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Sandra Ponzanesi

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Sandra Ponzanesi *Utrecht University*

Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard and Martha Nussbaum, eds, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-691-00432-3, £12.95 (pbk)

Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006. ISBN 1-592-13092-5, £12.95 (pbk)

Sneja Gunew, *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimension of Multiculturalisms*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. ISBN 0-415-28483-X, £19.99 (pbk)

Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-253-21156-5, £12.95 (pbk)

Uma Narayan and Sandra Harding, eds, *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-253-21384-3, £15.50 (pbk)

The question of multiculturalism as it is currently understood is the result of the major migrations of populations, as well as of the emergence of civil rights movements, liberation struggles, and feminist movements in Western nations and worldwide. Therefore as the two leading terms on minority rights, feminism and multiculturalism should be comrades in arms. However, as Shigehisa Kuriyama writes, the term multiculturalism is notoriously vague as ‘it sweeps under its blanket generality a tangle of confusion and uncertainties about how cultures can or should relate to each other, and how their worldviews relate to the world’ (Kuriyama, 1994: 337). Conversely feminism is marked by the unstable equilibrium between the universalizing common ground and the recognition of difference between women. Given the internal tensions within the two discourses it is only too obvious that questions of multiculturalism have been connected to feminist issues in many contradictory ways, though the relation between the two begins to have a genealogy of its own.

According to Stuart Hall the ‘multicultural question’ addresses ‘how we are to envisage the futures of those many different societies now composed of peoples from very different backgrounds, cultures, contexts, experiences and positions in the ranking order of the world; societies where difference

refuses to disappear' (Hall, 2000: 209). Multiculturalism as a concept always intersects with the politics of inclusion and exclusion of multiple cultural forms within nation-states. Stuart Hall distinguishes the concept of 'the multicultural' as expressed by the adjective 'multicultural' from that of 'multiculturalism' as a noun. The term multicultural as adjective addresses problems of society and of governance which stem from different cultural communities coexisting within the same nation-state while at the same time retaining and protecting something of their 'original' culture and identities. In contrast, 'multiculturalism', as a noun, refers to 'strategies and policies adopted to govern or manage the problems of diversity and multiplicity which multi-cultural societies throw up' (Hall, 2000: 209). Thus, 'the multicultural' is a theoretical and contested discourse whereas 'multiculturalism' is a governing policy of specific nation-states.

For example, multiculturalism in the US context is mostly concerned with education policy and the broadening of the literary canon, which ended up in what was called the 'culture wars'. For the Chicago Cultural Studies Group, multiculturalism is 'a desire to rethink canons in the humanities – to rethink both their boundaries and their functions . . . to find the cultural and political norms appropriate to more heterogeneous societies within and across nations, including norms for the production and transmission of knowledges' (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 1994: 114). For nations such as Australia and Canada, multiculturalism refers to a government policy developed to manage the multiple cultural origins of its populations and to recognize the rights of minority groups. In Britain, not unlike in the United States, it was mainly an educational policy until the publication in 2000 of 'The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain', also known as the 'Parekh Report'. This report has moved the debate on to new ground, opening discussion about the possibility of re-imagining Britain as a multicultural nation. The European Union is attempting to develop a model of multiculturalism which is supranational, a rather challenging task.

It is the purpose of this article to sketch the various relations of multiculturalism to feminist theory, their tensions and productive intersections, by offering an overview of the most relevant publications on the subject during the last decade. This general overview will show a gradual shift from an obvious conflict of interests between feminism, intended as a Western liberal project, and multiculturalism, towards a more nuanced and complex understanding of multicultural feminism intended not as a self-contained and descriptive concept, but as an analytical and discriminatory tool to be applied within a transnational perspective.

Susan Moller Okin's essay 'Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?' appeared in the *Boston Review* in 1997. Intended as a polemical piece it stirred a series of responses by well-known scholars which were later collected in the volume *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, edited by Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard and Martha Nussbaum (1999).

The original essay by Okin argued that feminism and multiculturalism both seek 'the recognition of difference in the context of norms that are universal in theory but not in practice' (p. 131). Gender equality often clashes with the interest of minority cultures and individual rights, as the

fundamental position of the feminist movement cannot be sacrificed in the name of group rights, which do often reinforce existing hierarchies. Okin's major take is on Will Kymlicka's defence of cultural group rights that should provide members with a meaningful way of life, that include both the public and the private sphere and therefore encompass social, religious, educational and recreational aspects of life. 'Cultural minorities need special rights, then, because their cultures may otherwise be threatened with extinction, and cultural extinction would be likely to undermine the self-respect and freedom of group members. Special rights, in short, put minorities on an equal footing with the majorities' (Okin, p. 20).

According to Okin there are two major downsides for group rights. First, they treat cultural groups as monolithic and do not pay attention to differences among and within groups; they accord little or no recognition to the fact that minority cultural groups are themselves gendered, with substantial differences in power and advantages between men and women. Second, the advocates of group rights disregard the private sphere which is essential for the definition of any culture as it revolves around crucial issues such as family, sexuality and reproduction. In other words the private domain, that is the sphere where women realize the most visible contribution to culture understood in traditional terms, gets erased in the name of an abstract definition of cultural identity, which does not take into account the different roles that cultural groups impose on their members. Therefore, according to Okin, group rights are blind to gender inequalities and at times even illiberal as they 'violate their individual members' rights, requiring them to conform to group beliefs or norms' (p. 11).

Okin goes into a list of ad hoc examples from completely disparate cultural settings to prove her point on gender inequalities within group rights such as clitoridectomy, polygamy, divorce systems biased against women, the marriage of children, *purdah*, abortion, the practice common in Latin America of requiring a rape victim to marry her rapist, the offence of *zina* in Pakistan, or sex outside marriage, for which the law allows the whipping or imprisonment of such women. While she accounts for the sexual discrimination present in Western society Okin stills proclaims that 'women in more liberal cultures are at the same time legally guaranteed many of the same freedoms and opportunities as men' (pp. 16–18).

The impasse is, according to Okin, in the international arena where the linkages between culture and gender mean that women's human rights are rejected by leaders or countries as incompatible with their various cultures. Even within the United States the demand for group rights is troublesome as, Okin triumphantly announces without providing any specific data, 'the overwhelming majority of "cultural defenses" that are increasingly invoked in the U.S. criminal cases involving members of cultural minorities are connected with gender – in particular with male control over women and children' (p. 18).

Okin's appeal to look at gender inequalities within group rights is welcomed by critics such as Kymlicka himself and Homi Bhabha, who respond to her essay. Kymlicka takes on Okin's critique of looking more carefully at intra-group dynamics, in particular pertaining to gender. He

makes a distinction between 'internal restrictions' and 'external restrictions' of ethno-cultural groups. The restriction of individual choice in the name of tradition is called 'internal restrictions' whereas the defence of language use, the request of political representation and the acknowledgement of historical wrongdoings are part of the 'external restrictions'. So Kymlicka comes to the conclusion that group rights should not accept or tolerate 'internal restrictions' of ethno-cultural groups and that internal restrictions should be accounted for more closely in order not to diminish the freedom of women.

Bhabha, in his response entitled 'Liberalism's Sacred Cow', also welcomes Okin's voicing of the tension between feminism and multiculturalism as it is a 'useful corrective to the prevailing orthodoxy that establishes "equivalences" between disadvantaged groups, aggregating "communities of interest" without doing the hard work of specifying rights and interests, shying away from conflicts within, and between, minorities' (p. 79). However, Bhabha is very critical of Okin's restricted understanding of the liberal ground on which feminism and multiculturalism might negotiate their differences about rights and representations. According to Bhabha, Okin's view of the interface between feminism and multiculturalism is too focused on the conflict generated by the anti-feminist and patriarchal effects of criminal cultural defence which make her produce, against her best intentions, monolithic descriptions of minority, migrant cultures, though gender differentiated. Bhabha argues that 'minorities are too frequently imaged as the abject "subjects" of their cultures of origin huddled in the gazebo of group rights, preserving the orthodoxy of their distinctive cultures in the midst of the great storm of Western progress' (p. 80). Another major criticism of Bhabha against Okin is that she bases her statements on gender roles within immigrant communities largely on the information submitted as evidence for criminal cultural defence procedures. By referring to information that is mobilized in the courtroom to achieve specific ends, Okin creates a distorted picture of group rights producing the monolithic discourse of the cultural stereotype.

Bhabha's conclusion on the usefulness of the liberal credo to comprehend the complexity of the multicultural predicament is extremely critical:

With a zealotry not unlike the colonial civilizing mission, the 'liberal' agenda is articulated without a shadow of self-doubt, except perhaps an acknowledgement of its contingent failings in the practice of everyday life. If the failures of liberalism are always practical then what kind of perfectibility does the principle claim for itself? Such a campaigning stance obscures indigenous traditions of reform and resistance, ignores 'local' leavenings of liberty, flies in the face of feminist campaigns within nationalist and anticolonial struggles, leaves out well established debates by minority intellectuals and activists concerned with the difficult 'translation' of gender and sexual politics in the world of migration and resettlement. (p. 83)

Bhabha concludes that only the awareness of the ambivalence and unsatisfactory history of liberal thought can allow postcolonial critics, multiculturalists, or feminists to join in the unfinished work of creating a more viable, intra-cultural community of rights.

Many of the issues discussed by Okin are tested on new ground by Sandra Harding's prior influential text *Is Science Multicultural?* In contrast to Okin, Harding has the best intentions of making an intervention in favour of the multicultural agenda. In this text Harding questions the universality of science and wonders whether a multicultural perspective that is already correcting distorted understanding of history, literature, the arts and social sciences, should not be a welcome addition to discussions on modern science, considered to be above any cultural referent. According to Harding there are many cultural fingerprints that are responsible for the success of the sciences. The use of science in the plural opens up the possibility of multiple understandings of scientific knowledge. Harding asks three crucial questions: first, to what extent does modern science have origins in non-European cultures? Second, have there been and could there be other sciences, culturally distinctive ones, that also work and thus are universal in this sense? And third, in what ways is modern science culturally European or European-American?

Harding makes an impressive journey through the history of science trying to integrate the new field of postcolonial science studies. To answer her first question she offers a wide array of examples from disparate contexts outside the West to demonstrate how science has always been highly inter-cultural. She mentions that the magnetic needle, the rudder, gunpowder and many other technologies useful to Europeans were borrowed from China. She mentions how advanced astronomical observation and many mathematical achievements travelled from India and other East Asian and Islamic societies to interact with the West and accounts also for the cultural borrowing from those generally defined as 'simpler' societies such as the pre-Columbian Americas and Africa. Thus modern science is already multicultural as many elements of knowledge from many different non-European cultures have already been incorporated.

If on the one hand there is nothing unusual about these scientific borrowings, the question remains if other knowledge traditions can be called science as well. In a conventional sense science is considered to have emerged in early modern Europe based on the logic of scientific research that has been characterized in various ways as inductivism, crucial experiments, and the hypothetico-deductive method. This internal logic seems to be missing from other traditions, which made them into pseudo-science because of their lacking the principle of objectivity, rationality and progressiveness. Much of European modern science has thrived on voyages of discovery during the imperial time, allowing the prosperity of imperial and military regimes while categorizing aspects of nature, geography and human races. It could be said that European expansionism changed the landscape of global scientific knowledge. Harding tries with the best intentions to correct these imperialistic and Eurocentric notions of science but, as Shigehisa Kuriyama argues in her comment on Harding, she ends up being paternalistic and very generalizing about other cultures. That is the same impasse pointed out in the responses to Okin's essay that by addressing diversity in such an unspecified way it obscures the deep differences between cultural traditions, erasing the very diversity promoted

under the banner of multiculturalism. Harding (1994) is creating an essentialism of difference, as Uma Narayan would say. Kuriyama claims that

Harding's multiculturalism glosses over the depths and real complexities of cultural distinctiveness . . . The view that supposes Western science to be incomparably superior, to be the only authentic way to know the world, is arrogant, wrongheaded and ignorant. In this I side with Harding. But there is also an arrogance and ignorance, albeit of a subtler kind, in flat assertions of comparability – a risk of merely substituting one prejudice for another, of replacing uninformed presumptions of superiority and otherness with assumptions of equality and commonality that are no more informed and, in the end, are scarcely less condescending. This is the third problem with Harding's conception of the multicultural: in its abstractness – in its focus on the idea of diversity rather than on its substance, on declaring comparability rather than on actually comparing – it lumps together the most diverse cultures into faceless, nonmodern, non-Western other. It diminishes them instead of restoring them. (Kuriyama, 1994: 341)

Harding seems to be on more steady ground in her epistemological pursuit of whether science is not just multicultural but also gendered and proceeds to analyse the role of gender for scientific knowledge. This is part of a long feminist tradition according to which women have a distinctive standpoint on nature. The question is what informs these standpoints, biology or culture? Can men have the same standpoint? Do all women have the same standpoint? In what ways, Harding argues, 'are women and men located in gender-distinctive cultures within their national, ethnic, or other historically located cultures that both enable and limit what can be known about the natural world from the perspective of their lives?' (p. 96). Harding goes into more depth on this in her chapter on 'Gender, Modernity, Knowledge: Postcolonial Standpoints' in which she explores what is meant by women's knowledge and whether it should be conceptualized as pre-modern or as outside modern knowledge systems.

By analysing the debates around WEAD (Women, Environment and Alternatives to Development) Harding illustrates how development policies in the South have been detrimental to local society by equating development with economic growth and by applying scientific method and technologies that destroyed the local environment upon which many vulnerable people are dependent. Feminists complained that women were left out of development as only men were trained to improve the quality of life in the so-called underdeveloped world. The combination of Eurocentrism and the sexism of Western assumptions on how to develop or mal-develop women in the Third World is often passed into policies highly detrimental to women in the South. These development policies, indirectly guided by the interests of multinational corporations, create economic development in a modernist sense that was based on the exploitation of women through underpaid wage labour and unpaid reproductive labour, and unpaid labour in general. The future should be towards sustainable development that proposes a balance between economic, social and environmental needs.

Despite the reiterated reference to women's knowledge systems in their

diverse local forms, Harding's discourse remains abstract and the multicultural term, often used in her other chapters on science, is elided in favour of a more generic binarism of the Western world versus the South, thus obscuring even more grossly than in her section on the origin of science the complexities and differences of women's strategies and tactics related to grass-roots movements. Her claim that development projects are themselves gendered masculine and marked as Eurocentric and that they serve the interests of political and economic groups at the expense of women and the poor in general is not new. That women's knowledge, in the North and South, should be re-conceptualized outside the modern versus pre-modern dichotomy is an interesting addition but Harding leaves it to us to decide how to untangle the complexity of this mission.

Harding seems to improve many of her positions in a later volume, edited in collaboration with Uma Narayan, *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*. The volume appeared initially as two separate issues of *Hypatia* and aims to transform feminist philosophical work by showing how multicultural and transnational feminist perspectives reconfigure mainstream feminist approaches to philosophy. The idea is to have an impact and change the paradigms of feminist philosophy through the lens of multicultural questions, as feminist philosophy had changed the paradigm of mainstream philosophy. As the authors write in their introduction: 'These multicultural, global, and postcolonial feminist concerns transform mainstream notions of experience, human rights, the origins of philosophical issues, philosophic use of metaphors of the family, white antiracism, human progress, modernity, the unity of scientific method, the desirability of universal knowledge claims, and other ideas central to philosophy' (p. vii).

The volume contains 17 essays divided into four sections. The first five essays were originally presented at an invited symposium entitled 'Cultural Relativism and Global Feminism', at the American Philosophical Association's Pacific Division at Berkeley in March 1997. These essays by Alison Jaggar, Susan Moller Okin, Ofelia Schutte, Lorraine Code and Uma Narayan explore issues of Western philosophy and how that might become in its practice respectful of cultural difference. Jaggar examines the possibilities of a global feminist dialogue between Western feminists and feminists in the Third World and how to engage in such a discourse. She points out that there is not a monolithic global feminist community but that such a community is shaped by many overlapping and contradictory discourses.

In her 'Essay of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism' Narayan warns against forms of cultural relativism that buy into essentialist notions of cultural differences and create as much a danger for the feminist agenda as universalism. In this essay Narayan offers a poignant response to Okin's discussed essay 'Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?' by acknowledging how cultural differences among women sometimes lead to culturally essentialist pictures of specific Third World cultures set in contrast to Western cultures. Narayan analyses the

recurrent formation of essentialist pictures of culture and also suggests a series of strategies that Third World feminists might use or apply to challenge the essentialist agendas of Third World fundamentalists.

The other essays continue to show how contemporary philosophy has been transformed by postcolonial and multicultural feminist engagements by putting class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion at the centre of the agenda along with more traditional issues pertaining to feminist philosophy such as Enlightenment based notions of modernity, progress, rationality and identity. The collection attempts therefore to cross traditional disciplinary boundaries, incorporating and transforming methodologies stemming from the different disciplines. It courageously interweaves the 'multicultural', 'global' and 'postcolonial' into the central concern of feminist theorizing, discussing issues of human rights or economic development that cut across national borders, and tries to engage with the protracted effects of colonial legacies and the rise of neo-colonial power relationships. The volume attempts, in its eclecticism and at times uneven engagement with transnational multicultural feminisms, to map the different struggles of feminist movements in a variety of national contexts. The volume offers a very welcome bridge between more abstract and aesthetic discourses on feminist philosophy and multicultural debates and postcolonial theorizing.

Sneja Gunew is a well-known critic in the field of gender and multiculturalism. Her new book *Haunted Nations* offers a fresh take on the debate. In this text she attempts to open the discussion between multicultural and postcolonial studies, two fields of studies that are closely related but that have institutionally very different genealogies.¹

Gunew is one of the most prominent critics of multiculturalism who advocates a critical use of the term² which could account for the commonalities and differences of multicultural policies and practices in the United States, Canada and Australia, where the specific reality of migration and multi-ethnic composition of the state, and state politics, strongly differ. Although Canada and Australia are highly multicultural states, the theoretical debate on multiculturalism had tended for several decades to be dominated by the United States, which was not always of relevance to other contexts. In *Haunted Nations* Gunew tries to account for the different dimensions of multiculturalism and how they are shaped by colonial histories, what Gunew so poignantly describes as the 'colonial seeds of multiculturalism' (p. 33).

The author attempts to rethink and relocate the history and geographical locations of terms that usually overlap the multicultural and the post-colonial. Terms such as ethnicity and race, religion and language, have different traditions of theorization, and they resonate differently in the United States, where they are mostly theorized with area studies, than in Europe where they resonate more with migrations consequent to decolonization and to current global restructuring of the labour force. Therefore, both postcolonialism and multiculturalism can be floating signifiers and it is necessary to look at their interaction within the specificity of various nation-states.

Gunew is particularly informed and competent in outlining the specificity of the Australian and Canadian cases in comparison to the US model, which she considers more developed at the academic level than state policy, and in comparison with the European Union's tentative upcoming model. Colonial legacies also mean analysing the spectre of British colonialism on settler societies such as Canada and Australia since, as Gunew writes in her introduction, following Stuart Hall 'the legacies of British colonialism haunt contemporary Australian debates around the nation, citizenship and multiculturalism so that who owns modernity (and inherits European civilization) instigates a process of racialization in which the descendants of European post-war immigrants are aligned with indigenous and "Asian" settlers' (p. 10).

In the second part of her book, entitled 'Abject Bodies', Gunew goes on to describe the bodily inscription of multiculturalism at the crossroads with postcolonialism through very specific examples. By using various theories and in particular those of Judith Butler, she analyses in chapters 4 and 5 the performative aspect of ethnicity. She examines the cases of ethnic passing by focusing on the case of the young Ukrainian Australian writer, Helen Demidenko, who produced a first novel about the complicity of Ukrainians in the Holocaust. It was later discovered that Helen Demidenko was actually Helen Darville, a daughter of British immigrants, with even a right wing history. The hoax created a turmoil around issues of ethnic authenticity, with Anglo-centric groups claiming their right to a suppressed identity in a country increasingly dominated by the claims of minority groups. Gunew also analyses the interesting case of *M. Butterfly*, a play by David Henry Hwang (1994) adapted into a film by David Cronenberg. The play is based on a bizarre but true story of a French diplomat who carried on a 20-year affair with a Chinese actor and opera singer, not realizing that his partner was in fact a man masquerading as a woman. Weaving into the play many parallels with, and ultimately ironic reversals of, Puccini's opera, *Madame Butterfly*, Hwang explores the stereotypes that underlie and distort relations between Eastern and Western culture, and between men and women.

Gunew's text addresses, in a sophisticated and refreshing manner, geopolitical questions that go beyond the nation-state, and historical questions that stem from the colonial past which still haunt present nations.

Patricia Hill Collins's *From Black Power to Hip Hop* provides an exciting overview of black culture from the community-based credo of the civil rights movement to the individualism and materialism of the black hip-hop generation. Collins questions the effectiveness of multiculturalism as the official policy of the United States which seems to be more concerned about the development of this ideology than with the actual social change that should improve racial integration, suburban housing and public school systems for black people. As Collins writes: 'Historically, African Americans have shown a strong degree of racial solidarity, largely because they had common problems and they saw their fate as inextricably linked' (p. 14). African Americans still choose race over class in questions of solidarity but significant shifts are happening in society. Collins's work

is informed by social theory and in her essays she uses intersectionality in order to connect race, theory, and nation to raise questions that might help black Americans, but especially the black youth of the hip-hop generation, to forge more effective responses to the new colour-blind racism present in the United States.

For the purpose of highlighting the tension between feminism and multiculturalism Collins's most interesting chapters concern the relation between black women and feminism. By black women Collins means women of African descent and women who are socially marked as black. Black women share common political, economic and social problems that take different forms in transnational contexts, as countries such as South Africa, Brazil, Britain or the United States have quite different histories of colonialism and capitalism. As Collins writes: 'Black women's placement within the global social relations created by globalization, a transnationalism that has weakened African and Caribbean nation-states and fostered major population shifts, and a persistent racism that denies first-class citizenship to Black women within advanced industrial societies converge to frame a common set of challenges for Black women' (p. 23).

However, black women often remain positioned between the conflicting politics of nationalism and feminism as black feminism constitutes a challenge to black solidarity. Black women are united with black men on issues of race and class pertaining to education, employment, housing and health, but are often divided on gender issues concerning domestic violence, sexual harassment and homophobia. Collins explores the contours of black women's political activism to show the development of these tensions: 'Black women seemingly reject certain expressions of feminism, not because they disagree with the main idea of feminism, but because they reject feminist principles as refracted through American relations of race, class, and nation' (p. 185).

Western feminists disregard the enormous contribution by black women to community work and see this as one more form of free labour exploitation on the shoulders of black women for their male counterparts. What Western feminists avoid seeing is the high degree of political power exercised by black women in their community to regulate well-being and health. Within a global context community work becomes, according to Collins, 'more, not less feminist' (p. 25).

In her last essay Collins makes her most important statement on feminist politics as expressed by African American women in the hip-hop generation. 'Is the personal still political?' asks Collins. The feminist politics of women of the hip-hop generation shows a clear break from the feminism expressed by earlier generations of Chicana, Latina and African American women. Women of the hip-hop generation, through their credo of the personal is political, manage to raise black women's issues not only in academia but also in popular culture and even in grass-roots organizations. In this respect there is continuity with previous struggles, yet the modalities are very different. The new motto seems to be Queen Latifah's claim, cited by Collins in the opening to her book and repeated several times, 'I am not here to live by somebody else's standards. I am defining what a

woman is for myself. Simply put, I am not interested in subscribing to what society has decided for half of humankind. I am an individual' (pp. 1–2).

The insistence on the personal, individual, unique identity recurs in the music style of the hip-hop generation, but also shows alliances with many of the credos of the young American generation in general. Women of colour now choose popular culture (film, music videos, spoken word poetry) as venues for their feminist politics, reaching much wider audiences and mobilizing women's interests, not within the bureaucracy of the state as happened in the 1960s and 1970s, but within popular culture and mass media. However, this does not mean that hip-hop culture, and rap in particular, are unproblematic. Hip-hop and especially rap can have explicit misogynist content and hip-hop music becomes a venue that can both liberate and oppress women.

That is the reason for the emergence of feminist hip-hop that refutes the negative representations of black womanhood. Queen Latifah, India Arie and Alicia Keys firmly argue that women have the right to be respected and not be mistaken for the stereotypes that have been applied to them. Black women artists encourage the new young female generation to express their individualism. Yes, this kind of personal politics, as Collins explains, is profoundly different from the intense, consciousness-raising black feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The hip-hop generation does not want to place its needs and desires as individuals in the service of the greater needs of the black community, and it challenges the traditional idea of the strong black woman. However important this new version of 'the personal is political' expressed in the venue of popular culture is, the question remains whether social structures are changed by it. Collins wonders whether popular culture consumers see hip-hop women as participating in an important new form of feminist politics or are just being entertained by it. Social problems are often left unspoken in the agenda of hip-hop feminism and the materialism of the hip-hop generations stands against any collective and socialist spirit. If on the one hand this new personal politics creates spaces for free women, these new identities, cautions Collins, 'can never occur without fundamental structural change that makes such identities possible for everyone' (p. 196).

These diverse views show that the terrain and terminologies of multiculturalism are still deeply contested. However, it remains a useful critical approach, connected to and partly overlapping with postcolonial theory, cultural studies, and critical race theory. As Bhabha writes in his response to Okin's essay: 'It is the fragile political and economic fate of postcolonial societies, caught in the uneven and unequal forces of globalization, to suffer in a heightened and exaggerated form the contradictions and ambiguities that inhabit the Western world' (Cohen et al., 1999: 82).

Multiculturalism keeps reminding us of both the local and the global by introducing minority perspectives while accounting for diasporic networks as well. Feminist perspectives need to be carefully articulated and positioned in order to avoid distorted rendition of multicultural discourses and policies. On the other hand multiculturalism risks glossing over the complexities of women's conditions within the new articulation of the

global marketplace, where women of the South end up being the most vulnerable subjects.

It is, therefore, particularly important that both multiculturalism and feminism form alliances in the transnational arena in order to better represent and improve the rights of local women. To develop a transnational multicultural feminism means to make significant interventions for both feminist theories and multicultural debates in order to work across national borders and disciplinary backgrounds. The aim is to pay attention to minority perspectives, using them to critique dominant discourses and practices.

Of all the texts above-selected Sneja Gunew's *Haunted Nations* and Patricia Hill Collins's *From Black Power to Hip Hop* stand out as the most effective as they attempt to make a connection between women's issues and multicultural debates from a specific historical, national and political situation. They also offer the most contemporary and forward-looking vision on where to go next. Gunew, for example, writes that the direction for the future is a comparative situated multiculturalism that is positioned within the framework of transnational studies, which to a certain extent 'represent a tension within nation states in the localized politics of multiculturalism and globalization which, to some degree, renders the nation state irrelevant as an autonomous self-legislating cultural body' (Gunew, 2004: 13). Collins on the other hand warns against the danger of black politics and black female power being commercialized and fetishized by consumer culture, suggesting that multiculturalism and feminism are not operating outside of the marketplace and that we must be always very wary of easy celebration of individual rights that claim to operate apart from collective identities.

Notes

1. See other works by the same author: Sneja Gunew, *Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies* (1994); Sneja Gunew, 'Multicultural Multiplicities: US, Canada, Australia' (1993); Sneja Gunew, 'Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism: Between Race and Ethnicity' (n.d.).
2. Critical multiculturalism intends an analysis that recognizes the global resonances of multiculturalism but also stays beholden to localized meanings.

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Sandra Ponzanesi is Assistant Professor of gender and postcolonial critique at Utrecht University, Department of Media and Cultural Studies. She has been visiting professor at the University of California, Los Angeles and visiting scholar at the University of California, Riverside. Her recent research interests concern the reception of postcolonial literature in relation to the literary award industry and the exploration of digital literacies of migrant youth in transnational contexts. She has published on postcolonial critique, transnational gender theories, Italian colonial history, visual culture and Third World cinema. Among her publications are *Paradoxes of Post-colonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora* (Albany: Suny Press, 2004) and *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-colonial Europe* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005) with Daniela Merolla.

Address: Research Institute for History and Culture, Department of Media, Munstraat 2A, 3512 EV, Utrecht, The Netherlands. Email: Sandra.Ponzanesi@let.uu.nl