Introduction

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 6 2013

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This special issue of *Anglo Saxonica* came about when ULICES organized the international conference *Women and the Arts: Dialogues in Female Creativity in the US and Beyond* (Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon, June 15-17 2011), having invited Sandra M. Gilbert to be one of the plenary speakers. Isabel Fernandes, director of our research center, asked Gilbert to co-edit, with the conference organizers, an issue of the journal dedicated to feminism, and she generously accepted the challenge. This is the result of that ongoing cooperation.

Under the generic title "Feminisms Today and Tomorrow", we have brought together the contributions of scholars coming from different geographical, academic, and cultural backgrounds, covering a range of perspectives, including philosophy, theology, literature, culture, and the arts. Unfortunately, the fact that the texts were to be written in English led to the exclusion of some voices, since there were several invitees who did not feel at ease presenting their ongoing research in a second language. Maybe this is a sign that it is time for us to start questioning the impact of linguistic imperialism in the academy these days. Still, though the majority of the contributors come from English-speaking countries and are women (which makes us wonder if this territory is still a woman's world), I believe the volume gathers diverse and compelling works by scholars who share their latest feminist research, allowing us to perceive common threads and identify recurrent thematics, yielding an overview of what unites us and what makes us different.

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It is a pleasure to have been asked to join with Diana V. Almeida in the project whose fruits we offer you here. Around the world, as these essays show, feminist theory and scholarship is alive and well. The movement that had its origins centuries ago in the impassioned early modern writings of Christine de Pizan and Sor Juana de la Cruz, and more recently, in the twentieth-century treatises of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, has gradually transformed private and public spheres from the nineteen seventies to the present. Now, with women's studies and gender studies programs firmly established on many campuses – for instance, in Latin America and Australia, in Europe and the United States, in India and Japan – and with women entering formerly male-dominated professions in increasing numbers, we can begin to believe that feminist activists have been successful in their efforts to change the traditional hierarchies of our culture. Yet as the incisive analyses offered here indicate, there is still much work to be done. Such fields as philosophy and theology, art history and literary criticism, anthropology and sociology – all represented in this issue – continue to pose problems that need to be addressed by revisionary thinkers like the ones whose work we collect here. Below we present abstracts of their essays, which should dramatize the range and ambition of their research. But it is a privilege to publish all these articles in their entirety, in a single lively issue of *Anglo Saxonica.*

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In "Difference and Hierarchy Revisited by Feminism", Irene Ramalho Santos draws on a plurality of sources to study the historical and philosophical origins of the subaltern position that for over two millennia has been attributed to and assumed by women in Western culture. Considering a wide range of examples drawn from the contemporary media that testify to the prevalence of sexist and misogynistic practices all over the world, the essay questions the ways difference has been conceptualized over the centuries and inserted into a hierarchy that establishes the predominance of a normative subject and debases alterity.

According to Page duBois, in the fourth century BC a substantial epistemological change took place from a mythic and poetic approach to a logocentric consciousness that ceased to be based on analogy and polarity and became rooted in differentiation and dominance. Since the Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of sexual differentiation have remained central to this day and give philosophical discourse a phallocentric bias, representing female subjectivity becomes complicated, if not, as several feminist theorists have asserted, impossible within patriarchal language.

Ramalho Santos considers several theoretical approaches to this issue and analyses their shortcomings, especially since some of them resort to non-Eurocentric but still male-centered views, such as the uBuntuu or the quechua philosophies. A few feminist movements, namely Mujeres Creando and the Combahee River Collective, exemplify activist stances that refuse to idealize indigenous worldviews but are able to integrate their positive contributions, taking into consideration a myriad of categories of difference that help to individualize and situate subjectivities. After all, following Rosi Braidotti's conceptualization of (sexual) difference, feminism nowadays tends to envision identity as a nomadic, nonhierarchical project that relies on the intersection of knowledges, in an ongoing process of reciprocal translation, based on an ethics of resilience and sustainability.

In "Making a Difference with Difference", Anna Mercedes proposes a feminist phenomenological epistemology that conceives identity as the result of a network of relational experiences lived by an embodied self. The concept of difference is paramount in this theoretical frame, since it admits the emergence of diversity and contrast, avoiding an essentialist and imperialistic perspective towards alterity that either tends to be assimilated to or modulated by the hegemonic norm. Underscoring the historical "temptation" of Christian doctrine towards a rhetoric of oneness that was instrumentalized as a strategy of political consolidation, the essay defines the dangers of this totalizing perspective and suggests a theology of difference founded on the notion of incarnation.

Indeed, incarnation presupposes the materialization of singularity and potentiates the activation of lived coalitions that allow for and stimulate the flourishing of differences. This practice is thus presented as a spiritual exercise that counteracts a universalizing and homogenizing tendency

by stimulating openness to the flux of ever-changing subjectivities. Feminism itself was born through, and is still nurtured by, this relational claim, which conceives the self as a permeable entity shaped by spatial and power dynamics. Arguing for a perspective that enables the emergence of differentiation as a source of empowerment, Mercedes foregrounds the need to perceive these communal exchanges with a consciousness of the implicit power lines that delineate differences and may consubstantiate recurrent contexts of exclusion.

Hence, while not ignoring the patterns that inform and sometimes deform these dynamics, this particular approach does recognize that difference is compositional, for each one of us, and is constantly being reshaped by confluences of relationships and by a plurality of interchanges between communities. Since difference ceases to be a substantive category, it implies openness to vulnerability and the acceptance of risk as part of this ever-shifting play of selves, which ultimately will encourage the revelation of our uniqueness.

In "Equivocation, Translation, and Performative Interseccionality: Notes on Decolonial Feminist Practices and Ethics in Latin America", Claudia Lima Costa adopts the perspective of cultural translation to consider the relationship between contemporary Latin American feminist theories and postcolonial criticism. This analytical protocol evokes the concept of translation as a productive tool that not only acknowledges the asymmetries of power and the fluidity of the modern world but also seeks to promote a dialogue that recognizes difference and honors the ancient systems of knowledge ("saberes próprios") of the Latin American peoples.

According to Quijano, the "coloniality of power" was built on the interconnected fictions of gender (patriarchy and heteronormativity) and race, which also implied the predominance of a binary world view that established an irrevocable opposition between nature and culture and posited the Western male as the normative model of subjectivity. The so called "earth practices" are one of the current strategies of resistance to this worldview. In fact, they imply an epistemic rupture with the anthropomorphic perspective, including nature in the political realm. Besides, they call for another type of reflective stance, based on the recognition of the need to slow down reasoning, in order to really be able to listen to other

opinions and to have time to think before responding. This is especially important because some conceptual categories are equivocal when used by different interpretative communities and require a careful translation that will allow for meanings to travel safely between particular spaces and peoples and across multiple boundaries.

Based on the concept of body as an assemblage of categories in the process of becoming, material feminisms offer a similar approach, since they underline the dynamics between the material and the discursive, proposing the ontological articulation of the traditionally exclusionary categories of nature and culture. While reclaiming the materiality and situatedness of the body, they also recognize that corporeality is dependent on its constitutive discourses, explicitly on the interface between technology (the material apparatuses that draw new contours to the body) and ideologies, which is very striking in the case of the fetus and the abortion discussion, for instance.

Finally, pointing out the barriers that feminist texts and practices face in the travels between South and North America, Lima Costa emphasizes that the decolonization of knowledge asks for transnational ethics and performances that celebrate alternative histories, ontologies, and paths of action. These dynamics are illustrated by Morimura's parodic recreation of Manet's *Olympia*, in a strategy of sardonic appropriation that opens up interstitial spaces of difference.

In "Beauty Incarnate: A Claim for Postmodern Feminist Theology", Krista E. Hughes maintains that beauty should be considered a crucial theological category, based on a more inclusive understanding of incarnation as the corporeal manifestation of God in every particular individual. This essay pinpoints three sources for the aesthetic penchant in present-day ontology: i) feminist theory, with its emphasis on an embodied subjectivity that questions the patriarchal dichotomies of self-other and body-mind; ii) affect theory, with its insistence on the intercorporeal and performative nature of identity, valuing vulnerability as *the* state of openness that allows for an encounter; and iii) process philosophy, with its focus on a sensible-relational network of dynamic entities who co-create beauty as they resolve the discord implied in the flux of becoming.

Thus, the norm for beauty should not be Christ crucified because, as other feminist thinkers also argued, the crucifixion has been associated

with self-sacrificial suffering that was (mis)used to disempower marginalized groups, specifically women. Instead, contemporary theological aesthetics may assume a panentheistic perspective and, exploring the depictions of Jesus in the Gospels, appreciate the way these images of embodiment weave a relational life-story that celebrates particularity and multiplicity. Indeed, the divine incarnated in this particular being in order to illuminate our common divinity and honor our physicality, as the episodes of the woman anointing Jesus's feet in parallel with the master washing his disciples' feet clarify.

Hughes also asserts that the wounds still marking Jesus' body after resurrection add another layer of significance to the New Testament, depicting the wholeness of human experience, where the process of healing testifies not only to vulnerability but also to our capability to grow out of and through pain. Consequently, beauty as a form of action (as the aforementioned examples from the Scriptures illustrate) heals, for it is co-created in the encounter of strong and vulnerable beings, encompassing the spectrum of joy and sorrow.

In "Feminism meets the Big Exhibition: Museum Survey Shows Since 2005", Hilary Robinson points out that between 2005 and 2011 major museums and galleries all over the world gave an extraordinary visibility to art created by women. Contemplating four of these exhibitions, the essay purports to analyze the rationale behind these events, in particular the extent to which they were informed by a feminist perspective and the type of Art History representations they produced. It is also worth noticing that all these exhibitions were presented as surveys (assuming a broad scope), all arose from a feminist agenda (established either by an overt curatorial motivation, by the chosen art, or by their catalogues), and all took place in an historical context characterized by the canonization of women's movements and their artistic practices.

WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 2007) staged an encounter with many key feminist works that had previously been confined to the pages of small-circulation art magazines, giving the visitors the opportunity to relate to the "real thing". The curatorial categories invoked by the curator Cornelia Butler are non-activist though, since she does not conceive of feminism as a

political framework that asks for vigilance and action. To prove her point, Robinson highlights the logics of exclusion presiding over the curatorial choice of works and artists — these seem to ignore basic feminist tenets such as the need to revise the relationship between the politics of the art world and the patriarchal structures that inform them. In contrast, Xabier Arakistain, the curator of *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang: 45 Years of Art and Feminism* (Bilbao, 2007), provides an historical context of the feminist movement and problematizes the rules of canon formation and the logics of the art market, assuming an openly activist position. An equally interesting example is the catalogue of *REBELLE: Art and Feminism 1969-2009* (Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem, Netherlands), which was published after the opening of the exhibition and documented several events and performances that were programmed in the meantime. *REBELLE*'s curator, Mirjam Westen, underlined the fluid dynamics of contemporary feminist art and avoided assuming a geographical center, inviting the viewer to establish a dialogue between continental and national borders. *elles@centrepompidou* (Musée National d'Art Moderne, 2009) offered the widest and longest survey, including only pieces from the museum's collection, which shows its long-term commitment to investing in work produced by women. In the catalogue, the curator Camille Morineau pointed out the ambiguity (and the importance) of the category of difference in French feminist thought, since the republic is based on the universalist motto "liberté, *égalité*, fraternité". In contrast to the material presented in the exhibition, Morineau avoids political commitment and seeks to structure the visitor's experience mainly by the existential category of "being a woman", without interrogating its broader cultural implications.

Robinson concludes that the current principles of canonization, exemplified by the exhibitions under scrutiny, tend to separate feminist aesthetics from their philosophical and political contexts. Thus, these methodological approaches domesticate art produced by women, enclosing it within a rigid archival category, while it is of the utmost importance to keep this classificatory system open to discussion and to reappraisal.

In "Finding Her Place: Success, Space, and Subjectivity", Mary Eagleton explores the relationship between spatiality and (inter)subjectivity in several literary texts, mapping out the social history of the UK from the

1920s to the new millennium and investigating how women's struggle for equal access to the market place has challenged and reshaped their identity constructions.

A Room of One's Own and *Three Guineas*, Virginia Woolf's fictional essays, are paired with Margaret Drabble's novel *The Peppered Moth*, which introduces the social class variant into the problem of women's exclusion from the higher-education establishment, namely Cambridge. While separatist all-female spaces provide a provisional sense of empowerment to Woolf's protagonists, Drabble's scholarship girl is not able to negotiate the symbolic gap between "home" and "away", since her sense of marginalization cuts deeper — it is hierarchical, not lateral, and marked by a lack of social contacts, cultural capital, and funds. David Lodge's sequential novels *Nice Work* and *Thinks* also depict the academic context through a female character that benefits from the 1970s legal emphasis on equal gender opportunities, but then has to adapt to the neoliberal utilitarian concept of the university as a managerial system measured by "objective" outputs. In that very competitive universe, this figure becomes a "top girl", the perfect late-modern subject dominated by the hegemonic narrative of self-making, which masks competition as choice and capitalizes on gender as an imperialistic asset (i.e. women's liberation is presented as the proof that Western democratic regimes must be universalized). In another rewriting of the tension between distance and proximity, Zadie Smith's *NW* also problematizes the identity politics implicit in the demagogic claims of success. Indeed, this novel dismantles the female protagonist's self-assurance and shows how her performance has inscribed her in the global space of capital but has robbed her of the spatial relations of intimacy.

Neoliberal ideological constructs tend to appropriate feminist discourse, claiming that gender, racial and class equality depend merely on the individual's resolve to succeed. Nonetheless, as Eagleton demonstrates, not only literary texts but also contemporary statistics show that access to key social spaces, such as the university and the high courts, is still disproportionately marked by gender.

"The Porn Wars Redux: What Can Young Feminists Learn from the Porn Wars, and What Can Those Veterans Learn from Younger Feminists"

emerges from a dialogue that involves two younger researchers, Amanda Kennedy and Cheryl Llewellyn, and an older sociologist, Michael Kimmel. They map the debate on pornography in North America, mainly in the U.S., since the mid-1970s, showing how the extreme positioning of the anti- and pro-feminists has given way to a more dialogic stance that seeks to include other voices and perspectives.

Many of the early critics of pornography equated it with violence against women and believed that the consumption of this type of imagery would perpetuate misogyny. Hence, they called for government regulation of the issue, sometimes establishing problematic coalitions with religious conservatives, which further tended to alienate them from those who argued that pornography could help to liberate women from sexual repression, as long as it played by safe and fair rules. The new technologies have made pornography almost ubiquitous, eroding the lines between consumer culture and the sex industry, with commercials and music videos becoming more and more sexually explicit. Therefore, feminist critics tend to approach this topic through a more inclusive lens, recognizing that there are many genres of pornography, some of which deliberately empower women, especially when they are produced by female pornographers or when they involve women porno-stars who seek to depict sexual interaction and female desire in a positive light. Besides, one should also take into account the fact that identity is not a monolithic concept; on the contrary, it involves different subjectivities situated and informed by a myriad of factors (gender, race, class, etc.).

All these considerations prompt Kennedy, Kimmel, and Llewellyn to formulate a set of questions calling for further empirical investigation, including, for instance, the diverse perspectives assumed not only by the female and male consumers of pornography but also by the male and female producers and actors involved in this industry. The landscape of lived and dreamed bodily encounters and the contours of erotic desire will certainly be reshaped by these new speculations.

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