: *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.)
- _____ . *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti*. Milano: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1997. (English translation: *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.)
- Duras, Marguerite. *L'amant*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1984.
- _____ . *L'amant de la Chine du Nord*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1991.
- _____ . *La douleur*. Paris: P.O.L., 1985.
- _____ . *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1950.
- Hak Kyung Cha, Theresa. *Dictee*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984.
- _____ . *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1983.
- Miller, Nancy. *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Autobiographical Acts*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Nelson, Maggie. *The Argonauts*. Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 2015.
- Preciado, Paul. *Testo Junkie : Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2013.
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Whitlock, Gillian. *Postcolonial Life Narratives: Testimonial Transactions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- *Women, Autobiography, and Theory: A Reader*. Edited by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

b). Judeo-Maghrebi Francophone works:

- Cohen, Annie. *Le marabout de Blida*. Paris: Actes Sud, 1996.
- Fitoussi, Annie. *La mémoire folle de Mouchi Rabbinou*. Paris: Éditions Mazarine, 1985.
- Halimi, Gisèle. *Fritna*. Paris: Plon, 1999.
- _____ . *Le lait de l'oranger*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1988.
- Moati, Nine. *Mon enfant, ma mère*. Paris: Éditions Stock, 1974.

V. Black Feminism as a Radical Theory of Difference

- Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *Spill : Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother : A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

- _____ . “Venus in Two Acts.” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1-14.
- Spillers, Hortense J. *Black, White, and in Color. Essays on American Literature and Culture*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus : Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Wynter, Sylvia. “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation.” *Savacou* 5 (1971): 95-102.
- Wynter, Sylvia. “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation — an Argument.” *The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 257-337.