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Article: ‘Jumping Generations’: On Second- and Third-Wave Feminist Epistemology

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Abstract: ‘Jumping Generations’: On Second- and Third-Wave Feminist Epistemology

This article is situated in the field of feminist epistemology and argues that currently a new generation of feminist epistemologists is working on the basis of assumptions other than those of the first decades of academic feminism. Thus it entails an analysis of generational change in the field. The article provides firstly a reading of Sandra Harding’s ‘undutiful daughter’, the feminist epistemologist supposedly undutiful to a philosophical Master/Master narrative by reference to the work of Rosi Braidotti on the same figuration. This analysis shows that what, in this article, is called ‘second-wave feminist epistemology’ is premised on dialectical ways of thinking. Secondly, it argues that this dialecticism is precisely the target of the so-called ‘third-wave feminist epistemologists’. This argument generates a methodological discussion about the classificatory versus cartographical strategies in feminist epistemology. It introduces as a key term the idea of ‘jumping generations’ as the central to the method of the cartographical approach. The article ends with an analysis of the ways in which the work of Karen Barad, Sara Ahmed and Claire Colebrook can be read as illustrations and exemplifications of the method of jumping generations.

‘Jumping Generations:’ On Second- and Third-Wave Feminist Epistemology

Introduction

This article deals with the generational dimension of academic feminism, and more specifically with generational change in the field of feminist epistemology. Sandra Harding and, earlier, Alison Jaggar have laid the foundations of the field of feminist epistemology. During the past two decades, the classifications of feminist knowledge theory produced in Harding’s *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986) and Jaggar’s *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983) have functioned as taxonomies of feminist thought. Evidence for this can be found in the wide circulation of the classifications as such as well as the individual classes in scholarly texts, and in the huge number of textbooks establishing feminist scholarly thought through the establishment of the classification(s) as its foundation. I want to suggest that the taxonomies that originated in the work of Harding and Jaggar constitute the framework of a ‘second-wave feminist epistemology’. In what follows I claim that a new generation of feminist epistemologists assesses the second-wave feminist tendency to classify and moves beyond it towards a ‘third-wave’ feminist order. In this article, I develop an argument about the extent to which second- and third-wave feminist epistemologies differ and about a way of capturing such generational change.

Let me start by highlighting two features of the classificatory approach so central to second-wave feminist epistemology. Firstly, classifications are construed on the basis of sequential negation. Secondly, they are progress narratives. In this article these two features are summarised using the term ‘dialecticism’. Jaggar’s and Harding’s account share these features. The classification of feminist thought brought to the fore in *Science Question* consists of three schools. Feminist standpoint theory

‘avoids the problems that beset feminist empiricism’, and feminist postmodernism ‘challenges the assumptions upon which feminist empiricism and the feminist standpoint are based, although strains of postmodernist scepticism appear in the thought of these theorists, too’ (Harding 1986, 26-27). Feminist postmodernism is thus presented as the apotheosis of feminist epistemological reflection, and the relations between feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory, and between these two classes and feminist postmodernism are said to be oppositional (Hemmings, 2005, 121-122). The problematic aspects of feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory, namely their respective universalising tendencies, are said to be solved by feminist postmodernism’s focus on diversity *rather than* equality or difference. *Feminist Politics* (1983) gives a less elaborate account but, having spiced up the account with signifiers such as ‘by contrast’ and ‘more complex,’ Jaggar is all the more explicit about its classificatory nature. Moreover, Jaggar explicitly distinguishes socialist feminism as ‘the best available representation of reality from the standpoint of women’ (1983, 389).

In this article, I want to show that contemporary feminist epistemology has moved away from producing classifications and towards *cartographical* approaches. Raia Prokhovnik has argued that feminist reflection in the first decade of the 21st Century is characterised by ‘the move to a third wave of feminism based now on relational, non-dichotomous thinking and social practices’ (2002, xi). I suggest that the move towards relationality and non-dichotomous thinking entails an epistemological practice that goes beyond the classificatory approach as such and the field-defining classifications of Harding and Jaggar in particular. I thus claim that another order is being produced, which I specify as a ‘third-wave feminist epistemology’. This other order I theorise with the help of Lynn Hankinson Nelson’s

(1993) work on ‘unreal dichotomies’ and ‘non-exhaustive oppositions’. These terms serve to account for feminist philosophical categories or phenomena that seem mutually exclusive to second-wave feminist epistemologists, but are, according to a new order, the opposite sides of one and the same coin. Nelson asks ‘whether some alleged dichotomies [sustained by epistemology at large] are real’ and ‘suggest[s] that [certain] oppositions are not exhaustive’ (1993, 127-128). This kind of questioning reappraises the standard approaches of the field of (feminist) epistemology and introduces a non-dialectical alternative based on an assessment of the paradoxes and complexities of our contemporary ‘post-postmodern’ times (Braidotti 2005). The *qualitative* shift (Braidotti 2006, 5) documented here I locate in the quest to bridge what was rendered dialectically opposite within the order of second-wave feminist epistemology. I do not conceptualise the move away from the classificatory approach as merely quantitative, because third-wave feminist subjects inhabit locations that are *more complex* than just plural. In other words, the complexity involved cannot be captured by thinking diversity or simply thinking hyphenated identities (see also Harding’s definition of feminist postmodernism (1986, 27-28, 163-196)). The new generation of feminist epistemologists *assesses* rather than construes (new) paradoxes. Third-wave feminist epistemologists do not work according to a framework of diversity thinking nor does their move beyond the postmodern entail a return to modernist identity politics or equality projects. The latter would involve a negation of feminist postmodernist epistemology (i.e. another dialecticism), and the former an affirmation thereof (i.e. a continuation of one of the classes of second-wave feminist epistemology). Neither continuing feminist postmodernist epistemology, nor the negation of it, would legitimise the theorisation of qualitative, generational change in the order of feminist epistemology.

The next section introduces the generationality of the field of feminist epistemology through an in-depth discussion of the (envisioned) relations between feminist epistemology and epistemology 'proper', between the separate 'classes' of the order of second-wave feminist epistemology, and between second-wave and third-wave feminist epistemology. I will claim that feminist epistemology, ordered in a second-wave, classificatory manner, has gradually *lost* its feminism. Rosi Braidotti's work will be used to indicate a shift towards non-dialectical, non-linear/non-teleological approaches to feminist epistemology and its generationality, which will prevent the disappearance of feminism from being effectuated. In this article I will try to capture this shift through 'jumping generations', and to create a third-wave feminist epistemology along the way. 'Jumping generations', that is, serves both as my object of study and as my analytical tool. 'Second-' and 'third-wave feminist epistemology', as well as 'jumping generations', are my terms.

Undutiful and Dutiful Daughters

With the coming into existence of academic feminism in the 1980s, feminism, in the dominant Anglo-American discourse, started to be conceptualised as internally conflictual. Importantly, this self-affirmed conflictual dynamics is said to have proven the illusory nature of movement feminism's 'sisterhood' (Hirsch and Keller 1990). As a result, feminism's generational dynamics turned into a dialecticism. I will briefly reconstruct the argument here. For starters, academic feminists as of the 1980s started to *negate* the work of 1970s movement feminists, not taking into account the fact that the membership of these two classes showed overlap, nor keeping in mind that academic feminism as a project (for instance 'the long march through the institutions') came out of the feminist movement. The negation of activist feminism

was accompanied by the (implicit) claim that diversified feminist analyses were *better than* the ‘illusion’ of intuited sisterly universalism (Stacey 1993). If it is truly the case, however, that feminism as progressive gets accompanied by a *loss*—that is, if the dialectical, classificatory approach and feminist epistemology’s loss of feminism *are* related (see Hemmings 2005)—then we need to re-conceptualise the *conflictual* generationality for an understanding of the relational, non-dialectical third feminist wave and its epistemological order to occur.

At this point, it is important to examine the dialecticism (sketched above) by scrutinising academic feminism’s relationship with the concept ‘Oedipal conflict’. This is in order to capture, as well as overcome, feminist generational strategies that affirm rivalry between women (the conflictual model, academic feminism versus movement feminism) driven by Oedipal structures, and those that rely upon/constitute an essentially non-rivalrous, pre-Oedipal women’s culture. The latter opposition (Oedipal versus pre-Oedipal) can be said to be unreal, even the concept of the ‘pre-Oedipal phase’ is predicated upon Oedipality. I want to argue that it is this unreal opposition that needs to be addressed for the order of third-wave feminism to be fully understood. In what follows, Harding will be used as an example of the second-wave order of feminist epistemology. The generationality of her account will be read through the work of Braidotti. Both Braidotti and Harding have typified feminist philosophers in general and feminist epistemologists in particular as the *undutiful* daughters of male theorists. In the case of Harding, this claim illustrates the generational dialecticism of second-wave feminist epistemology. Undutiful daughterhood in Braidotti’s account, however, signifies an Irigarayan stance of affirming the need to build a women’s culture and subjectivity conscious of the fact that without a genealogy of women, women will always continue to fight for

becoming the phallic Mother (Wright 1992, 263; 314-315; Buikema 1995, 103-104). The latter stance, different from stressing the pre-Oedipal, will be used to illustrate the order of third-wave feminist epistemology. This is not to say that either Braidotti or Irigaray are third-wave feminists. Their work has helped me to understand the order of second-wave feminist epistemology and to capture and create an alternative to this order.

Harding explains that feminists in the 1960s and 1970s started to become conscious of the fact that women had never been allowed to enter the field of knowledge theory and knowledge production (Harding 1991, 105).¹ She goes on to explain that '[i]n attempting to account for and remedy this situation, several competing feminist epistemologies have been articulated' (1991 106). Whereas it can be said that this is an apt Irigarayan description of feminist epistemology, the effects of Harding's portrayal are not Irigarayan. Harding not only sees the field of feminist epistemology as the diametrical opposite of 'epistemology' and 'philosophy', but also *affirms* the competing feminist epistemological classes. Harding, that is, constitutes an epistemology and a philosophy 'proper' through the reassurance that a feminist challenge thereof exists, reaffirms the so-called 'paternal discourses' of the distinct feminist epistemological schools, and finally not only describes but also buys into Oedipal structures by endorsing the construction of competing schools. Here, the existence and importance of positivism, Hegelian Master-Slave dialectics, and postmodern scepticism, as well as post-structuralist tendencies, receive confirmation *by negation*. Additionally, the resulting feminist epistemological classes get to share characteristics with their paternal discourses rather than with each other. This is to say that the resulting feminist epistemologies are *as foundationalist as* their paternal discourses.

Feminist empiricism claims Reason for women, and feminist standpoint epistemology claims women's lives as an objective location. The fact that Harding discards the importance of the work of Chela Sandoval in the production of Donna Haraway's designated postmodern feminist epistemology (King 1994, 146), for instance, is just one effectuation of the process described. It is, however, also an *exemplification* of the unnecessariness of the constitution of a paternal postmodern/post-structuralist discourse on the one hand (a feminist genealogy could have been created),² and the possibility of non-linear generationality on the other (in the 1980s Sandoval was Haraway's graduate student). Due to the competition staged amongst the classes, the feminism that connects the classes as well as the *complex* generationality involved is being disregarded. In Harding's account, feminist epistemology is governed by what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1983, 142) have called an 'exchangist' framework according to which women do not just circulate, but are allowed to circulate (or not) through the hands of men.³ In other words, Harding's work verifies Judith Roof's criticism of the generational dimension of academic feminism:

Importing the full force of Oedipal rivalry, recrimination, and debt, generation is neither an innocent empirical model nor an accurate assessment of a historical reality. Rather, generation reflects and exacerbates Oedipal relations and rivalries among women, relies on a patriarchal understanding of history and a linear, cause-effect narrative, and imports ideologies of property (Roof 1997, 71).

In conclusion, Harding's work is structured by Oedipality, and the *undutifulness* of feminist epistemologists of the second-wave *reinstates* the power/knowledge of male 'fathers'.

Reading Harding's Oedipal conceptualisation of 'undutiful daughterhood' through the work of Braidotti, it becomes clear that Braidotti appropriately labels such a conceptualisation *dutiful* daughterhood instead. In addition, Braidotti's work dismantles Harding's undutiful daughterhood as specifically Anglo-American. In *Patterns of Dissonance* (1991), Braidotti claims that feminists wanting to change bad philosophy rather than philosophy *as such* (a strategy structurally equal to Harding's feminist empiricism) and feminists wanting to re-value the roles patriarchy assigns to women (equal to feminist standpoint theory) both reinforce philosophy 'proper', and—due to the fact that power and knowledge are intricately connected—patriarchy. Following Luce Irigaray, Braidotti calls this pattern 'I think therefore he is' (1991, 174). The solution Braidotti proposes to this non-exhaustive dichotomy does not equal second-wave feminist epistemology's feminist postmodernism. Braidotti labels those feminists that criticise patriarchy and philosophy 'proper' as *undutiful* daughters, those who enact the different option of 'I think therefore *she* is' (1991, 209). In addition, Braidotti follows Teresa de Lauretis, who has claimed that the tendency towards making classifications is to be found amongst *Anglo-American* feminist scholars. These scholars are said to engage themselves with the constitution of dialectically opposing classes, and the construction of progress narratives (feminist epistemology getting more and more sophisticated), whereas European feminist scholars are said to deal with difference *as such* (De Lauretis in Braidotti 1991, 210). The rationale here is that, from the 1980s, French feminists of sexual difference took a different course to their Anglo-American sisters. Rather than Anglo-American reinforcement of the negative effects of generationality and the Oedipal conflict, the French made (the reconceptualisation of) *difference* their main theoretical and political project. French feminist theorists did not move from a so-called universalistic

difference feminism (a standpoint theory) towards a pluralistic or diversified feminism (a feminist ‘postmodernism’). Braidotti (2001) shows that this move is an Anglo-US one that has no direct bearing on the way in which feminist thought has developed in Continental Europe/ France. In the broader field of second-wave feminist epistemology premised on the Franco-American Dis-Connection (Stanton 1980), radical feminists of sexual difference were either read as essentialist and confirming the patriarchal norm through leaving it untouched (another language, another realm, etc.) or they were *not* read at all (Braidotti 1991, 273). The first option is nowadays generally considered a misreading, and a product of Anglo-American dominance.⁴ The second option does no longer play a role; I will shortly show that third-wave feminist epistemology does pick up the ideas of what I claim was an avant-garde movement.

What does the equally specific French undutiful daughterhood look like, generationally? Theorising difference as such entails the following: ‘What characterises them as a distinctive trend (...) is that they sexualize the issue, by positing differences between men and women as the prototype of all differences’ (Braidotti 1991, 210). In the beginning of the second feminist wave, the claiming of space was most important. This space could be claimed within the patriarchal/phallogocentric order or cut off from this order. Sexual difference feminists theorising *positive* rather than asymmetrical, Beauvoirian difference (in Shulamith Firestone’s terms (1971) ‘the dialectic of sex’) rejected both these options as both were said to buy into the Oedipal conflict. By doing so, sexual difference theorists constituted a relation to (dialectical) Oedipality that differs from confirmation either by negation or by being subsumed (for instance through the affirmation of the *pre*-Oedipal). Sexual difference theorists did not constitute a post-

structuralism 'proper' through the negation of unmarked post-structuralist work. Post-structuralist conceptualisations of difference were *broken through* in a manner that Deleuze and Guattari called *an-Oedipal*. The result was the design of *something else*. Braidotti explains that the countering of dutiful, Oedipalised daughterhood by French radical feminists of sexual difference led to 'the idea of a "double militancy", a critical, "different" participation'; that is, different from both non-participation and participation on patriarchal terms as both these options eventually reinforce patriarchy (1991, 176).

In Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) a similar doubleness is employed. Aiming at 'circulation' or 'desiring-production' freed from Oedipalisation, one needs to work through Oedipal territoriality, but also pass or deterritorialise to the an-Oedipal, they claim (1983, 362; 376-337). 'An-Oedipal' deterritorialisation designates non-anthropomorphic circulation rather than anthropomorphic representation according to which all situations (including generational conflict and science) (1983, 350; 371-372) are always already Oedipalised (1983, 308). I read Braidotti's radical feminists of sexual difference as an avant-garde movement illustrating Deleuze and Guattari's an-Oedipal deterritorialisation. Furthermore, I want to claim that the move Braidotti's undutiful daughters made in the 1980s can only now (that is, amidst non-dialectical, *non-foundational* claims of third-wave feminists) be fully understood. Deleuze and Guattari claim that predetermined, Oedipal representation involves an idealism, whereas they plea for non-foundational materialist approaches (1983, 52; 75). It is their argument that that science as well as art are Oedipalised, *but not necessarily so* (1983, 368-372). Some uncanonised writers have the potential to explode or break through Oedipalisation (1983, 134-136). Such

writers do not assume nor determine the Oedipal frame, and work in a *materialist* rather than idealist manner.

As I will show below, the full potential of third-wave feminist epistemology's generational non-dialecticism can be said to be fully realised in the work of new feminist materialists. I will claim that *these* scholars jump generations rather than engaging in the further endorsement of one of the feminist epistemic classes of the second wave, thus confirming their philosophical Masters either by negation or by subsumption. One of the reasons why Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* is important for conceptualising the order of third-wave feminist epistemology involves its deviation from social constructivism or deconstruction which, as I claimed in the beginning of this article, forms the apotheosis of the second-wave feminist epistemological order. Deleuzian feminism as an instantiation of new materialist feminism does not involve the installation of a new Master narrative. Rather it affirms a *transposition* (Braidotti 2006, 5-8) between Deleuzian and feminist theory defined by Braidotti as a 'quest for overcoming dualism and reconnecting life and thought (...) it is a joint commitment to re-thinking subjectivity as an intensive, multiple and discontinuous process of interrelations' (2002, 69). This non-dialectical, non-foundational stance should be seen as advancing my take on the order of third-wave feminist epistemology; that is, a breakthrough of dialectical structures. For the purposes of the argument in this article, I will not pursue the psychoanalytic dimension further, but focus on transposition or jumping generations.

'Jumping Generations' as Methodology

In 'A Critical Genealogy of Feminist Post-Postmodernism', Braidotti has claimed that '[f]eminist philosophers have invented a new brand of materialism, of

the embodied and embedded kind' (2005, 177). She lists Deleuzian feminism and feminist science studies as examples (2005, 178). Her constitution of a new 'brand' of feminist epistemological thought, explicitly linked even to the third feminist wave, goes accompanied by raising 'a qualitative question about the criteria of classification, the use of analytic categories and the canonisation processes' (2005, 177). In this article I am equally passionate about new feminist materialism. I try to provide an answer to the latter question through rethinking the generationality of, and generational change in, the field of feminist epistemology through 'jumping generations' as a manner of affirming and studying feminist genealogies. I want to follow Braidotti in developing new feminist materialism as a few feminist epistemic category, the generational dimension of which is non-dialectical. Engaging in the construction of (new) feminist epistemic categories is, however, not uncontested.

Sarah Bracke and María Puig de la Bellacasa, for instance, speak of the "becoming-a-brand" of feminist conceptualisations (including Harding's picture of feminist epistemological strands)', hinting at feminist epistemologists' complicity with neo-liberalism, and at the (feminist) academic publishing market as intrinsically connected with the capitalist economy (2004, 313). Alison Wylie has been equally critical of feminist epistemologists' practices of categorising feminist thought. Wylie connects to those feminist scholars who have asked 'whether there is any such thing as "standpoint theory": perhaps it is a reification of Harding's field-defining epistemic categories, an unstable (hypothetical) position that mediates between feminist empiricism and oppositional postmodernism' (2004, 340).⁵ Here the 'reality' of epistemic categories is questioned. I want to suggest that Donna Haraway can be used in replying to Bracke and Puig, and Wylie. Feminist epistemology as armchair philosophy can be considered a totalising activity, cut off from 'the real', whereas the

capitalist unlimited creation of feminist epistemological categories or strands can be thought of as relativistic. This is precisely the binary that Haraway addressed in 'Situated Knowledges: *The Science Question in Feminism* and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (1988). Here Haraway convincingly argued that both activities, *also* in their feminist incarnations, are God tricks, and that, as a consequence, *both* should be avoided. The alternative consists of, in Haraway's terms, 'partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology' (1988, 584).

My concern for the rest of this article, then, is to deal with the an-Oedipal, *feminist* generation of *non-classificatory* 'shared conversations' through the theorisation and employment of 'jumping generations'. These conversations are said to form the order of third-wave feminist epistemology. The features of the shared conversation Braidotti has called new materialism, will be dealt with in a systematic manner. Questions key to this undertaking are: how to theorise shared conversations in a non-classificatory (that is, non-dialectical) manner? How do we construct *cartographies* (Braidotti 2002, 3) rather than classifications? In other words, how to disidentify with (Henry 2004, 7) instead of disqualify or naïvely celebrate the generation of classes of feminist epistemological reflection?

I argued above that classifications are characterised by *sequential* negation and by a narrative structure that is *progressive*. Working towards a cartographical mode, a first step is engagement with the temporality of classifications. Elizabeth Grosz has argued that 'limited [or linear] temporality characterises all feminist projects of equalisation and inclusion *as well as* a number of projects within postmodern feminism' (Grosz 2005, 162; emphasis added). As a consequence, '[t]he future of feminism, on this understanding, is limited to the foreseeable and to contesting the

recognised and the known' (Grosz 2005, 162). In other words: Grosz shows that both empiricist and some postmodern feminisms are informed by what she calls a causal theory of time (1998, 55 n. 2), while we tend to think of them as opposite, or *exhaustively* dichotomous. A causal theory of time involves decidability and constraint in the case of empiricism, and undecidability and limitlessness in the case of postmodernism. The conflictual model of generationality is thus part and parcel of Grosz's theorisation of temporality. Grosz argues:

What is needed is the idea of a history of singularity and particularity, a history that defies repeatability or generalization and that welcomes the surprise of the future as it makes clear the specificities and particularities, the events, of history. (2000, 1018).

Grosz thus argues for a take on time comprised of undecidability *and* constraint (1998, 40). The addition notwithstanding, I want to argue that Grosz *bridges* empiricist and postmodern feminism in a manner that is not only quantitative, but engenders a qualitative shift in the light of what was previously considered to be an exhaustive dichotomy. In other words, she argues for a deterritorialisation from a feminist past (one that is made up of conflictual feminist epistemic classes); for breaking through linear temporality both in its feminist empiricist and in its feminist postmodern incarnations. Grosz can be said to argue for overcoming both the constraint recognised by Wylie (feminist epistemological category constitution as a totalising activity) and the limitedless identified by Bracke and Puig (feminist epistemological category constitution as a relativistic activity). I want to theorise the 'bridging' Grosz carries out with the help of jumping generations. Bridging what was conflictual for a previous generation is an instantiation of jumping generations. It leads to shared conversations, and, as I will shortly show, to the new feminist

materialism in particular.

Constituting and employing jumping generations as a methodology for capturing and creating third-wave feminist epistemology, I have borrowed ideas about ‘transposition’ from both Barbara McClintock and Braidotti. Transposition enables the articulation of generative and generational links in terms that differ from causal linearity, in which case origin and destination always already exist instead of them being produced in a relational manner.⁶ ‘Jumping’, that is, is my term for the bridging of ‘classes’ that were previously considered to be incommensurable, while being in fact part of a non-exhaustive dichotomy. It allows for conversations that *cannot* be pinpointed on beforehand, but they are not limitedless either, because of the fact that ‘the specificities and particularities, the events, of history’ (Grosz 2000, 1018), in the case of feminist epistemology the classificatory approach, are not negated nor naïvely celebrated, but intimately yet critically engaged with or simply negotiated. I want to demonstrate here that the order of third-wave feminist epistemology exists of a series of transpositions or jumps resulting in a cartography of new feminist materialism. In Braidotti’s terms:

Resting on the assumption of a fundamental and necessary unity between subject and object, the theory of transpositions offers a contemplative and creative stance that respects the visible and hidden complexities of the very phenomena it attempts to study. This makes it a paradigmatic model for scientific knowledge as a whole, particularly feminist epistemologies, notably the critique of dualistic splits. (2006, 6)

Let me first review existing theories of transposition. With ‘jumping genes’, McClintock has described a way of genetic transfer that qualitatively differs from the idea of *programmed* transfer from one entity to another (Braidotti 2006, 5). Braidotti

explains: “transposition’ refers to processes of genetic mutation, or the transferral of genetic information, which occur in a non linear manner, which is nonetheless neither random nor arbitrary’ (2006, 5). In her biography of McClintock, Evelyn Fox Keller shows that transposition does not work from a centre outwards. Transposition covers a process in which the entire cell is involved; a process that is irregular but systematic (Keller 1983, 121-138). In other words, transposition can be employed to question, analogous to the questioning of the temporality of classifications, their *spaciality*. Braidotti (2002, 3) has claimed that classifications are fixed, not only in time, but also in space, and as such they are unsituated or seemingly universal. Neil Smith (1992) has theorised the transposition of spatial categories; that is, non-linear spatiality. With ‘jumping scale’, Smith tried to show that thinking in terms of successive scales (small to big) is nonsensical. He argues that it is idealistic to assume that the world is dividable in localities (for instance, bodies or neighborhoods), regions, nations, and that a certain boundary exists between earthly and unearthly matter (1992, 60-62). He has documented political art projects and actions ‘providing oppositional means for re-inscribing and reorganizing the urban geography of the city, but they do so in a very specific way. They open new spaces of interaction but not randomly’ (1992, 60). It can be argued that the neologism ‘*glocality*’ is exemplary here as it signifies the bi-implication between the local and the global, and making a difference because of that specific non-random, non-arbitrary relationality. The work of Karen Barad strengthens Smith’s conceptualisation as she stresses the importance of researching the ways in which spaces enfold in, what she calls *intra-action*. ‘Intra-action’ enables a way of thinking that moves beyond the existence of isolated and a priori existing entities that subsequently *start* to *interact*. A predetermined scale can never be *isolated* for *interaction* with another, possibly contradictory predetermined scale.

These are all idealisms and, following Barad, we should be studying the ways in which entities, like spatialities, materialise (Barad 2001, 102). Positionings, wherever projected (on a global or local scale, in past, present or future), are produced in intra-actions. There exists no original (feminist) positioning (second-wave feminist epistemology in general, or one of the feminist epistemic classes in particular) from which we *subsequently* and in the *unmarked here and now* deviate; supposed original and supposed reaction are co-constitutive of one another.

I want to argue that a sustainable and transformative (academic) feminist perspective is a perspective that is an-Oedipal, and that carefully pursues and implements those parts of second-wave feminism—whether feminist empiricism or feminist postmodernism—that are useful for current-day feminist generation. But how to develop an-Oedipal structures and how to avoid being lured back into producing linear forms of temporality and spatiality? My alternative consists of theorising shared conversations through jumping generations. Like Smith's political art projects, there exists the possibility of intra-actively dis-closing feminist positionings that make a difference. It is not beneficial to presuppose the existence of a generation of members of a certain feminist 'wave' or theoretical 'strand' with which a new generation should start to *interact* so as to constitute a new feminist categorisation. Instances of jumping generations produces positionings, which are not essentialist *because* they stem from the seventies nor post-feminist *because* they are articulated today as this would fix feminism in the past, and post-feminism, as its dialectical opposite, in the present. Next, it is not the case that feminism flows from our M/mothers towards us, as the flow cannot be characterised as a one-way track, originating in a feminist centre. Jumping generations enables the abandonment of such a centre, theorises bi-directional running on a single or on multiple tracks,⁷ and stimulates focusing one's

thoughts on current-day problems, and the most useful solutions to them in keeping with past, present, and future. Jumping generations is a methodology with which both linear conceptualisations of time and space, and the trap of non-exhaustive dichotomies *per se*, can be avoided. It enables thinking the new as *generative*, and it avoids the discontentment with feminist epistemological categorising.

I want to argue that current-day questionings of postmodernism's radicalism, undertaken from a new materialist standpoint, employ the full potential of both the non-dialectical order of third-wave feminist epistemology and jumping generations as a methodology. The academic feminist questioning of postmodernism's radicalism has produced a renewed interest in 'matter'. This renewed interest in matter and the material has recently been categorised as a 'new materialism' (Fraser 2002; Hird 2004; Rahman and Witz 2003; Squier and Littlefield, 2004). The interest in matter is generated by scholars emphasising the importance of (the study of) (laboratory) technology, the body, and the effects of globalisation. I claim that questionings of the radicalism of postmodernism have been generated in a non-linear, 'jumping' manner, and that the 'new materialism' effectuated stands in a non-dialectical relation with feminist empiricism *as well as* (non-)relativist feminist postmodernism. I want to engage in the categorisation of this shared conversation, while stressing that the materialism in question should not only be situated in the context of the decline of postmodernism, but also in the context of ongoing production in feminist philosophising which constitutes a next generation. I argue that the new materialism is a materialism that shares characteristics with feminist standpoint theory, while being nonidentical to it. I read new materialism as the result of negotiating traditionally (feminist) empiricist approaches and feminist postmodernism, acknowledging the fact that the latter is often narrowed down to a social constructivism. The new materialism

is produced by the bridging or jumping (undecidability; the unforeseeable) of feminist empiricism and feminist postmodernism (the constraints; the known and recognisable) on the basis of a non-linear theory of time. The new feminist materialism is a *new* materialism (undecidability) but *not* a feminist standpoint theory (constraint). Let me specify two characteristics. Firstly, the new materialist positioning cannot be said to be either historical-materialist or critiquing historical materialism for being gender blind and/or inserting gender into a largely unchanged historical-materialist frame. New materialist scholars negotiate a traditionally realist ‘versus’ a social-constructivist approach to matter, and it is the ‘versus’ that is actually being criticised. Showing similarities between realism and constructivism, theorising this relation as an unreal opposition, allows for transposition. Secondly, the new materialism is a positioning that is neither second-wave feminist nor post-feminist. New materialist feminists do not (fully) identify with second-wave feminism, nor do they buy into a power-feminist rhetoric. Authors such as Sara Ahmed, Karen Barad and Claire Colebrook can be said to engage in the generation of *transversal*, *cross-generational* connections; that is, in the jumping of generations. Their work shows a clear interest in bodies and body politics (how second-wave!), but without traces of essentialism or of its assumed opposite. Their work is non-foundational; they do not adhere to an essential Body nor to something as idealist as Reason.

What does the new materialist conversation consist of in its different yet structurally connected incarnations? Feminist science studies scholar Barad, for starters, argues that *both* traditionally realist approaches to science (assuming the mirror of nature wherein scientific claims reflect nature out there) and social constructivist ones (according to a charged reading, social constructivism assumes the mirror of culture in which scientific claims reflect academic culture) pursue a

correspondence theory of truth. The representationalism shared, then, construes the opposition between realism and constructivism as a non-exhaustive one (Barad 1996, 1998, 2003). Jumping feminist empiricist, *realist* approaches and feminist postmodernist, *constructivist* approaches, Barad designs her ‘agential realism,’ which I would like to argue is structurally related to new materialism. Barad is interested not only in the ways in which the postmodernists theorise ‘how *discourse* comes to matter’ but also in the new materialist question ‘how *matter* comes to matter’ (1998 90-91; original emphasis). Secondly, with Abigail Bray, Deleuzian feminist philosopher Colebrook has argued: ‘a theory of sexual difference that relies on constitutive negation may be best overcome by not turning to the body or attacking representation but by questioning the primacy of the representation/materiality dichotomy (Bray and Colebrook 1998, 54).⁸ While starting from an altogether different theoretical tradition, Colebrook can be said to be building, like Barad, a new materialism on the basis of a bridging of an unreal opposition. This time it is the opposition between the primacy of the body (feminist empiricist realism, and feminist standpoint theory as an identity politics) and the primacy of representation (feminist postmodernism) that is being bridged by trying to break through the primacy of the representation/matter dichotomy; that is, by focusing on immanent philosophies. My third exemplification comes from post-colonial feminist theory. Ahmed provides her readers with a critique of both realist readings of the biological body and social-constructivist readings of the always already cultural body. She claims that *both* biologisms and ‘culturalisms’ assume a certain *inherent* or *pre-determined* body; in both cases a certain body is or has a ‘race,’ for instance. On the basis of biology or culture we always already know what a certain body is, and that is why Ahmed argues that a biologicistic take on the body is as representationalist as a culturalistic take. In the

context of both the biological body and the cultural body, the body can be named as if bodies were *before* the law (Ahmed 2004; 1998, 43). Ahmed bridges mentioned non-exhaustive dichotomy by claiming that bodies materialise or come to matter.

On the basis of the work of these ‘new materialist’ authors, I plea for a reformulation of Harding’s so-called mutually exclusive feminist epistemic categories into categories that can be *selected from*. Harding’s schema is *no longer* providing third-wave feminist epistemologists with a classification of distinct options that respond to one another in a dialectical manner. In their writings, new materialists bridge seemingly opposing categories, and in the process they jump generations. As such, their knowledge theoretical work is *generative* of shared conversations and new, unexpected theorisations; it is not totalising or relativist. Additionally, it is *feminist* work, not allowing for Oedipal structures to govern third-wave knowledge work. The genealogy third-wave feminist epistemologists work with is a genealogy of (academic) feminist productions. I thus follow Braidotti in claiming that in the context of the decline of postmodernism, a new feminist philosophical canon is being built. A new generation of feminist epistemologists assesses both the end of postmodernism, and the canon of academic feminism. This ‘third’ generation stands in a relation to the philosophical canon that is undutiful in Braidotti’s sense of the term and it relates to the canon of feminist epistemology in a way that is other than dialectical. Relating oneself explicitly to the work of a previous generation of feminist scholars, and critically yet intimately assessing that work—that is, disidentifying with that work—the work of the new generation of feminist theorists cannot be said to be governed by a dialecticism. It shows a pattern of jumping generations instead.

Cartography of Third-Wave Feminist Epistemology

‘Third-wave feminist epistemology’ is introduced in this article so as to capture the new order consisting of non-dialectical approaches in the field of feminist knowledge theory. This new order, firstly, allows for the critique of both the installation of a women’s realm (a place secured by patriarchy, women and intuition/spirituality, *not* women and knowledge) and the feminist negation of the philosophical or epistemological malestream (paradoxically resulting in the confirmation of the philosophical Masters). These seeming opposites do not allow for the ‘double militancy’ needed for breaking through Oedipality. Both the so-called undutiful daughters of Harding, and those feminists that are (supposedly) keen on pre-oedipal women’s culture, have not been able to overcome the Oedipal plot. They have confirmed/conformed to the philosophical Masters. By being attentive to feminist desiring-production, rather than to representations buying into/negating the Oedipal conflict, feminism has become non-dialectical. Theories of non-linear temporality and spatiality have been used to make clear how feminism can be *generative* rather than blocked by Oedipalisation (Braidotti 2002, 66) and as such remain *feminist*. The third-wave order in feminist epistemology allows for being attentive to Oedipalised generationality (constraint: ‘Your feminism is seen as having given birth to mine/ours...’) as well as desire-production/ circulation *as such* (undecidability: ‘... but studying it I/we found out that it is not more rudimentary, but simply different from mine/ours’). This double movement, essentially a jump, can explain the fact that Deleuze and Guattari (1983) claim that it is the cracks in the *Oedipal* relation that can unblock an-Oedipal desiring-production and circulation.

I have shown that the order of second-wave feminist epistemology was classificatory in nature. Classifications or taxonomies, also within a feminist context, are *dialectical* charts: x is not y, and y is not z, and z is to be preferred to x and y.

‘Post-classificatory approaches’ (bridging *subsequent* options in an existing classification) do not substantially differ from classificatory ones. The strategies share an (implicit) teleological structure. Both the classificatory and the post-classificatory approach are based on linear theories of time and space and, as such, in both cases the result is unsituated (because predetermined). The ‘current’ class is always already positioned as the most advanced one. A postmodernised feminist standpoint theory,⁹ for instance, is a feminist modernism influenced and *enhanced* by a feminist postmodernism. Following this schema a modernised feminist postmodernism is considered to be logically inconsistent.¹⁰ In other words, neither the classificatory nor the post-classificatory approach allow for unexpected outcomes, i.e. for surprises. I hope to have shown that the recent generation of new materialism cannot be captured by a (post-)classificatory mode. New materialist feminist theorists *bridge* feminist empiricism and feminist social constructivism. A characteristic of the new materialism is that it does *not* involve a postmodernisation of feminist standpoint theory, as this would not necessarily constitute something qualitatively different from feminist standpoint theory nor to the progress narrative structure of second-wave epistemology. New materialists do not build their case on the basis of sequential negation, and a progress narrative structure is not underlying the shared conversation. They thus avoid the spatiotemporal fixity, and the linearity implied in classifications. New materialism has been brought to the fore working on the cracks in the dialecticism of second-wave feminist epistemology, by presenting the three feminist epistemological classes as *sharing* characteristics. The shared conversation of new materialism defines generationality as generative; generative of shared *feminist* conversations between third-wave feminist epistemologists from different interdisciplines, and between third- and second-wave feminist epistemologists.

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Endnotes

¹ See also Genevieve Lloyd (1984).

² Please note that this argument also concerns 'race'/ethnicity. In Harding's work, Haraway gets assigned the role of postmodern/post-structuralist feminist theorist who completes the black feminist disclosure of the racism of second wave movement feminism. For the underlying pattern, see Hemmings (2005, 122).

³ See also Gayle Rubin (1975).

⁴ See, for example, Bronwyn Winter (1997) and Sneja Gunew (2002).

⁵ An example Wylie refers to is Dorothy E. Smith (2004, 263).

⁶ See also Prokhovnik's *Rational woman: A feminist critique of dichotomy* (2002, 43).

⁷ I want to thank Prof. Gail Lewis who, during the 6th European Gender Research Conference in August 2006, stressed the importance of thinking 'multiple tracks' in response to my paper. Lewis pointed out to me that black women stand in a specific generational relation to one another, and simultaneously to white women.

⁸ See also Claire Colebrook (2000).

⁹ See Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2004).

¹⁰ This is not to say that counterexamples do not exist. See, for example, Alison Assiter (1996). What I claim is that these examples will not be noticed by the second-wave or post-second-wave feminist epistemologists.