

Reflections on course work at Emory...

FALL 2000

Race, Gender and Representation:

In this class I spent a great deal of time thinking about how authority gets represented within texts. My key question was: How can one have authority without being an Authority? I was interested in how authority can coexist with vulnerability and with uncertainty. Because this class really focused on race I also started to think about how race gets represented within texts and how white women situate themselves within their texts and how this positioning does/does not grant them certain types of authority. I think with all of this I was interested in exploring how we can be uncertain and still be taken seriously. How can one acknowledge the uncertainty/unpredictability of their knowledge while still persisting on, being invested in what they are doing, and be taken seriously as someone with whom to critically engage or respect? During this class, I was particularly interested in how authority gets represented, expressed, conveyed within texts. As I thought about the class, I also started to think about how authority gets represented within the classroom. Over the next semester I paid particular attention to the ways in which authority (and arrogance) were expressed in the classroom setting.

(a) relevance to larger project: This idea of uncertainty and vulnerability gets at the heart of one of my concerns/interests with the idea of risk. How do we persist if we are always uncertain? What kind of authority, certainty, productive knowledge can come out of this uncertainty? Is uncertainty always a weakness? In the final paper, I talked about how authority is developed within and through communities. This idea continues to be of importance for me and is also present in my notions of courage and strength. Also, how all of this gets represented in texts has continued to interest me. How does risk and its new type of authority or lack of authority get played out in texts? How do theorists express/experience this risk? How does risking theory get practiced? Also, the particular issue of how white women express their position within texts lingers as something in the back of my mind that I would like to work on—will it work in my larger project? Maybe not....

(b) future questions: What kind of assumptions does the theorist/writer make when she presents herself as “the” authority? How can a theorist take herself and her audience seriously while presenting her ideas as one way among many? What kind of techniques can the theorist use in order to grant her audience some authority? What types of responsibility do/should the theorist and her reader have?

(c) other thoughts: I think that these issues could still fit into my larger project. I am really interested in the relationship between the reader and the theorist and how the notion of risk makes it more equal. I don’t know about that, but I do think that the idea of practicing risk within theory and of risking theory does relate to this issue....I should return to these thoughts later....

Critical Theory:

In this class, I spent a lot of time thinking about the nature and practice of the critical theorist. What is their relationship with the “masses” that they seem to be in solidarity with? Who has the capacity to critically reflect? Are there only certain individuals who can think critically and not get wholly subsumed by the system. Another key question that came up repeatedly in class and in my final paper concerns the idea of practical answers, practical advice, prescriptions on how to proceed. This is a key element for me

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in my work on JB. How can a project be politically viable if it doesn't offer specific solutions? What kind of responsibility is the theorist putting in the hands of the reader? Horkheimer and Adorno have some strong feelings about rejecting utopian projects out of fear that they will produce false hope and ineffective solutions. In my paper, I discuss how Horkheimer understands the role of the theorist as one who must acknowledge their complicated place *within* the system and as critiquing the system. A key question in this paper is: What is the nature of the unity between the theorist and the oppressed class? How does this unity allow the critical theorist to keep a critical distance but not the oppressed individual?

(a) relevance to larger project: It is clear to me that Butler takes many of her ideas about critical thinking directly from the Frankfurt school or indirectly by way of Foucault. The idea of critiquing from within (immanent critique) is very important to Butler and to projects similar to hers. The questions that Horkheimer and Adorno were asking and struggling with are ones that feminist theorists continue to ask. Looking at their project helps me to see another way in which this issue has been addressed. Also, because I am interested in looking at how theory and practice are connected and at the nature of theory, looking at Hork/Adorno are important. In his important essay, "Traditional and Critical Theory," Hork redefines the notion of theory. Maybe I should put (at least) that essay on my exam.

(b) future questions: How should we define theory? How does a theorist practice theory? In what ways is the practice of theory exhausting? In what ways is the practice of theory and the project of critical thinking larger than the individuals that practice it? What is the goal of theory/theorizing? What are critical theorists attempting to change with their theories? To transform society or to enable all individuals to recognize their own capacities? How does it relate to practice? Who has access to theory? What does it mean to be a theorist? What is the relationship between the theorists and others? Who can be a theorist?

(c) other thoughts: This preliminary work seems very important for my JB work. This serves as a valuable foundation for the future....I keep coming back to the question of the capacity for critique—if we are so immersed in/subsumed by our situation, then how can we break out of it? How do we develop the capacity for critique if we can never fully step outside of our situation? What makes us able to stand back, critically reflect? How do we develop an answer to this question? As JB says in *BTM*, is it a matter of knowing? Is this the right question to ask? I think that I will come back to this issue again and again throughout this process.

Methods and Topics:

In this class, I worked on a grant proposal—effectively, a possible dissertation prospectus—on the theory of risk within Butler's work. I talked about how an investigation of risk and an emphasis on the tension that it fosters and promotes offers much to the issue of identity within feminism/feminist politics. In this project, the tension was over the fact that the identity "woman" needed to be used/asserted, but also needed to be critiqued.

(a) relevance to larger project: Obviously, this project, as a tentative dissertation proposal, *is* my dissertation in its rough form. The idea of risk remains important to me as I continue to study Judith Butler's work and its importance within feminist theory and

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politics. In this original project, I outlined two key gaps in Butler's theory: (1) How are identities risked? What is the actual process of risk? How does the tenuous process of risking identities affect our ability to sustain our politics, providing us with hope and strength? and (2) How can we explore the uncertainty of identity claims as a source of unimaginable (countless) possibilities instead of as a source of certain doom? How does the openness of this uncertainty allow for more freedom? How can we push Butler's articulation of the problem to include these new possibilities? I think that these questions are still very relevant to my project. However, I have slightly altered my course. I am not as interested in the issue of identity and representation of identity. This question seems to have already been dealt with quite a bit and the conclusion by many theorists, including JB and myself, is that identity is not a sound or effective basis for a political movement. Moreover, I think that idea of representation has been overemphasized in current work. I am interested in connecting risk and uncertainty with other ideas, such as freedom, agency, and critical reflection...

(b) future questions: What function/role should critical thinking play in feminist politics? Can it be a foundation in itself? Should I continue to place such emphasis on the term risk or should I focus on another word for describing this? Why should I promote risk as *the* best way in which to describe this process? What will help me to ground this project? What could serve as the foundation of my thoughts on risk? Who should I put Butler in conversation with in this project?

(c) other thoughts: I am still wondering how much emphasis I should place on woman and its riskiness? Do I want my dissertation to include a chapter on the transition from id politics to radical democracy? Is this already played out in my work and others? What will help me narrow does this entire process and make it compelling for others to read?

SPRING 2001

Feminist Literary Theory

In this class we spent much time discussing the relationship between theory and politics within feminism. Some of our key questions were: does the political nature of feminist theory reduce it to mere polemics? Can feminist theory be rigorous *and* political? Does theory disable our ability to politically act? Can theory and politics work together? For my first presentation, on Susan Bordo and Linda Nicholson, I discussed the theory of politics, the politics of theory, and pragmatism. In this presentation I explored how Bordo envisions theory and its role within discussions of gendered politics, Nicholson and her discussion of the debate over postmodernism, and the pragmatic method that both Bordo and Nicholson promote. I also addressed this topic in my first paper, highlighting Bordo's emphasis on gender skepticism and Nicholson's emphasis on epistemic humility. In my second presentation I discussed Teresa Ebert's critique of ludic feminism and Sandoval's theory of differential consciousness. In her work, Ebert offers some different understandings of what theory is and what it should do. In her work, Sandoval promotes the idea of tactical subjectivity and of using grace, flexibility and strength in order to achieve differential consciousness. In my second paper, I did a closer analysis of Sandoval's theory and her use of grace, flexibility and strength. I also connected these terms to three different theories. I connected strength to Bernice Johnson Reagon and her discussion of coalitional politics, flexibility to Nicholson and her discussion of pragmatism, and grace to Lugones and her discussion of playful world traveling.

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(a) relevance to larger project: This was a very important class that raised a number of key questions for me. In both papers I was trying to get beyond the either/or of feminism (paper 1: essentialism or social construction, paper 2: in general, the idea of taking sides) to find a different theory, one that addressed the complexity of feminism and did not reduce it to some simple notion of woman or commonality. This is a big part of my larger project. I also spent some time on pragmatism, negotiating between differences and grace, flexibility and strength. These are central to my project because I am interested in exploring the specific skills that are needed in order to practice theory and the specific ways in which we can negotiate between theories. I think all of these voices are important countervoices to Butler.

(b) future questions: What are the differences between tactics and strategies? In Sandoval's essay she discusses the tactics that are employed in order to use different theories. What does it mean to strategically or tactically use theories/ideas? This fits in with my directed reading for Cindy. How is Butler/Irigaray employing tactics, strategies? What is the significance of describing these in such ways? Another question: How useful is pragmatism for my project? What are the drawbacks of pragmatism?

(c) other thoughts: I am really interested in exploring a variety of ways in which negotiating differences occur. What strategies are used? How are ideas communicated across cultures? Understood by others? Translated? Expressed? These are some of the key questions that I am interested in for my ethics section.... I need to reread many of these texts and make sure to put them on my exam list.....

Feminist Ethics

In this class we read and discussed a wide variety of feminist ethics texts including *Feminist Contentions* and *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*. We discussed issues of accountability, authority, authorship. I did a brief paper on *Feminist Contentions* that we discussed in class. In that paper, I discussed the way in which the book and its theorists (Benhabib, Butler, Fraser and Cornell) ended up engaging in position taking instead of communication. At the end of the paper I asked: Does this reflect the impasse that exists within feminism and in its attempts to create some normative theory *or* is there a future for feminist ethics? My final paper was also the final paper for the 3rd Wave class. In this paper I explored the move, in Butler's work, from feminism as an identity politics to feminism as a radical democracy.

(a) relevance to larger project Because I am interested in feminist ethics, this course offered a good overview and background in the topic. The discussion of textual authority is an important part of what I am interested in doing. The small paper on *Feminist Contentions* was also important because it helped me to think about *how* theorists engage in their own theory. How their own theoretical understandings are reflected in the ways in which they present their material. Our discussion of Welch was also important because I am interested in using her in my exams/dissertation. I would like to explore her idea of doing penance and repenting (are those the words that she uses?) some more. The final paper serves as a foundation for my future work on Butler, risk and radical democracy. At the end of this paper I talked some more about grace, flexibility and strength. I also remember thinking about the issue of co-option and appropriation. I was toying with the idea of connecting risk with this—Welch is a good example of how other texts can be appropriated.

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(b) future questions: Where does textual authority come from? What can stand as a foundation for feminist ethics? Some of the key questions that came out of the paper are: Does Butler's radical democracy provide us with a substantial enough vision, one that can encourage and sustain political thought and action? How does Butler account for the connections between individuals? How does Butler's work allow for large-scale contestations? How can she talk about systems of oppression? Why does Butler focus exclusively on the negative aspects of politics? Can we think about the process of radical democracy and its contestation in positive terms? How do we develop our judgments in the process of politics? How exactly do we keep our political terms open? What does the difficult work of perpetual contestation look like? (more questions continued in 3rd wave section).

(c) other thoughts: I need to reread Welch and think some more about how *Feminist Contentions* fits into the larger project....

3rd Wave Critical Theory

This was an important class because it was taught by my advisor. In many respects, it served as a continuation of my critical theory class in the fall. In this class we read the intro to Cindy's book, some Kimberle Crenshaw, Lewis Gordon, Joy James, Enrique Dussell, Judith Butler and Iris Young. We talked about how these different theorists contributed to the project of critical theory: resistance, justice. We discussed intersectionality, race, hegemony, coalition building, expanded conceptions of work, redistribution and the five types of oppression. I did two presentations and a final paper in this class. My first presentation concerned Judith Butler and her work within *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*. I had a four part thesis: (1) All claims must be left open and recognized as ultimately unrealizable, (2) This open-endedness allows for a perpetual contestation of the terms of democracy, one that requires that we be critical of our own democratic claims and recognize our limits, (3) This contestation does not point to the impossibility of politics, (4) but serves as the source of its future transformation. In my second presentation, I talked about co-optation and exploitation in the work of black women scholars (Ann Duggan) and how this connects with Young's work on oppression and her critique of redistribution. My final paper for this class (same as FEthics paper) was on Butler and the shift from identity politics to radical democracy.

(a) relevance to larger project: Many things in this class were really relevant to my larger project. All of the work on Butler and her idea of radical contestation. Her comments about putting your body on the line. In many respects this class was all about my dissertation project. What is freedom? justice? resistance? I need to continue building on the ideas expressed in this class. In particular, I am interested in the notion of black pragmatism. Although this class and my other class with Cindy talk about this, I still feel like I do not know that much about it. I almost forgot to mention the key section on theory and practice. This is something that is very important to my future work and connects with these larger issues. I think that one of my main issues is rethinking theory and practice and how that fits in with the role of critique (this becomes even more important in my Foucault/Butler paper).

(b) future questions: Is it really enough to say that we need to keep our politics open? Is Butler's project compelling enough to provide the hope that feminists need in order to continue to engage in politics? If politics (and normative visions) are so radically open,

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how do we have accountability to it? And, through what process are we able to commit to these fluid terms?

What is cultural translation? How do feminists engage in this difficult process? What does it really mean to take difference seriously? What is the hard work of translation? Does Butler do this in any of her work? How can we put Butler in conversation with Morrison or Hill Collins? How can Butler's project, or one similar to hers, allow for creativity, imagination, improvisation? (See Welch's other book and West's essay on improvisation)

(c) other thoughts: I definitely need to come back to this paper and think about it some more. This was a central paper for me and for my thoughts on this issue.

FALL 2001

Foucault: Disputed Questions

In this class we discussed some of the disputed questions surrounding MF and his work. In particular, we focused a lot of attention on the idea of freedom in MF's work, history, and the possibility for politics. We read mostly interviews and excerpts—no full books. Flynn mentioned the importance of interviews in Foucault's work. I did my presentation on the idea of problematization and how it connects with Butler and her work on troubling. I did my final paper on Foucault and Butler and the nature and practice of critique. For both MF and JB I focused on three key questions: (1) What is critique, (2) Who practices critique and (3) What is a goal of critique. For MF, critique is an attitude, a way of thinking and speaking. It does not fit one particular method, but points to a broader philosophical ethos. Critique is about defiance and challenging and is connected to problems and problematization. Critique points to the precariousness of things. The critic who practices critique does not offer solutions but poses questions. She is not an advisor, but a specific intellectual, one who engages (and learns from) people involved in movements of social justice. She is never guaranteed success and must live with discomfort and uncertainty. Her goal is to demonstrate the simultaneity of theory and practice and the importance of critique and perpetual questioning. It is through this process that communities (and selves) are formed. JB agrees with many of these ideas. She believes that critique is a way of productively and effectively engaging in critical disputes and developing strategies for how best to push the limits and discover new possibilities. JB echoes many of MF's thoughts on who practices critique. She is not interested in providing answers or offering solutions, but working with others to develop tentative (and historically embedded) solutions. At the end of the paper I discuss the masculine (Nietzschean, warlike conflict) imagery that is used to describe this process of contestation. Is this masculine imagery necessary? Is it the only way in which to understand this process? Must critique be only expressed in language? Are there other ways in which to critically engage with ideas, actions, etc.?

(a) relevance to larger project: This is a very important part of my dissertation project. In fact in some ways it serves as the template for the project. What is critique? Who practices it? And, what are its goals? These are the three main questions that I wish to ask in my project to JB and other theorists with whom she is (or should be) in conversation with. I think that this fits in with ethics because I am interested in critics/ audience and where their responsibility and accountability resided. The ideas of theory/ practice, masculine imagery of critique, and how critique is practiced are very central to

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my exploration. Also, I am still contemplating how much of a part of this final project MF will be. He will definitely have some sort of voice in this.

(b) future questions: Is contestation, questioning a male/masculine practice? Are there other ways in which to envision the practice of critique? Risk? Contestation? How is it expressed in some other writers? How is critique practiced? Must it be in language? What is the role of critical thought in all of this? What is the relationship between theory and practice? What is the critics relationship to others? Who can be a critic? What are her goals? [these questions are very similar to the ones that I raised in the critical theory class]

(c) other thoughts: I definitely need to revisit this paper because I think that it will play a very important role in my dissertation. I am really interested in the nature and practice of critique, how it is expressed in JB's work, how it is practiced, etc. Looking at critique as more than theory, but as a type of practice is also central to this whole project. This paper and class are very important. I should talk with Flynn again about all of this...

Masculinity and Violence in American Cinema of the 1970s

In this class we looked at three different film genres: (1) boxing films, (2) war films and (3) westerns. We explored how masculinity identity was depicted and what role violence played in each of the genres. I presented on the use of violence in Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*. I did my final paper on *Apocalypse Now* and the connections with Nietzsche and his überman. In particular, I explored the hero and the hero's quest looking at four different sets of similarities between Coppola's hero and Nietzsche's: (1) death of God, (2) death of the romantic hero, (3) death of man and (4) death of truth and morality.

(a) relevance to larger project: This final paper is very connected to my larger project. Nietzsche is a very important figure in the work of MF, JB and ideas about critique and contestation. It also connects with my interest in the hero (as critic) and the courage that they must maintain in order to accomplish their goals. I could see myself writing more on Nietzsche and his hero as critic in my final project. I am not sure how much room I would want to give him, but it is at least important to be familiar with his work.

(b) future questions: Must contestation always result in these series of deaths? Is contestation always a battle? What is the tradition of contestation that comes out of Nietzsche? Again, are there other ways in which to understand contestation? Is critique a masculine, violent, individualistic pursuit? What is the goal of transformation? Will contest critique eventually result in madness?

(c) other thoughts: I really enjoyed this class and feel that I learned a lot about film and representations of masculine violence in film. I also learned a lot about Nietzsche—for the paper I read tons of his work. I have some good notes from this project and even more ways in which to find parallels between Nietzsche and Coppola. Although this class and paper did not initially seem to be connected to my larger project, I really see them as important to the work that I am doing. Nietzsche, hero quest, contestation, battle....these are all important to the work that I am doing.

Literature, Politics, and the Women Writer: Contemporary Novelists

In this class we discussed how politics gets represented and practiced in a series of novels by contemporary women writers. We took a very specific and rigid view of what

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constitutes the political and we looked at the relationship between romance (the genre) and politics and the possibility for their simultaneous existence. This led to many discussions about how politics can truly be practiced and if it can be practiced by individuals connected to communities. We also discussed how male and female relationships are depicted in these novels. I did a presentation on *I, Tituba*. In this presentation I connected the novel with Wendy Brown and her discussion of "Finding the Man in the State." I asked about women's relationship to the state, Tituba's practice of courage, redefining courage, resistance, and heroes/heroines. In a second presentation I looked at Paule Marshall's *Daughters*. In this presentation I explored spiritual wholeness, the possibility of being whole *and* fragmented, the nature of home and how it is represented, and home as a source of identity. My final paper was on *In the Time of Butterflies* and connected Wendy Brown and her redefinition of courage with María Teresa and her journal entries from prison. I looked at five different ways in which to redefine courage: (1) practice of sustaining life, (2) pursuit of dignity and humanity, (3) collective action, (4) acting through fear and (5) act of writing.

(a) relevance to larger project: This class was important to my larger project because it enabled me to do a closer investigation of how courage can get redefined through the practices of an individual and community. This book served as a case study of sorts for this practice. I also was able to do a closer analysis of Wendy Brown and her redefinition of courage. This courage connected with the idea of risk, but a redefinition of risk. Instead of focusing on risking life and dying for a cause, Brown focused on risk as sustaining life and taking the risk of staying alive. It allowed me to connect the work of Brown and Alvarez with bell hooks, B.J. Reagon and Audre Lorde.

(b) future questions: How can we redefine courage as sustaining life instead of dying? How does having and practicing courage connect with theorizing, writing, critiquing? What is a courageous act? How are heroes connected to communities? Must heroes be isolated from the community? How are politics practiced within theoretical feminist writings?

(c) other thoughts: I am really proud of this final paper. I think I did an effective job of exploring the idea of courage in this work and linking it to a particular text. The question remains: How do I want to express these acts of courage within theorists writing? Do I need to look to the lives of these thinkers for examples? Or, can their texts serve as examples in and of themselves? Is this where I look to the work of Irigaray and Butler, maybe Foucault? Practice through writing? Yes! Foucault talks about his problematization as transformational for himself. And Irigaray and Butler discuss how their writings serve as practice itself.

Narrative and Female Selfhood

In this class we started by discussing several theoretical understandings of selfhood. Then, we read six novels, including: *Jane Eyre*, *Beloved*, *The Woman Warrior*, *Oranges are not the only Fruit*, *Bastard Out of Carolina*, *Gender Outlaw*. We discussed the nature of narrative and narrative selfhood. One of the most central questions for the entire class was: How do we get the epistemic purchase to determine what narratives are good or bad? We kept asking about where our ability to critique, resist comes from and we didn't come up with any sufficient answers. I was also interested in how we define narrative. I am not sure that we came up with any sufficient answers for this one as well.

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I did my presentation on Judith Butler as a troublemaker. I looked at the different ways in which she makes trouble in her work and how she is perceived as a troublemaker. In my final paper I compared/contrasted Kate Bornstein's notion of the gender outlaw and Judith Butler's notion of the gender troublemaker. I closely outlined how these different characters influence each theorist's understanding of gender performance. It was my assessment that Butler's notion of performance, with its openness, was more viable than Bornstein's.

(a) relevance to larger project: This class dealt with some interesting questions about agency and ethics. This idea of where the capacity to critique comes from is an important one and connects to my question concerning who can be a critic and how they practice critique. My presentation on JB as a troublemaker was also important because this is something that I continue to think about. JB's practicing of her own theory is as a troublemaker. This connects beyond her theory to the story of her life within academic circles as one who makes trouble. Perhaps this is something that I can explore in the future. I could look closer at her theoretical "altercation" with Nussbaum. What kind of troublemaking does she do? The final paper was also important because it was my most comprehensive (and detailed) account of performativity to date. It will serve as a good resource for future work. Perhaps it could even be part of a chapter in my dissertation. At the end of my paper I suggested (in a footnote) that more exploration should be done on how the body connects to all of this talk about performativity. This is something that closely connects to the work and practice of theorists. Also, Pam Hall had an interesting comment at the end of the paper about the values/virtue/goals of such theoretical rebels. This is a key question for me.

(b) future questions: Where does the capacity to critique come from? Who can be a critic? What values, virtues do theoretical critics/rebels practice, promote? How does JB practice troublemaking in her work? Does she go beyond promoting troublemaking to practicing it? Does description of critique privilege the practice or the actor [this is an interesting point that I just considered. Could it be that the practice of critique is a practice, one that is centered on activity and not actors? It is not controlled by individuals, but taken up by them. I think these ideas fit in with my earlier studies on identity. But I wonder if my focus on the virtues of critique place the emphasis on the critic again. Actually, I am trying to redefine these virtues to demonstrate the ways in which they are not focused on individuals, but on communities.] How does the body/bodies fit into this description of critique? How is troublemaking practiced by real bodies and what effects do troubling practices have on those bodies?

(c) other thoughts: This was one of my favorite classes at Emory. I felt really comfortable talking and got a tremendous amount out of our weekly discussions. I learned a lot from Pam's teaching style and her emphasis on community building.

Philosophy of Society and Politics

In this class we traced the notion of freedom through its variations as positive, negative and pragmatic. We looked at Isaiah Berlin's essays on liberty, Hegel's work on Antigone, Antigone the play, Irigaray, Butler, Morrison, Hill Collins, Lorde, Bourdieu and Woolf. We explored how negative, positive freedom work and how pragmatism offered a different focus on freedom. I did two presentations for the class: one on Irigaray and her use of mimicry within her texts on Antigone and one on Butler and her use of Antigone's story

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as a foundation for understanding risky politics. I did my final paper on Butler, performativity and the possibilities for freedom. I outlined two different types of freedom that Butler supports (freedom as a practice of critically reflecting and freedom as a radical space of openness) and a third type which Butler leaves room for the possibility of (freedom as ability to connect, belong). At the end of this essay, I point to the possibility of seeing Butler's project as linking with a different kind of freedom than the negative freedom that she has been linked to.

(a) relevance to larger project: This is very important to my larger project. I think that the idea of freedom is central to what critique is trying to do and to what critique is. Freedom is one of the central goals of agency and of the critical work and how it gets defined is important for understanding to purpose of critique. I also think that freedom is a key way in which to link butler with the pragmatists and to address my questions of longing, belonging, connection and community. What kind of freedom is the critic able to practice, to have when she is critiquing? What are her goals as a critic? I am also interested in redefining freedom and its role as part of the critique. Freedom is not some utopian future, but neither is it wholly impossible. I need to see how these questions fit in with the larger issues of critique, reflection, risk. I really need to reread this paper, my critique paper and the radical democracy paper from last spring.

(b) future questions: What is freedom? How can we bring the work of Butler and black feminists pragmatists into conversation? Is Butler practicing a radical notion of negative freedom? How does freedom connect with my larger project? How can it be applied to my thoughts on feminism, the theorist, difference within feminism?

(c) other thoughts: See "Unspeakable Things Unspoken." Morrison discusses the uncertainty of the future of one's work—it could be praised, forgotten, condemned, ridiculed. "In any case, as far as the future is concerned, when one writes, as critic or as author, all necks are on the line" (56). This reminds of Butler and her idea of putting your body on the line. I really think that these ideas of freedom and this paper are key for my larger project. I should really shape my dissertation around the three papers I mentioned earlier. I think that would result in the strongest overall project. Read all three papers together and then figure it out from there...

Directed Reading on Butler and Irigaray

In this directed reading I explored the similarities and differences between Irigaray's use of mimicry and Butler's use of parody. I read primary and secondary sources, wrote a paper summarizing my findings and raising new questions, and completed an annotated bibliography of important sources. I was able to determine some key differences and similarities between the two projects. (See paper for a more detailed description of my project).

(a) relevance to larger project: I am still not sure what role this study will play in my larger project. At this point I think the idea of rhetoric and writing style as practice will serve a fundamental role in my work. I think that Butler does use Irigaray's notion of mimicry as a way of questioning the text. I think it might be interesting to use this as one of the chapters in the book. As I think more about my project, I will think about how this fits in.

(b) future questions: see paper for a full list of questions. One key set of questions that I am thinking about right now is: Irigaray uses mimicry as a strategy and writing style

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that forces readers to experience the disruption and subversion of the system. What role does the reader play in Butler's work? If Butler uses a rhetorical strategy to disrupt the reader, how does her writing style reflect this? Does she critically mime philosophical discourse in order to expose its weaknesses or, does she do something else? How does she use language to challenge her readers?

(c) other thoughts: As mentioned above, I need to think about how this fits in and how much of Irigaray I want to use. Does this connect with comedy, irony? Think about this some more...

[the discussion of what is theory is important and political because certain assumptions are made about what counts as theory, what is rigorous/scholarly enough, who can theorize, what audiences can be expected to understand. When theory is seen as too abstract and too difficult to understand, what assumptions are being made about the audience?]