

~~Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," *Signs* 2 (1975); Catherine R. Simpson, "Zero Degree Deviancy: The Lesbian Novel in English," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981); Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman," *Feminist Issues* 1 (1981), "Paradien," *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts, Critical Texts* (ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, 1979); Bonnie Zimmerman, *The Safe Sex of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989* (1990), "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism," *Feminist Studies* 7 (1981).~~

3. Queer Theory

Queer theory is the radical deconstruction of sexual rhetoric. It has sought to develop links between various forms of progressive activism (the lesbian and gay movement, the women's movement, HIV/AIDS activism, and movements for racial justice, among others) and the analytic rigor of poststructuralism (especially that of MICHEL FOUCAULT, ROLAND BARTHES, JACQUES DERRIDA, and PAUL DE MAN) with respect to the problematic of sexuality. Although it takes as foundational its insights into the instability of language and the historical contingency of sexuality, queer theory is not a unified doctrine or political agenda but a highly mobile practice of imminent critique that draws its form and content from the shifting rhetoric of sexual politics. It interrogates the binaristic thinking that has traditionally characterized sexual politics, in particular such familiar oppositions as heterosexuality/homosexuality, masculine/feminine, sex/gender, closeted/out, center/margin, conscious/unconscious, nature/culture, and normal/pathological, to name a few. It has also sought to bring sexual politics, in particular anthropophobic critique, to the fore of intellectual debate. As EVE KOSORSKY SEDGWICK has written, "An understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition," especially from the "relatively de-centered perspective of modern gay and anti-homophobic theory" (*Epistemology* 1).

In or about 1991 the term "queer theory" burst into academic consciousness with the force of a revelation, though what it revealed was not particularly clear. Teresa de Lauretis is credited with coining the term in a special issue she edited in 1991 for the feminist journal *differences*, though she was not otherwise an avid or exemplary proponent of its methods. In her remarkably succinct and accessible overview of queer theory, Annamarie Jagose emphasizes from the start "that its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics" (1). Nearly all definitions of

queer theory share this paradoxical tendency to eschew definition, even though they all say much the same thing and focus on much the same list of foundational texts. As these definitions implicitly reveal, queer theory is no more haunted by the impossibility of definition than any other theoretical term; rather, its political value, its conceptual coherence, its flexibility, and its novelty lie in its peculiar deployment of deconstructive methods, which have resulted in an extraordinarily wide-ranging applicability.

From its inception queer theory was an oddly retrospective designation that came to be applied to a group of existing, more or less poststructural texts; indeed the word "queer" is, paradoxically, infrequent in them and in some cases altogether absent. These important early texts include Foucault's writings on sexuality, Gayle Rubin's "Thinking Sex," Sedgwick's *Between Men and Epistemology of the Closet*, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, D. A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police*, Douglas Crimp's *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, JUDITH BUTLER's *Gender Trouble*, Diana Fuss's *Essentially Speaking and Inside/Out*, David Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, Lee Edelman's "Homographesis" and "The Plague of Discourse," James R. Kincaid's *Child-Loving*, Jonathan Dollimore's *Sexual Dissidence*, and the essays of Monique Wittig.

Queer theory emerged in part from Foucauldian social constructionism, and it theorized sexuality as a mode of performativity through which subjectivity is not only enacted but also imperiled. Although it is deeply indebted to lesbian and gay studies and women's studies (in which social constructionism was already quite common), it challenged those fields by being radically anti-identitarian and taking such categories as "lesbian," "gay," and "woman" not as the self-evident foundation for knowledge but rather as indeterminate signifiers whose instability and contradictions can serve as a volatile site for political negotiation and struggle. As Judith Butler has written, "This is not to say I will not appear at political occasions under the sign of lesbian, but that I would like to have it permanently unclear what precisely that sign signifies" ("Imitation" 14). In recent years the word "queer" has lost much of its nastiness as an epithet and has been domesticated into an increasingly bland self-designation for sexual minorities that are largely oblivious to the anti-identitarian impulses of queer theorists. Nevertheless, the epithet was embraced by sex radicals in the 1990s precisely because it was so richly pejorative that it could scarcely fail to communicate the sense of anger that activists felt at being unjustly shamed and discriminated against for their unconventional sexual practices. It also served better than the designation "lesbian and gay" as an umbrella term to unite movements for all such stigmatized sexual practices and identities, whether homosexual

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or not. Furthermore, the term "queer" was thought to preserve a persistent ambiguity that figured the very indeterminacy of desire and language and the contingency, the instability, the ultimate impossibility of sexual identity. Queer theory proved uniquely useful in deconstructing the very category of the sexual, rendering it more flexible, opening its definitional boundaries to explore its other discursive affinities, both historical and potential. To quote the same essay by Butler, "There are no direct expressive or causal lines between sex, gender, gender presentation, sexual practice, fantasy and sexuality" (25), and one might add that there is no necessary connection between those formulations and race, religion, nationality, history, politics, or aesthetics. Whatever connections have been or will be drawn are open to ideological critique and rearticulation and therefore open to radical political change.

Queer theory asks what we think sex is or ought to be, how we came to think that way, for whose profit we think that way, and how, for the sake of social justice, we might think and act differently. This deconstructive impetus is the most controversial but also the most political dimension of queer theory. Some of its opponents have seen queer theory as undermining the foundational claims for political action, especially those of identity-based movements, and of promoting an elitist language of analysis rather than a "street language" of action. This critique tends to devalue intellectual rigor in political movements and to overlook the political activism of the theorists themselves. Furthermore, as Lee Edelman has pointed out, "To remain enchanted by the phantom of a political engagement outside and above an engagement with issues of rhetoric, figuration, and fantasy is to ignore the historical conceptualization of homosexuality in a distinctive relation to language" (21). Because of this focus on RHETORIC, queer theory has proved a boon to politically engaged literary critics, and it is no coincidence that virtually all of its earliest proponents were employed by university departments of literature or rhetoric. Queer theory has a profound investment in formalism, close reading, and style in that it is concerned primarily with the figuration of desire and sexuality as they are ideologically constituted in and through language.

Besides DECONSTRUCTION, feminism, and gay studies, the intellectual trend that has most influenced queer theory is psychoanalysis, though that influence has been persistently controversial. Part of the appeal of queer theory, especially in its more Foucauldian spirit, was its challenge to the hegemony of psychoanalysis (also psychiatry and biology) in the study of sexuality in the humanities. Most queer theorists explicitly acknowledge the dubious scientific reputation of psychoanalysis, its status as a doctrine with a relatively limited and ahistorical focus on Oedipal

dynamics, and its continuing contribution to the pathologization and stigmatization of sexual minorities. Nevertheless, some queer theorists have also been inspired by psychoanalysis's invention of the unconscious, its rich interpretive strategies, and its sophisticated theorization of connections between desire and language. Some theorists (e.g., Halperin, Rubin, and Sedgwick) have opposed themselves to psychoanalysis or set it aside to pursue other approaches, while others (most notably Butler, Edelman, and Fuss) have sought to appropriate and rethink psychoanalysis, especially the more rigorously psycholinguistic work of JACQUES LACAN, for a poststructural queer project that has nevertheless been harshly criticized for its departure from psychoanalytic orthodoxy. Other controversial sources of inspiration for queer theory have been postcolonial and critical race theory, though a number of critics in these fields have taken queer theory to task for having a predominantly white and Western frame of reference. Despite this criticism, queer theorists have often emphasized their political and philosophical affinity with these fields, which are also deeply influenced by the same radical deconstructive tradition. At its most sensitive to racial and ethnic politics, queer theory questions the purity of the very category of sexuality and "illuminates how various dimensions of social experience—race, sexuality, ethnicity, diaspora, gender—can cut across or transect one another, resulting in their potential mutual transformation" (Harper et al., 1).

Beyond the massive deployment of queer theory in literary studies, some particularly innovative developments in the field since the coining of the term have included Marjorie Garber's magisterial studies of cross-dressing and bisexuality; Sandy Stone's post-transsexual manifesto; Michael Warner's critique of the politics of "normal" in debates over public sex, gay marriage, and gay media; José Esteban Muñoz's theorization of racial and sexual "disidentification"; Jonathan Goldberg's analysis of the rhetoric of "sodomy"; Joseph Livvak's reading of "sophistication"; the further expansion of queer theory into visual studies (e.g., the group of critics in *Out Takes*, edited by Ellis Hanson), into musicology (e.g., the group of critics in *Queering the Pitch*, edited by Philip Brett, Gary Thomas, and Elizabeth Wood), and into sociology and law (e.g., the work of Steven Seidman and William B. Turner); Jane Gallop's "anecdotal theory" and her writings on the erotics of pedagogy; and Sedgwick's theorization of shame dynamics and reparative reading in *Touching Feelings*.

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See also AFRICAN AMERICAN THEORY AND CRITICISM: 3. 1990 AND AFTER, AMERICAN THEORY AND CRITICISM: 3. 1970

AND AFTER, JUDITH BUTLER, FEMINIST THEORY AND CRITICISM: 5. 1990 AND AFTER, FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM: 2. MAY 1968 AND BEYOND, MICHEL FOUCAULT, GENDER THEORY AND CRITICISM, POSTCOLONIAL CULTURAL STUDIES: 2. 1990 AND AFTER, EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, and OSCAR WILDE.

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GENDER THEORY AND CRITICISM

If, as many critics have argued, feminism has been the single most influential cultural theory of the twentieth century, it is because it has made gender an integral component of virtually all humanities and social science discourses (see FEMINIST THEORY AND CRITICISM). A product of the confluence of feminism and poststructuralism, as well as queer theory (see GAY THEORY AND CRITICISM: 3. QUEER THEORY) and masculinity studies, gender as a field of inquiry has become increasingly prominent since the early 1980s. Gender studies focuses upon the historical, social, and psychological systems within which sexual identity becomes meaningful. Fundamental to gender criticism is the premise that sex (male/female), gender (masculine/feminine), and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual) are distinct. These divisions have theoretical as well as political implications since, as gender theorists argue, the essentialist tendency to equate gender and sexuality with anatomy can mask the ideological function of the male/female binary, namely, the reproduction or naturalization of a patriarchal system that defines male heterosexuality as the norm. Separating gender from biology thus helps make possible the radical reimagining of traditional gender roles that is necessary for the transformation of patriarchal structures.

The origins of contemporary theorizings about gender can be traced back to early feminist critiques of the "natural" distinctions between the sexes. To this end, gender studies remains indebted to the groundbreaking work of the eighteenth-century writer MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), one of the first extended cultural analyses of gender and power, Wollstonecraft illustrates the dangers for both sexes of limiting the education and responsibilities of women. An equally foundational work for the study of gender is the existential feminist philosopher SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S vast and revolutionary *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949, *The Second Sex*, 1953). Beauvoir's famous maxim "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (267) calls attention to the ideological role of social, legal, and economic forces in the production and reproduction of gender. In her encyclopedic analysis of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and literary texts and authors Beauvoir powerfully illustrates that throughout Western history the "feminine" has been constructed as "Other" in opposition to a normative masculine mode. Beauvoir's work opened gender up to scrutiny, revealing how mythic cultural structures combine and deny liberty to women and also to men (720). Wollstonecraft and Beauvoir relied upon and inspired a range of "first-wave" feminist thinkers who have also been influential in the formation of gender studies, but these two works represent particularly crucial steps in

the analysis and critique of pervasive patriarchal ideologies, in part due to the way both authors establish the essential connection between individual norms or values and broad social structures. The assertion of this connection—"the personal is political"—would become the celebrated slogan of "second-wave," 1960s feminism, which decisively moved the "private" issue of gender into the public realm.

The sixties and seventies saw a shift from feminist activism and consciousness-raising in the sociopolitical field to a critical cultural analysis of gender that was often conducted within the academy (also a "public" realm that had excluded women), and particularly U.S. literary studies departments. Feminist critiques of the representation of women in canonical male-authored texts and the "rediscovery" of marginalized female authors, while criticized as essentialist or humanist by later feminists and gender theorists, nevertheless made important steps in historicizing—and gendering—the supposedly neutral categories of truth, beauty, and so on, that had been the bedrock of academic literary study. Studies such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Hazel Mew's *Frail Vessels* (1969), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Katherine M. Rogers's *Troublesome Helpline* (1966), and Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) revolutionized literary criticism and established gender as a legitimate foundation for the analysis of authorial tradition and textual reception. These works illustrate that gender is both a product and a producer of art and narrative, that literary texts (and literary criticism) have helped define what it means to be male and female in the world, and finally that gender determines or affects relations and access to textual expression.

The theory and criticism of political rights movements that emerged alongside feminism in the 1960s, such as the civil rights and gay and lesbian liberation movements, and the academic discourses that sprang up from or around them have also had an enormous influence on contemporary approaches to gender, especially since "second-wave" feminist theory (both activist and academic) could be criticized not only for its essentialism but also for its exclusivity. *Psychoanalysis and poststructuralism.* Gender as it is studied and understood in the twentieth century is necessarily indebted to the psychoanalytic work of SIGMUND FREUD, and particularly to his arguments concerning the psychosexual acquisition of identity. The Oedipus and castration complexes formulated by Freud have been criticized for resting on apparently "stable," coherent notions of the gendered body, as well as on a normative—father/penis-centered—heterosexuality (see, e.g., Chodorow, de Lauretis, Mitchell, Mulvey, Rose). However, in his stress on the polymorphous nature of the infant's desire, the precariousness of repression, and the central but generally problematical

status of gender and sexuality in the process of psychological development Freud's theories present a significant challenge to biological determinism that has proven highly productive for gender theorists.

Contemporary analysis of gender reflects the influence of French feminist theorists like HÉLÈNE CIXOUS, LUCE IRIGARAY, and JULIA KRISTEVA, who responded to and participated in rereadings of Freud as well as of the linguist FERRIS DINAND DE SAUSSURE. Gender for these poststructural theorists becomes firmly situated as a category of language. This discursive positioning cannot be understood without reference to the work of JACQUES LACAN, MICHEL FOUCAULT, and JACQUES DERRIDA. In his "return to Freud" Lacan reformulated the basic tenets of psychoanalytic theory (and specifically Freud's stress on the division and instability of identity, which he argued had been overlooked or misinterpreted by later theorists) in light of Saussure's attention to difference, signifier and signified, and the way language constructs subjects. Lacan's setting of Freud's theories of the unconscious and sexuality in a linguistic framework powerfully sutures gender, language, and subjectivity. Working out of a philosophical tradition but also influenced by Saussure and Freud, Derridan DECONSTRUCTION has also been crucial for contemporary gender theories. In the deconstruction of binary oppositions that is a foundational aspect of Derrida's work "woman" is given a unique and privileged position, as the "side" from which one starts to dismantle European phallogocentric structures. Derrida's privileging of femininity—a reversal of the phallogocentric order—is, however, only meant to be a preliminary gesture. In the second deconstructive "stage," sexual opposition would be replaced by sexual difference: "Opposition is two, opposition is man/woman. Difference on the other hand, can be an indefinite number of sexes" (198). Finally, Foucault's work, especially in *Surveiller et punir* (1975; *Discipline and Punish*, 1977) and *Histoire de la sexualité* (3 vols., 1976–84, *The History of Sexuality*, 1984–86), has been pivotal for understanding structures of pleasure and power, as well as the ways that bodies and sexuality are produced discursively within specific sociohistorical contexts.

Despite the obstacles that these theories present to imagining alternatives to patriarchal hierarchies—Lacan's insistence upon the phallus as the ultimate signifier of authority, Derrida's reduction of the feminine to a symbolic and linguistic marker, Foucault's silence regarding the issues and history of gender inequality—gender critics have utilized the anti-essentialism of their positions to challenge conventional notions of gender. In different ways, Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva each focus on the disruption of patriarchal structures through the celebration of "the feminine," that which is marginal, prior to, or in excess of the

phallogocentric order. Irigaray, for example, envisions a way in which that order can be modified by women: rather than "repeating/interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject, [women] should signify that with respect to this logic a disruptive excess is possible on the feminine side" (78). These methods, however, as has been pointed out by other feminist critics (see, e.g., Moi), are risky, potentially functioning merely to reinscribe women in the role they are attempting to subvert, while also reproducing an essentialist, binary logic.

One of the most influential poststructural theorists of gender has been JUDITH BUTLER. While the term "performative" was coined earlier by J. L. Austin (see SPEECH ACTS), it was Butler, in her groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble* (1990), who shifted the term's semiotic focus (on how certain utterances actually "bring into being" that which they declare) onto the realm of gender and power. In *Gender Trouble* Butler points out that gender itself relies on principles of performance ("persistent impersonation" [viii]) as well as parody. Thus gender, according to Butler, is always unstable and must continually be inspected, repaired, and regulated vis-à-vis compulsory heterosexuality. Most challengingly, Butler's performativity steps beyond a metaphysics of substance, abolishing the so-called authenticity of the doer behind the deed: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (25). In her 1997 work *The Psychic Life of Power* Butler examines the formation of the identifications "man" and "woman" and argues that these categories, which are essential for social recognition, are "achieved" only through the foreclosure of desires and/or identifications that exist as the "outside" of cultural intelligibility (e.g., homosexuality) (168–70). Rather than accepting this melancholic foreclosure as the inevitable result of ego formation, however, Butler insists that the "outside" of discourse is always historically determined, political, and thus contingent.

Gender and queer theory. Butler's work is integral to queer theory, a complex and far-reaching methodology that engages with gender and sexuality in all of their ambiguity, paradox, and contradiction. Heavily influenced by psychoanalysis and poststructuralism, queer theory developed out of the identity-based gay and lesbian criticism movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Queer theory rejects any notion of stable identity and instead pursues the spectacular though often vigorously concealed and disavowed contradictions of desire, with a particular interest in how such disavowal can highlight the fissures in traditional conceptions of sex-

ual "normality." This is basically a deconstructive practice, but one also informed by feminist and historicist methodologies, especially the genealogical mode presented in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. In this way, queer theory is characteristically interested in how gender identities and disruptions of identity codes relate to questions of history and power. Butler explains that "If the term 'queer' is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes" (*Bodies* 228). The use of the term "queer" (coined by Teresa de Lauretis in 1991) as an identifier for either sexual identity or a theoretical mode is, however, still debated in the academy. One criticism leveled at queer theory has to do with its very amorphousness (see Norton), as its referentless status risks rendering it meaningless or reducing it to a cooptable tag that can be re-deployed by dominant culture to connote abject otherness.

Queer methodology has, however, undoubtedly established itself in literary theory, especially as it tends to embrace ambiguity and expose the illusion of authenticity. The "queering" of the literary canon (the re-reviewing of writers such as GERTRUDE STEIN, OSCAR WILDE, HENRY JAMES, VIRGINIA WOOLF, and William Burroughs) is just one example of this new form for literary studies, one that can also be seen as making receptive space in the academy for contemporary "queer" experimental writers like Jeanette Winterson and Kathy Acker.

Transgender studies. As the feminist theorist Patricia Duncker writes, "Queer also means to 'fuck with gender'" (57), and perhaps the most radical "queering" of gender and identity occurs in the realm of transgender studies. The contemporary artist and theorist Sandy Stone has said that "the transsexual currently occupies a position which is nowhere, which is outside the binary oppositions of gendered discourse. For a transsexual, as a *transsexual*, to generate a true, effective, and representational counterdiscourse is to speak from outside the boundaries of gender" ("Posttranssexual" 295). Transgender theorists—Bornstein, Califia, Feinberg, King, Stryker—are therefore concerned with the multiplicities and identity dynamics (performative-subversive possibilities) indicated in the "trans," and so "transgender" may refer to cross-dressers, transsexuals, transvestites, and those whose performance(s) of gender(s), including the performing of a nonmarked gender, radically trouble identities and sex conventions. As transgender studies distrusts any restrictive, stable binaries, it is also necessarily interested in the cultural force of gender-inscribed bodies,

revealing most powerfully how culturally and psychologically crucial the "marked" body (the knowable referent) is for dominant culture.

Cybergender. Over the last two decades cybergender theory has radically deepened the denaturalization of sexual identity by positing the body as a highly unstable site of cultural, sexual, racial, ethnic, and techno-biological meaning. Cybergender studies draws from and informs other postmodern theories—JEAN BAUDRILLARD's simulacra, FREDRIC JAMESON's critique of the logic of late capitalism, queer studies' fascination with gender "incoherence"—understanding the subject as merely a node in a vast network of information and technology and thus collapsing traditional oppositions between nature and culture. Gender is conceived in cyberstudies as a kind of force in a web of codes, an information that is machine-automated but also possesses a certain autonomy. To this end, and perhaps most prominently, the work of DONNA HARAWAY has pioneered the analysis of "cyborgs," a term that Haraway argues includes all contemporary human subjects. She writes, "We are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics" (191). The theoretical force of "the cyborg" for gender studies lies in its ability to utterly demolish essentialist sexual binaries. Thus, for cybergender theorists, if what is "natural" is also necessarily "machined" or constructed, the reconstruction of gender (and its attendant social laws) must be possible. The concept of the cyborg has recently enjoyed prominence in the literary-theoretical field (see Flanagan, Flanagan and Booth), particularly in the so-called cyberpunk writings of the contemporary science fiction writers William Gibson, Philip K. Dick, J. G. Ballard, and Kathy Acker. Cyberfiction and theory is preoccupied with the materiality of the subject and with questions about the way gender relates to and is even engineered by manic consumption (global technocapitalism). Much recent cybergender theory (Green and Adam, Lykke and Braddott; Stone) has concerned itself with how gender is altered or even utterly eradicated in the virtual realm (VR).

Masculinity studies. An essential aspect of gender studies, and one that differentiates it from feminism or women's studies, is its attention to the issue of masculinity. A relatively recent addition to critical gender discourse, masculinity studies documents both the vicissitudes and the implications of masculinities within a heteropatriarchal system. Thus, like women's studies, masculinity studies, especially in its general analysis of the relation of identity to history, also strives toward the realization of gender justice. While early feminist inquiry sought to analyze and address

the place of women in patriarchal culture, it also revealed that no gender designation (including "male/man") is ever politically neutral. Thus, masculinity studies was born in part out of a context of growing "male feminism" that became especially preoccupied with men "writing the feminine" and then later with how the concept of "masculinity" itself related to patriarchy. This development was somewhat controversial, as some feminists argued that that this early "male feminism" was potentially exploitative since it allowed male academics to recenter their own discourse and experience through the appropriation of feminist discourse and political strategies (what Showalter in 1987 called "critical cross-dressing"). (For examples of both "male feminism" and its feminist critics, see Digby, Jardine and Smith; Morgan.) Masculinity studies, however, grew to establish itself as a legitimate profeminist mode of gender inquiry dedicated to challenging the privileged "obviousness" of the masculine signifier within patriarchal capitalism. Responsible for this growth is not only the early sociological work on masculinity (David and Brannon; Pleck) but also the work of later sociologists and theorists (Brod and Kaufman; Connell; Whitehead and Barrett), especially as they began to investigate strategies for subverting patriarchal domination.

In literary studies an important early work was Peter Schwenger's *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1984), which proposes an *écriture masculine* as a language of the male body. Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990) is a significant mytho-anthropological work that propounds a male-specific critique of patriarchy. Bly describes contemporary American men as lost and suffering, primarily due to a lack of paternal guidance. Bly's text can be seen as inaugurating a host of popular masculinities (texts and movements) that sought to therapeutically broach the subject of men's pain. These so-called mythopoetic movements have been popularly caricatured as glorified boy-scout camps for disaffected white males, and more seriously, they have been critiqued, especially by other male masculinity studies scholars, as at least *potentially* both antifeminist and homophobic (see Kimmel).

Gay literary criticism, and particularly the work of EVE KOSOFSKY SEDGWICK, has been instrumental in increasing the attention devoted to masculinity in the field of gender studies. In *Between Men* (1985), for example, Sedgwick deconstructs literary and visual texts, including Shakespeare and Dickens, and posits a triangulation of male desire that is always mediated through or across a woman's body. Sedgwick charts a "continuum" of male desire that moves from the homosocial to the homoerotic, and she uncovers the importance of homophobia within conventional patriarchal

gender structures. Critical works focused on the gay male (e.g., Paul Hammond's *Love between Men in English Literature*, Edmund White's *The Burning Library*, and Tim Edwards's *Erotics and Politics: Gay Male Sexuality, Masculinity, and Feminism*) have also been vitally important to masculinity studies, as they work to theorize the place of masculine desire in antipatriarchal (liberatory) politics.

Race and gender. In the 1970s and 1980s African American feminists such as Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks critiqued and exposed the feminist movement for its focus on the lives of white, heterosexual, middle-class women. African American feminist critics also pointed out the differences between racism as it is experienced by black men and black women. This debate played itself out with some bitterness in the realm of literature, with the woman-centered fiction of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Gloria Naylor being castigated by male African American writers and critics for its alleged participation in the denigration of the black man. The canonical works of African American fiction—for example, the novels of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, which emphasized the struggles of black men in racist environments—were, however, just as harshly criticized by female writers and critics for their patriarchal and masculinist bias (see AFRICAN AMERICAN THEORY AND CRITICISM). Ultimately, as bell hooks writes, “since all forms of oppression are linked in our society because they are supported by similar institutions and social structures, one system cannot be eradicated while the others remain intact” (*Feminist* 37). Gender theory has thus been profoundly affected by the recognition that all forms of social and psychological domination are interconnected, as well as by the understanding that definitions of masculinity and femininity are always racialized; as recent theorists have argued, this includes “white” masculinity and femininity, which, though hegeonically forwarded as neutral or invisible in terms of race, are inevitably defined and founded in opposition to nonwhite “others” (see Dyer, Frankenberg, Morrison, Peil, and on whiteness as constructed vis-à-vis Native Americans, Faery; see also RACE AND ETHNICITY).

Colonial and postcolonial theorists have also demonstrated the connections between race and gender through their analysis of the ways that imperialism is implicated in the production of sexual difference (see POSTCOLONIAL CULTURAL STUDIES). One of the earliest and most influential explorations of colonialism and gender is Frantz Fanon's 1952 *Peau noire, masques blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1967). Focusing primarily on the struggles of the Afro-Caribbean male, Fanon demonstrates that colonialism functions not only as an economic or governmental force but as an all-encompassing structure that engineers

and subjugates colonized peoples culturally, psychologically, and sexually. Challenging the discourse of academic discussion of the so-called Third World, and specifically white feminist analyses of Third World women, critics such as GAVATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Avtar Brah, Uma Narayan, and Trinh T. Minh-Ha have been instrumental in calling for a de-ethnocentrizing of “man” and “woman,” terms that have typically signified (within scholarly discourse) the white, middle-class European. These writers have also worked to illuminate the complex interactions of gender, nation, and citizenship in a postcolonial context and the ways these profound but often subtle forces affect the daily lives of the majority of the world's peoples (see, e.g., Narayan and Harding; McClintock).

Studies of race and gender have also been undertaken from a masculinity studies perspective (see Blount and Cunningham; Carby; Ouzgane and Coleman), as well as with an attention to sexuality (see, e.g., Hawley, Somerville, the latter of which explores how the notion of the “queer” existed as a sign of both racial and sexual marginality in the early twentieth century).

Gender and materialism. The strategic synthesis of Marxist criticism and gender studies has proven to have far-reaching implications for all contemporary theories of subjectivity and cultural history. Materialist feminist criticism (see Barrett, Hennessy and Ingraham, Kaplan, Moi) suggests that formations of gender, including sexuality and the body, are indisputably inflected by political, social, and economic structures. Materialist analyses of gender have drawn attention to how gender has been historically constructed around—and, in essence, contained within—designations of public (male) and private (female) liberal-capitalist categories. Carole Pateman, for example, in her essay “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy” (1987), illustrates how these categories encourage the subordination and finally commodification of the female body. RAYMOND WILLIAMS, in his seminal 1961 essay “Advertising: The Magic System,” shows that the modern marketing machine of capitalism sells products to consumers but also peddles magical “fetishes” of gender identity (e.g., that the consumption of beer validates a male fantasy of macho masculinity [335]).

Materialist gender inquiry also focuses on issues of GLOBALIZATION, and specifically on the interrelations of First and Third World economies. Of primary importance here is the work of Spivak, who draws on the diverse theoretical fields of psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminism, and Marxism to consider the material conditions of the “subaltern” subject (see also Kelly; McClintock, Mufti, and Shohat; Rai).

Gender and film theory. Film theory has impacted gender studies most notably on the level of viewership and identity. Building on the early formalist film theory work of the first half of the twentieth century, early 1970s film theorists (e.g., Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz) began to understand film, especially commercially produced cinema, within its ideological (capitalist) context. Most importantly for gender studies, this Marxist-informed mode of inquiry also utilized Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in order to more fully interrogate the reception of filmic images. These theorists linked Jacques Lacan's concept of the mirror stage—the child's gaze at his or her reflection charting his or her movement into the world of language (symbolic)—with the presymbolic (imaginary) effects of the big screen on the adult viewer. This was significant precisely because it not only proposed a compelling narrative of ideological production but also suggested that gender identity is deeply implicated in that process and production. The nature of sexual differentiation, in particular, was interrogated in film studies by feminist and poststructural theorists. Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking 1975 essay "Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema" utilizes a Freudian-Lacanian framework to investigate how desire itself becomes gendered in the visual field, specifically the classic Hollywood film. In an argument that continues to affect film and gender studies today, Mulvey suggests that "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (19). While her essay has been criticized (even by Mulvey herself) for reproducing binary (and heterosexual) definitions of gender and for ignoring the place of the female viewer, Mulvey's call to disrupt or destroy the pleasurable patriarchal patterns of viewing and its general attention to the powerful processes of audience identification and pleasure inaugurated a productive and ongoing analysis of the ways gender is (re)produced in visual narratives. This analysis has included further investigations of the feminine in film (see, e.g., de Lauretis, Rose, Silverman), as well as studies of masculinity (Bingham, Cohan et al., Lehman, Neale), the queer in film (Doty, Hanson), and race and gender in film (see hooks, *Reel*; Willis, *High*).

Gender studies is an enormously diverse and contentious field; thus it has been possible to give only the most rudimentary sketch of its place in various (interconnected) theoretical fields here. As with most or all poststructural theories, the decentered, performative, discursive "subject" of gender studies has been viewed as compromising the possibility of solidarity between members of oppressed groups that is necessary for strident political actions (see, e.g., Bell and Klein). Feminists have been wary about gender studies' inclusion of men and critical of its embracing white- and

male-dominated "inaccessible" poststructural theories. The separation of gender from biology (the nature-culture split) that is a founding premise of gender studies has also been criticized for ignoring the materiality of the body and for participating in a patriarchal privileging of the mental and rational fields (Flax, Grosz). Despite these ongoing debates, however, gender theorists and their critics share a belief that traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity need to be understood and challenged.

Mario Edwards

See also FEMINIST THEORY AND CRITICISM, FILM THEORY AND CRITICISM, GAY THEORY AND CRITICISM, and PERFORMANCE STUDIES.

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