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SCREENING FEMINISMS

Approaches for teaching sex and gender in film

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In teaching feminist film studies for both practice-based and theoretical courses, engaging the student body in a critical politics of responsibility provides a useful entry into studies of feminism, diversity, and equity issues. As educators, we have to ask what we can do in concrete terms to address the gender and diversity inequities in the world without creating a competing grand narrative subscribing to the neoliberalist discourses of economic and ideologic "mastery", but instead by exploring different ways to conceive of the world together.[1] This can be taught through all areas of screen analysis: through cognizance of the technological platform involved, and the gendered production, distribution, and marketing of particular types of film; the plurality of ideologies, narratives, and themes; models covered by screen media; and in the appeal to and rejection of the situated body of the spectator and participant in that media. This approach to feminist film studies is heralded by feminist thinkers who engage technologies, notably Donna Haraway, whose entire body of work consists of an appeal to "making a difference" to the inequities of gender bias across societies.[2] The conceptualizations and representations that screen media produce and engage with offer readily identifiable sources, evidence, and archives of ideological biases in different cultural and political systems. Communicating the structures that screen media like film engages with enables both a political and cultural analysis of the screen text, and a collective reorienting experience for the student, a reorienting towards what Latour refers to as the "reassemblage of the social", and away from what Wendy Brown (2015) identifies as the "neoliberal political imaginary" where the student was recruited for enrolment in expensive higher education for economic and not for autonomous political reasons.[3] Students are engaged with interventions that disrupt the educational economy of student-as-consumer and educator-as-service-provider

dynamic that the neoliberal university system articulates. We have found that students are encouraged by neoliberal educational institutions to expect to be given information, and to be served by the (contingent) educators in their classroom. In advocating a politicization of this educational process via a feminist ethics of relational responsibilities, the aim is to teach students how to learn to reclaim their political situatedness in order to seek out information, and to learn how to take an active role in knowledge production. However, in the current climate, as Anna Hickey-Moody and Mary Lou Rasmussen argue, when the "personal isn't just political: it's marketable", then an intervention is called for.[4]

In this chapter, we focus on the situated experience of the student body. In doing so we engage the notion of "responsibility", as feminists committed to tackling problems created by modes of oppression of different political communities through racial and gender profiling. Joining with Hannah Arendt, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, bell hooks, Gillian Howie, Luce Irigaray, Kara Keeling, Chandra Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, and Iris van der Tuin, we advocate for a pedagogy of feminist film theory and philosophy that is informed by political feminist, postcolonial feminist, and feminist new materialist scholarship. In doing so, our aim is to reconsider the categories of oppression of minoritarian groups, and focus on the possibilities for new ontological sites, new creative methodologies, and new feminist genealogies. We find that we can locate actions of responsibility at individual, deindividualized, community, trans-species, and machinic levels of engagement. We also wish to acknowledge that the burden of responsibility, empathy, and welfare obligation disproportionately affects female educators. The notion of "emotional labour" can be deployed here to consider how female educators are made responsible for the welfare of their students in a manner distinct from the experiences of male educators.[5] This assumed responsibility extends to the political and feminist provocation of students, and all educators should question the inclusivity of their work in terms of a feminist education. This could easily be checked at the readiness levels of curriculum design or curriculum revision stages to ensure that an inclusivity of materials and a responsible ethical content, both adequate for an appropriate range of taught diversity issues, are inserted into the disciplinary canon – a canon in which critical attention is paid to the problems of structural patriarchal, political, ethnic, and social racism, and misogyny, *and* against negative "othering" so that an adequate space is set for the inclusion of positive imaginings in a site of life.

"We" are two inter-generational educators, both of whom have taught and shared responsibilities in the research, delivery, and reception of feminist film and screen media curricula since the early 1990s, teaching with students in predominantly South-East Asian Pacific and European cohorts. These shared curriculum experiences engage the fundamental "hard questions" for feminist politics, the aim of which is to confront the dominant

discourses of masculinist inequalities, and heteronormative propositions, enabled through patriarchal masochistic power structures, and addressed through the mediating factors of technological platforms of various screen-based media. These questions include a confrontation with patriarchal systems, and an examination of aesthetic and ethical approaches to questions of identity politics, sex and gender essentialisms, education, health, and other social and philosophical questions.

This chapter examines the relationship between the changing location of the (non-)personal, the experiential and material, and the political, taking as central the intimate issues of the biologically sexed and the publicly and culturally gendered body; the question of the desire of sex and of gender, and the material forces that design the politics of that desire. These are not the only questions for a feminist curricula of screen cultures, but as provocations they provide a primary action point from and with which to engage with issues of the history of gendering, of new forms of relationship building, of the issues surrounding the tensions and resolutions between the essentialist and the conceptualist theoretical and lived feminist positions, and are a mandatory topic for media that in its majority has a focus on bodies on screen and the worlds they provoke and produce. Proposed is a three-stage model for teaching feminist film theory where the matter of the film image is engaged first in terms of the units of experiences it focuses upon, then examined for the kinds of forces engaged, and finally related in terms of temporal politics.

The chapter takes as its applied example the topics and images of French filmmaker Catherine Breillat, and in particular her film *Á Ma Sœur* (*Fat Girl*, 2001), although the chapter also draws on her films of the same period, *Sex is Comedy* (2002) and *Romance X* (1999). Breillat's films are about the isolation of women in a situation of "romance" (*Romance*), the condition of women in relation to the situation of men in society (*Romance*), women in competition (the mother and her daughters, and the two sisters in *A Ma Soeur*), rather than women and comradery. Other feminist films that seek to represent women's comradery or feminist solidarity would engender a different kind of feminist reading and critique from those of Breillat. However, the concepts and methods are applicable for any film that engages with the articulation of issues surrounding gender construction, feminist agency, and feminist genealogies produced under patriarchal structures.[6]

Methodology: forming a collective identity

In film and media studies, late twentieth-century feminist theories appeal to the personal experience of the spectator.[7] Second-wave feminist discourses around the "personal is political",[8] together with a self-reflexive awareness of the situation of the viewer's body and its empirical, racial, and psychological experiences in relation to the screen action,[9] created a subject-centred

approach to screen analysis. Typical of this are screen theories that identify with a particular viewing position, a stand-point for a specific body which then provides the possibilities of a politics of alienation from particular screen forms or dominant narratives, sites for women designated as "non-being",[10] cross-identification,[11] oppositional or counter-readings,[12] or politicized female spectatorship[13] that simultaneously locate the spectator-as-subject, a specific identity unable to engage with material possibilities beyond the rigidity of identity location. While this specificity can be politically productive in providing a starting point for the possibility of community, it can also be exclusionary in terms of its identification of a specific race, gender, or sexuality, and often does not account for non-gendered and non-stratified sexual possibilities, such as the experience of queer sexualities, gender-fluid, gender-queer, and transgender sensations and bodies. Further, the singular position is incompatible with a feminist new materialist position that argues for the understanding of an intra-active dynamic field in which the matter of bodies are relationally constituted.[14]

If we assign this personal viewing body to the student as spectator, then we run the risk of assigning an already mediated, visualized identity politic to that body, which can become an "essentialist" position. For example: you are x, based on the ways in which you signify as x and not y or z. For the majority of students, learning *how* to learn to take an empathetic, ethical, and critical approach to images of identity clusters requires a shift of focus toward how one can identify at various points that are the result of collective, trans-subjective, non-individuated communities or groups and not be limited to the specifics of perception either in relation or comparison to surrounding bodies, or restricted in ideological focus to the dominant media and institutional narratives. What we want to emphasize as worthwhile in the classroom safe space is the identification of experiential moments of the recognition of difference, not the already conceptualized body as a singular object. Joining experiential perspective with academic knowledge, as bell hooks describes, can result in the creation of shared communities but it is not without the risks associated with the identification and voicing of positionality.[15] As every classroom educator knows, the risks inherent to inviting student voices to contribute require that a careful mediation take place. This is necessary in order to avoid allowing dominant voices to overpower discussion, as well as to enable and allow productive silences where reflection may occur. In this we would advocate a controlled space where equipment is limited, in order to allow the students to focus on thinking through the issues at hand.[16] The instructor learns to rein in the discussion and bring shade to the silences through the carefully set questions for each class. It is advisable that all students have watched the film example together and done the set readings prior to the class time, which is framed for the students as a point of responsibility to their classmates as well as to their own learning. Thus students already have a shared body of knowledge

that provides recognizable points for discussion and debate. This classroom experience becomes a process of following the methodology advocated by the teaching of feminist materials, with the pedagogical focus being on using the individual experience of the shared screen to then form a collective set of concepts and knowledges produced by this experience.

In addition to thinking about the feminist politics at hand, a consideration of the gendered nature of the technological production of screen media, such as film, is requisite to forming a considered analysis of the material nature of technology and of all its implications. In this, we follow the teaching of Karen Barad, who, in following Donna Haraway's diffractive methodology, reminds us that an approach to understanding differences can be achieved through a "performative understanding of techno-scientific and other natural-cultural practices [where] knowing, thinking, measuring, theorizing, and observing are material practices of intra-acting within and as part of the world".[17] Within any given media form, what are the potentials for a community of multiplicity, rather than a community of exclusion? Engaging the students from the outset in a recognition of the uneven distribution of resources in the world, including access to privileged sites of narrative film as well as citizen screen-based journalism, requires a focus on the material conditions depicted on screen and their political mediation. Information concerning the context of the filmic production and its contextual distribution field further contribute to an engagement with the politics of the screen system, and with the economy of its production of the various points where trans-subjects can identify as such within shared, situated communities – where we take a community to mean an identification of commonalities and themes, not of commonalities of identities. Recognition of a student and a community body does not simply mean identification of an absolute standpoint, or concrete "fact" about the situation of that body and its epistemological and molecular constitution.[18] Rather, it is about appealing to the material factors of heterogeneities that comprise a community of knowledge, not the identification of homo-semiotic markers of normativity: "Location is not a listing of adjectives or assigning of labels such as race, sex, and class", Haraway argues, rather it is about being "in the action, be[ing] finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean" in a relationship or community of solidarity, not mimesis.[19] This understanding of "situated knowledge", as Haraway describes the field of scientific knowledge, requires a certain kind of participant that we can think of in screen media terms as the technological fields that generate not just a spectator, as described in film theoretical trends of the twentieth century, but a participant that also acts as "modest witness"; required to engage and activate a critical position in and of community-epistemology.[20]

Taking an initial "show and tell" approach, we ask students to recount their personal experiences of viewing a film, of the *how* of the story (the epistemic facts of image and story construction), and of the situated

(technological, physical, experiential) viewing experience. The aim of the classroom recounting is to then enable the students to move towards taking a turn away from this personal experience and towards being a "modest witness". Becoming a collective involves moving away from a singular standpoint, towards a shared resource in order to critique not only the production and concepts of the film, but also how and what are the forces enabling a relatable "experiential" moment as individuals within a collective. In teaching the *how* of a critical framework for engaging with the filmic text, such experiences can become a set of critical epistemological methods of the ways and means by and in which discursive, performative, material, and technological moments engage in the formations of materials and concepts that are generated by new technologies.

The approach is thus: 1. Articulate and critique the situatedness of the viewing experience in material (including technological) and social terms; 2. Identify and critique the epistemology of the narrative and its images in political terms; 3. Determine and critique the temporally determined witness-participant of the technological specificity of different screen media.[21] In taking these steps the method being practised, which should also be discussed with the class, is one of a material relationality using the tools of pedagogic classroom-as-safe-space and as test-laboratory. To develop this further, we point the instructor to Latour's critical address of the social in pondering how to think more abstractly about individual experience within the larger frameworks that institutions such as higher education and global film practices put forward.[22]

Temporal politics: portraits of women on the market

The position of the student in the classroom should be one of a freedom that is nonetheless respectful of the diversity of communities within that site. Through initial exposure to feminist concepts in the set reading texts and discussion in the classroom, the political grammar of gendered differences begins to emerge, using a feminist language that teaches a political modality through attention to experiences and manifestations of difference. Observation and analysis of the materiality of the situated body of the on-screen lives performing their communal bodies, through specific conditions of life, provides a way for students to begin to appreciate the abstractions of knowledge that feminist theories can and have enabled. Luce Irigaray's essay "Women on the Market" can be read in relation to any screen media form, setting up the more complex terms for questioning and discussing the historical roles that women are forced to take up in societies organized through particular stratifications of the gendered production of labour and through gendered economies of life.[23] Taking the critical language of capitalism that Marx developed to address the circulation of women as commodities in the marketplace, Irigaray argues that "wives, daughters, and sisters have value

only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men".[24] We can take this market positioning of women-as-commodity as a starting point for conversation. Describing screen media situations, conditions, and characters, students often pick out images or concepts that they can personally relate to. This allows the biases of ethnic, gendered, and institutionalized identity-knowledge to become shared in the group, providing a useful starting paradigm that enables intensive entry points for students into or outside of texts and enabling their communities to create alternatives. Such a project may then be critiqued in terms of the binary positioning of a narrowly conceived, stereotypical, or limited "subject" – in the complexities of the gendered framework into which this "woman" or "gender" or "sex" or "race" notion circulates – and the extent to which each is performed and "entangled" with the other may be identified and discussed.[25] Challenging stereotyping and seeking different ways of expressing the multidiscursive affects that different bodies can generate has become one of the pressing agenda items for feminist theorists engaged in feminist epistemologies.[26] Hinton and Treusch note with regard to teaching with a feminist agenda today that the feminist materialist work demonstrates that "'actors' in knowledge processes cannot be conceived of in solely atomistic or anthropocentric terms".[27] New materialist feminist critiques offer accounts of historical shifts through genealogical approaches,[28] and post-human critiques of the notion of singular "identities" demonstrate the importance of taking a bio-deconstructed approach to the social political body and its mediated forms.[29]

In film studies, the pedagogic frame of feminism is addressed through the film content, and sometimes through its technological modality. The film text (which may or may not be overtly articulated as "feminist") is screened for the class, chosen for its affective lesson – perhaps a "friendship" film (e.g. *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*, Dir. Cristian Mungiu, 2007); or a film that addresses a "family" experience (e.g. *Wasp*, Dir. Andrea Arnold, 2003); or a "coming-of-age" theme (e.g. *Mustang*, Dir. Deniz Gamze Ergüven, 2015); or a social "revenge" film (e.g. *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, Dir. Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014) – and also chosen for the fundamental theoretical lesson on how a personal situation enables a positional aesthetics that is both determined and determining of one's access, entry, and position within a community; the film text is also chosen for the affective nature of its political conditions. Appealing to the student's potentiality for consciousness of the political conditions of the screen media site through the examination of the situation, the inhabitants of the screen, and their mediation, the pedagogic screen narrative enables students to take up a responsive analysis in the first instance. Depending on the type and style of screen media experienced, the classroom can then diffract this reading into as many different possible positions as are conceivable within the contextual and technological frameworks.

Witnessing sex as a material politics: après ma mort, je m'ennuie encore

Feminist film critic Sophie Mayer addresses Breillat's film *À Ma Soeur*[30] in terms of a question that Molly Haskell asks in relation to the staging of sex scenes in teenage films: "whose sexuality is it, exactly?"[31] This is a question that reappears in the case of many staged versions of "female" sexuality on screen, for example the lesbian sex scenes in the film *Blue Is the Warmest Color* (Dir. Abdellatif Kechiche, 2013), which were critiqued as being representative of the silence of women against their use as sexual motivators for men (and derided and critiqued by lesbians on multiple online forums, most famously in a clip titled "Lesbians React to Sex Scenes in 'Blue is the Warmest Color' ").[32] Mayer refers to *À Ma Soeur* as "scintillating and disturbing", addressing the ways in which the teen female body is used as a problematic site.[33] In *À Ma Soeur*, adolescent female sexuality is framed around the concept of virginity, and female virginity in particular, which is an aspect that Eugenie Brinkema relates directly to transgression and violence.[34]

Breillat's film focuses on the rigidity of the lives of two sisters, how they are shaped by the perception of those around them and the expectations that their physical presence produces. Breillat draws a stark comparison between them by framing one as a late twentieth-century commercially "beautiful" fifteen-year-old girl, Elena (played by Roxane Mesquida), and the other, twelve-year-old Anaïs (played by Anaïs Reboux), as the "fat girl". There is an ethical issue to be discussed in the casting and framing of competition between young women in this way, which could be a focus of a classroom discussion. In one intense scene, Elena invites a boy, Fernando (played by Libero De Rienzo), into the sisters' holiday house bedroom, and as Anaïs is ignored, the couple engage in extended, awkward foreplay. Fernando's heavy breathing can be heard over the conversation as he fondles Elena's covered breast. The girl's body, then, becomes a site that serves to refer back to the viewer's sexual encounters, as well as to communicate the tension between the strength of desire and the disappointing reality of such an experience.[35]

The relationship between sexuality, consumption, and desire is produced through the juxtaposition between Anaïs and Elena throughout the film, where Anaïs is designated as not being desirable because she eats, but Elena does not eat and is thus able to be consumed. In a precursor to the sexual encounter to follow, Elena and Fernando eat breakfast with the sisters' family. The topic of discussion rests on Anaïs' food. Anaïs' father comments on her heaped plate, and Elena continues the discussion by talking about Anaïs' weight and how she eats and does little else, which, in turn, puts Elena off her food. The film makes Anaïs eat to avoid being like her sister, being used by men. Anaïs fantasizes about exploiting men the way her sister is exploited by them: for example, while talking to herself in the pool, Anaïs

kisses the railing. She envies, resents, and pities her sister as she watches during Elena's encounters with Fernando. That evening, the sisters lie in twin beds, and Elena applies lipstick while reclining. Anaïs asks her what she is doing, and she replies that as she can't escape the compound of the holiday house where they are staying, she has invited Fernando over. Anaïs is told that she sees, hears, and knows nothing, but will remain a witness to Elena and Fernando's sexual encounter. Here, Breillat produces a tension between adolescent sexual exploration, exploitation, and incestuous sexuality. Elena's moody, resolved teenage pout remains throughout. Fernando arrives and acknowledges the overbearing silence in the room by asking for music, a request that can't be accommodated because they must be quiet to avoid being caught. As a result, the sound of Fernando and Elena kissing is nauseatingly wet and breathy. Every movement is magnified by the crickets and silence. Elena (playfully) challenges Fernando on his desire for music, demonstrating the overanxiousness for men to desire her that Anaïs observes in the film's opening scene. Even music played in the background is a challenge or disruption to his desire, and represents the threatening competition for his attention that Elena fears.

The lack of ambient sound is further amplified when Elena and Fernando progress to his touching her breast while they kiss. The breathy groping becomes unbearable for the squeamish viewer as Fernando fumbles with Elena's bra. Elena asks Fernando how many girls he's "had" while he touches her breasts; she is matter-of-fact, even defiant, and clearly threatened by the thought of competition, but still obligingly stretches and offers her body to him. Not sleeping with him "makes a big difference", he says, as he gets out a cigarette, realizing she's a virgin. He smokes while telling her about a woman that wanted to sleep with him so much it made him "feel sick" and tells her how he tried to avoid having sex with her. "I got a kick out of dumping her like that", he laughs, as he ashes a cigarette in an ashtray he's placed on Elena's stomach, further demonstrating his disdain for women, and particularly for those who articulate their desires. This further reinforces for Elena that she is to be desired and not to desire autonomously. Elena asks whether Fernando would respect her, even if she slept with him; he replies that he would, although it is obvious from this exchange that he already does not.

Anaïs listens from her bed, picking at her nose, and covering her eyes with her hands, but watches through her fingers as Fernando has sex with her sister. He promises to only penetrate her "part of the way" and to not come in her, he tries to guilt her into allowing him to fuck her properly by threatening to fuck someone else instead, or directly afterwards. She replies that she loves him, but that she needs time. She looks away from his eyes, moving her head to avoid confrontation. He tries to fuck her anyway, and then tells her she's "spoiling" their relationship, and this strained negotiation extends for a considerable amount of time, made tedious through repetition.

Elena's desire to protect and mediate her virginity is a demonstration in opposition to Anaïs' assertion at the beginning of the film, that she wants her "first" to be "nothing" so that no man can claim (sexual) ownership over her. Fernando calls Elena a "little girl who looks like a woman" and continues to try to manipulate her into having sex with him. He touches her hip and vulva, and describes the encounter as "a demonstration of love" (her love for him, although that remains unclear). Throughout, the presence of Anaïs, witnessing from her bed, produces further illicit tension. The scene abruptly cuts to Anaïs' eyes as Elena grunts, and then cries out "stop" and groans. The audience infer the act through the fear on Anaïs' face. Elena is clearly in pain as Fernando penetrates her anally, following his explanation that women can still say that they haven't been with someone that way, which Elena designates "sick". Afterwards, she says "I feel like crying" and Fernando responds by telling her "that was a wonderful gift" and touches her face and won't stop in a way that is as oppressive for the viewer as it is for her. Fernando stays in Elena's bed until morning, still grabbing at her face and neck, closely, controlling. Before leaving, he asks Elena to fellate him, and Elena expresses concern that Anaïs is awake and jealous. Anaïs abruptly yells that she wants some sleep. As he leaves, Fernando designates their encounter sinister, not because of Anaïs, but, as he implies, because he has not had everything he wanted. Worried, Elena asks if he wants to break up, and then says "until next time" before fellating him at the garden gate.

The situation that Breillat sets up here makes overt the sexing of gender, and this community's conditioning of women and men clearly represents the senses of all performing as commodities in a given site. Indeed, film critic Linda Williams argues that *À Ma Soeur* "turns out to be a comparative study in the forms of humiliating sexual initiation and the damage they can do to young girls with no real power over their sexual fate".[36] The use of Elena's body as an object for penetration only denies her any agency for her own desire in the marketplace of bodies. The relationship between the body, its desires, and the condition of identity, or the self, is further complicated here as a site of constant movement. Breillat's narrative ending of this film provides an extreme rejection of the normative modes of female gendering that the film maps out when Anaïs' self, along with the notion of a body, and the body's sense of the self is refigured. Instead of a singular girl, sister, or daughter, the body is produced in ways that must be recognized through interaction with the material and representational world, in such ways that each recognition, experience, interaction, and moment is generative of a new body and a new self.[37] This generativity further complicates desire, particularly, as Braidotti has noted, the concept of desire as reliant upon a mastery of the self, to be defined in opposition to an other.[38] Desire becomes a site of the demarcation of privilege, where the possibility for the subject of desire is defined by the ability of the subject within a given political context to express it. As Braidotti writes, "desire is never a given", but the (sexual)

expression of autonomy provided by the objectification of an other, and the provision of social and political recognition bestowed upon some bodies, forms, and sensations over others.[39]

Conclusion: communicating the political praxis

The concepts of sex, gender, and desire provide provocations for the classroom. Sex can be a confronting topic for students of all ages and orientations to address, as can their position on what constitutes gender, and how to articulate notions of desire. The cultural variations in what constitutes normative standards of behaviour in all such topics and related ideas, policies, and practices mean that cognitive, empirical, and semiotic methods for analysis of sound-images are limited in their address. Recent theoretical turns in post-psychological affect theory, in film studies in particular, have seen the address of the sensorial that the cognitive may have left out, but affective theories per se,[40] tend to repeat the same universalist errors that the "spectator" theories of first-wave feminist film theory made in addressing the "body" of the viewer.[41] Not all bodies are the same, and they certainly can't be ascribed any form of reactive change by another. In a theoretical turn towards a queer "sensuality", the argument that a "sensual figuration" created through filmic displays of sexual acts "cancel" semiotics by their "excess" requires further elaboration of what constitutes excess, and to whom. If the image is to be understood as being relationally productive for re-examining the situation of the political sphere, then the methods for analysis of the image must be adequate. The dictum "the personal is political" in the contemporary classroom brings with it the danger of becoming an emphasis on rigid identification categories within the realm of the personal and the authentic at the expense of the political and actionable.[42] In the feminist classroom, students often relate their personal experiences to ideas discussed, but it is not the relationship between existing feminist ideas and their own lives that is important but rather the question of how to mobilize that relationship between the personal, once identified, and the broader politics of the community at hand. The use of cultural examples and particularly films can assist with this mobilization as a clear way to motivate students to think beyond themselves and to queer a representation, following Patricia MacCormack's notion of queer as an approach to given material where "queer is a way of approaching the unfamiliar".[43]

   The conception of normative forces and their critique can be established as "subjectivist" where the experience of life is "a detaching power" designed to separate the individual from the community and from communication.[44] The position of experiential normativity, which is constituted by the identification of the unremarkable for the student, is a position of habit. We read and relate to specific images, including moving images, as a comparative relation to a culturally and economically ascribed "normativity"

that is composed by a repetition of recognition which produces this habit, a process that Claire Colebrook describes as "the stabilisation of the self through a repeatable norm".[45] Films that confront normative positioning and expectations (for example, *Baise-Moi*, 2002, dir. Coralie Trinh Thi and Virginie Despentes, 2002; *Spider Lilies*, 2007, dir. Zero Chou), or films that approach ideas of gender in a challenging or non-normative way (for example, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, 1980, dir. Connie Fields; *Daughters of the Dust*, 1991, dir. Julie Dash; *All About My Mother*, 1999, dir. Pedro Almodóvar; *The Milk of Sorrow*, 2009, dir. Claudia Llosa) become tools for constructing a feminist pedagogy. The different forms and genres of feminist films also provide further tools.[46]

We advocate balancing images of popular culture feminism with a range of different local and delocalized feminist cultures so that a "normative" position (as Irigaray addresses) becomes questionable through the proliferation of images of different feminisms, thus providing a framework for a critical feminist pedagogy. This approach often exceeds textbook phrasing, and therefore prevents the discussion of feminisms from being confined to any specific location when seen and compared collectively.[47]

Teachers must be prepared to set up flexible but firm rules of debate at the start of classes, addressing the issues of safety of opinion, confidentiality within the classroom space, the concepts of different cultural mores and norms, and the temporally and culturally divisive arena of censorship. Students should be allowed to not participate in some of the screenings or areas of discussion if they feel unable to confront some of the topics broached, and alternatives for assessment processes should be arranged prior to the start of classes. Teaching the practice of inclusive formations of discourses of the self also means providing a grounding in the critical histories and theories of such practices – including Foucault's concept of care of the self, but also extending to recognition that a self-body is constituted across political histories that perform community requirements.[48] While some critique of the rise of the "trigger warning" is valid, the use of techniques like creating the concept of a "safe space" and warning students about challenging material in advance both allows access for participants who, for whatever reason, feel unable to engage with that material, but (perhaps even more importantly), it allows teachers to continue to present students with stimulating and provocative materials without censoring them for fear of undermining the mental health or cultural sensibilities of those at risk.

A political community is predicated on common goals, but it must also be an agreement or treaty between diverse bodies, an agreement to participate in the recognition of commonality and solidarity while engendering difference. This approach to feminist pedagogy has the potential to produce the most politically engaged, nuanced student experiences. In this chapter, we have mobilized a discussion of films made by Catherine Breillat to illustrate the possibilities for feminist film analysis in the classroom. In offering an alternative

and critical approach to neoliberal feminist discourses that eschew the particularity of the material body for the sake of authentically located identity politics, Breillat makes an analysis of the affective political aesthetics of the screen site. Using the framework of "relational responsibilities" that is to be devised in the classroom and the tools of feminist second-wave (Haraway) and feminist materialist (Barad) theory, this chapter has established that there has been a fundamental change in the ways in which we can conceive of a personal-political, and how the relation between the personal-political might be renegotiated in the context of the analysis of screen media through feminist pedagogy. In this, we hope to re-engage students in the active, collaborative, and creative production of feminist epistemological thinking.

Questions

*   What have been some of the historical roles women have played in society, culture, and politics? How are these roles depicted in contemporary film?
*   How is the position of "woman" challenged or confirmed by contemporary film?
*   How does the neoliberal economy produce a "feminism without women"?[49]

Suggested assignment

*   Using specific examples, discuss the empowerment of women through the contemporary televisual and cinematic use of the female body as an active and creative site for the expression of sexuality and desire.
*   Could we speak of a gendered temporality? Discuss with reference to film/television.
*   In what ways can films and/or television programmes which foreground aspects of sexuality be read as subversive?
*   What might constitute a feminist discourse of a counter language? Discuss with reference to films or television programmes which address the voice, language, sounds, and/or music of women.
*   Discuss the political implications of pornography for women through an evaluation of different feminist positions on pornography.
*   Is a woman's body her destiny? Argue this topic through at least two of the key concepts of feminist film theory.

Notes

1   Here we draw on the respective works of Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, 14, 3 (1988): 575–99; bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 172;

and Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 41 ff.

2 Donna Haraway, *Modest–Witness@Second–Millennium: FemaleMan©_Meets_ OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 16.

3 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Brown, *Undoing the Demos*.

4 Anna Hickey-Moody and Mary Lou Rasmussen, "The Sexed Subject in-between Deleuze and Butler", in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, Chrysanthi Nigianni and Merl Storr, eds, 37–53 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 39.

5 Karen Ramsay, "Women: Mothers and Others: Discourses of Women and Motherhood in Three Academic Departments", in *Challenges and Negotiations for Women in Higher Education*, Pamela Cotterill, Sue Jackson and Gayle Letherby, eds, 48–9 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

6 For example, the film *Mustang* (Deniz Gamze Ergüven, 2015) would be equally well suited to such a reading, as are the film oeuvres of: Chantal Akerman; Ana Lily Amirpour; Andrea Arnold; Sadie Benning; Lizzie Borden; Jane Campion; Gurinder Chadha; Lisa Cholodenko; Sofia Coppola; Catherine Corsini; Julie Dash; Claire Denis; Maya Deren; Vivienne Dick; Cheryl Dunye; Marlene Gorris; Leslie Harris; Mary Harron; Todd Haynes; Joanna Hogg; Karyn Kusama; Clara Law; Samira Makhmalbaf; Marzieh Meshkini; Trinh Minh-ha; Tracey Moffatt; Kimberley Pierce; Monika Pellizzari; Sally Potter; Carolee Schneemann; Céline Sciamma; Susan Seidleman; Monica Treut; Rose Troche; Margarethe Von Trotta; Athina Rachel Tsangari; Agnes Varda – to name but a few examples.

7 Annette Kuhn, *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representation and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1985), 3; Martine Beugnet and Laura Mulvey, "Feminist Perspective", in *Feminisms: Diversity, Difference and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*, Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers, eds (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

8 Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political", in *Radical Feminism*, Anne Koedt, Ellen Levin, and Anita Rapone, eds (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 113.

9 See bell hooks, *Reel to Reel: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1996); Minh-ha Trinh, *Cinema Interval* (London: Routledge, 1999); Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds, 833–44 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); A. Smelik, *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* (London: MacMillan, 1998).

10 Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory [1988]", in *Feminism and Film*, E. A. Kaplan, ed., 351 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

11 Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema".

12 bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators", in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Robert Stam and Toby Miller, eds, 510 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

13 Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator", in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, Robert Stam and Toby Miller, eds, 495 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

14 See Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter", in *Signs*, 28, 3 (2003): 801–31.

15 hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*.

16 For example, restricting the use of laptops and smartphones during class discussion, which can be discussed with students in relation to respecting and engaging with others, as well as a way of preventing the recording of discussion in a "safe space".

17 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 90.

18 Haraway, *Modest–Witness@Second–Millennium*, 25–6.

19 Ibid., 2–3; 37.

20 In our forthcoming book on *Feminist Screen Media, Practice and Philosophy* we describe more fully this sense of the feminist epistemological community participant.

21 We use the term "witness" here on a number of levels, beyond the scope of this article, we refer readers to Haraway's sense of a "modest witness" as well as the use in observational and trauma film accounts, for example as discussed in Lisa Downing and Libby Saxton, *Film and Ethics: Foreclosed Encounters* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 71–4.

22 Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.

23 See Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed, 1998 [1986]).

24 Luce Irigaray, "Women on the Market", in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 172.

25 We engage the sense of a performance of identity and the entangled subjectivities it produced through readings of Barad, Butler, and Haraway: Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity"; Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Haraway, "Situated Knowledges".

26 Cf. Sara Ahmed's work on diversity, affect, and race within a feminist key in *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); and the new materialist approach taken to generating feminist epistemology by Iris Van der Tuin, in her book *Generational Feminism: New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

27 Peta Hinton and Pat Treusch, "Introduction: Teaching with Feminist Materialisms", in *Teaching with Feminist Materialisms*, Peta Hinton and Pat Treusch, eds (Utrecht: ATGENDER, 2015), 3.

28 van der Tuin, *Generational Feminism*.

29 For examples of these critiques see Patricia MacCormack, *Posthuman Ethics: Embodiment and Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2012); Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013); and Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman Affirmative Politics", in *Resisting Biopolitics: Philosophical, Political and Performative Strategies*, S. E. Wilmer and Audrone Zukauskite, eds, 30–56 (London: Routledge, 2016).

30 Which was re-titled *Fat Girl* for Anglophone cinematic release, reflecting the need for explicit explanations in Anglophone filmic consumption practices.

31 Haskell, cited in Sophie Mayer, *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema* (London: IB Taurus, 2015), 147.

32 See Manohla Dargis, "Seeing You Seeing Me: The Trouble with 'Blue Is the Warmest Color'", *New York Times*, 25 October 2013. See also Marlene Gorris' 1982 film, *A Question of Silence*. The video "Lesbians React to Sex Scenes in 'Blue is the Warmest Color'" can be found here: https://youtu.be/rIjJ_VtU9PA (accessed 10 September 2016).

33 Mayer, *Political Animals*, 146.

34 Eugenie Brinkema, "Celluloid is Sticky: Sex, Death, Materiality, Metaphysics (in Some Films by Catherine Breillat)", *Women: A Cultural Review*, 17, 2 (2006): 156.

35 A useful classroom reading to accompany the viewing and discussion of this film is found in Linda Williams' discussion of Breillat's films in her chapter

"Philosophy in the Bedroom: Hard-Core Art Film since the 1990s", in Williams, *Screening Sex*, 258–98 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

36 Williams, *Screening Sex*, 283.

37 L. Ayu Saraswati, "Wikisexuality: Rethinking Sexuality in Cyberspace", *Sexualities*, 16, 5/6 (2013): 587–603.

38 Rosi Braidotti, keynote lecture: "Vectors of Affirmation", London Graduate School Bloomsbury Lecture, Central St Martins and Kingston University, London, 2015.

39 Rosi Braidotti, "Interview with Rosi Braidotti: 'The Notion of the Univocity of Being or Single Matter Positions Difference as a Verb or Process of Becoming at the Heart of the Matter'", in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, eds, 32 (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012).

40 See Marie-Luise Angerer, *Desire after Affect*. Trans. Nicholas Grindell (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015 [2007]); Anu Koivunen, "The Promise of Touch: Turns to Affect in Feminist Film Theory", in *Feminisms: Diversity, Difference and Multiplicity in Contemporary Film Cultures*, Laura Mulvey and Anna Backman Rogers, eds, 97–110 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015) for a summary.

41 See Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, 343–9 (London: Routledge, 2000) for a summary.

42 Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political", 113.

43 MacCormack, *Posthuman Ethics*, 109.

44 Claire Colebrook, "Norm Wars", in *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters, eds, 81–2 (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

45 Colebrook, "Norm Wars", 90.

46 For just one example, see the discussion of feminist documentary film in Ilona Hongisto, *Soul of the Documentary: Framing, Expression, Ethics* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

47 For example: we might look at the specific events and how different feminist groups respond to them in films by Nadine Labaki, Samira Makhmalbaf, or Andrea Arnold.

48 Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 3, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

49 Braidotti, "Posthuman Affirmative Politics", 40.

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