Introduction

Introduction

Theoretical Points of Departure

Focusing on the contemporary representations of the "witch" as a locus for the cultural negotiation of genders, in this book I revisit some of the most prominent traits in past and current feminist perceptions of exclusion and difference. I examine a selection of twentieth-century North American (U.S. and Canadian) and European narratives to reveal the continued political relevance of metaphors sustained in the fantasy of the "witch," widely thought to belong to pop-cultural or folkloristic formulations of the past. Through a critical rereading of the feminist texts engaging with these metaphors, I develop a new concept of the witch, one that challenges stigmatized forms of sexuality, race, and ethnicity as linked to the margins of culture and monstrous feminine desire. I turn instead to the causes for radical feminist critique of "feminine" sexuality as a fabrication of logocentric thinking, and show that the problematic conversion of the "hag" into a "superwoman" can be interpreted today as a therapeutic performance translating fixed identity into a site of continuous negotiation of the subject in process. Tracing the development of feminist constructs of the witch from 1970s radical texts to the present, I explore the psychoanalytical writings of Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray, as well as Judith Butler's and Rosi Braidotti's feminist reformulations of identity complemented with narrative analyses of different cultural contexts.

While early feminist representations of the "witch" fit into the paradigm of US-American feminists helping their "sisters on the periphery," current feminist theory suggests that sociocultural transformations affected by the recognition of difference cannot simply include only those who are usually excluded. They must equally dislocate the centrality of the dominant subject that is not strictly defined by gender. Radical feminist configurations of the "witch" as a *herstorical* fantasy and as an archaic mother mark a turning point in feminist philosophy by indicating new processes of responding to the nullification of "woman" in the social structure. They allow us to move forward today in contesting metaphorical representations of the female subject by undermining the very structure of female subjectivity, as well as the social relations and collective imagery that preserve these representation. Each of the selected texts in my study attests to a particular relationship between the witch and representation (identity), and enables us to read the self-fashioning of

the witch literally as a language of cultural negotiation, consisting of constant reformulations of negativity and difference. Bringing in this relational dimension, my study demonstrates that despite distinctive cultural, linguistic, and political contexts, common philosophical threads of difference intertwine the various representations of feminist witches. Their cultural and national heterogeneity is thus set to confirm and to unsettle the function of the witch figure as a token for otherness and incompatibility. In fact, as analyzed here, representations of the witch appear to be somewhat confusing, because two apparently contradictory versions are conveyed simultaneously. The first is that the "witch" as a phallogocentric archetypal construct remains intact across time and geographical space. Like the generally shared conception of "woman," this construct is difficult to displace. The second configuration, introduced strategically by specific writers in particular contexts and with different aims and effects, needs to be differentiated from the archetype. I formulate these particular (differentiated) threads as traces of "cultural un/belonging," a term that denotes a cultural topography of the stigmatized body, and engages the political significance of identity with reference to contemporary feminism that challenges the antagonisms between sameness and difference. This political challenge has as much to do with mainstream North American and European capitalist and (post)communist histories as with the specificities of feminist cultures within these histories, to which the concept of "difference" is fundamental.

My objective is to suggest a theoretical framework for explicating the culturally transgressive locations of the witch as representing feminist configurations of identity. The main argument is that the "witch," deployed in the 1970s to convey the diasporic status of a female sexuality as incompatible with the dominant discourse, has undergone significant theoretical transformations over the last three decades. These transformations reflect on central traits in the reformulation of second-wave Continental and Anglo-American feminist thought into current postulates of transnational difference and the heterogeneity of women's agendas. The book gives a detailed and careful mapping of various positions, while focusing on paradigmatic representations of the "witch," her culturally specific identifications, and how they are influenced by the Anglo-American and Continental discourses of gender and difference. The archetypal "witch," simultaneously a particular and peculiar representation of "woman" in Western history and culture, offers one of the most spectacular and complex metaphors for identification with difference. Always already a fantasized sign, her appearance exemplifies Butler's definition of the body as never free of an imaginary construction. Constituted as hysterical and disordered in relation to logocentric structures, the "witch" is suspended at the point of crossing into the unspoken and forbidden. Her speech perverts the language of philosophers; laughter, spells, and evil incantations flow from her grotesque and filthy mouth. Emerging in asymmetric relation to logocentric thought, the "witch" articulates a force for subversion that exceeds her own representation within the philosophical logos. This recognition offers a point of departure for a politically feminist theorizing that chal-

lenges epistemological dichotomies of subject and object, I and the other, or masculine and feminine as central categories of identification.

In reading various narratives emerging from feminist philosophies, I have observed that a distinction between a literary text (a narrative, a fantasy) and a critical or theoretical text is difficult to maintain and persistently displaces itself in auto/biographical, historical, and documentary references. I refer to this tendency as a narrative suspension between fantasy and memory, between auto/biography and fiction, and in the end, between the authenticity and fraud of both the remembering and remembered subject. The second, a question more than a remark, is that despite deconstruction of the category of "woman," there nevertheless remain some universal issues at stake. The question is: for whom? These "issues," along with the treatment of every text (literary or not) as a cultural text, are broached in my analysis of the "witch" as a network of identities, in which somehow, paradoxically, forms of local appropriation, opposition, and resistance contribute to the conceptual dissemination of the archetype. I therefore turn to feminist narrative as a type of theory, as a way to define other theoretical spaces that theory alone does not encompass. The line of argument developed in approaching the fantasy of "witch" parallels both Butler's formulation of "gender as trouble" and Braidotti's definition of "embodied subject." As an ongoing discursive practice the argument is open to interventions within specific cultural and national agendas. For example, the postfeminist proposal to abolish gender as a cultural equivalent to biological sex, a position reminiscent of the anti-sexuality wing of early US-American feminism, does not recognize the transformative power of the feminine in subverting the representational economy of the social order. In opposition to this reduction, Continental philosophers of difference, such as Irigaray and Braidotti, propose to involve a psychoanalytic insight. Sexuality, the materiality of human reproduction, and consequently the kinship system are central to their conception of difference that rests on the combined impact of morphological and social power relations upon the positioning of the subject. The "trouble" with the witch figure (re)created in the 1970s relates to complex feminist beliefs of the alleged mystery of "woman" on the margins of culture. This witch appears as a sudden intrusion of a female subject, who reverses the phallic gaze, contesting the authority of the masculine position. My study creates spaces for discussing both: the tremendous desire to deal with the witch as a troubling gendered category, a woman (but not quite), and the need to dispose of this category. Through the entire book, the argument is developed to elucidate the heterogeneity of feminist thought, as well as to allow representations of the "witch" to have a strong presence in the text itself, to have a voice (voices perhaps) in the text that the reader can clearly discern.

The starting point for my work is a question that I would also place at the center of my theoretical quest: the trace of the "witch"-woman. Corresponding to the "other" as dissociation and incommensurability, the "witch" as a her(m)etic figure offers a philosophical encounter with alterity that extends the boundaries of system towards anarchy. The concept of the trace leads back to the poststructuralist persis-

tence in formulating otherness as negativity (Levinas, Derrida, Lacan), but it also looks into the (feminist) future. Echoing Levinas's philosophical project of "sensibility" elevating otherness and difference above self-identity and presence, Derrida has argued that before any finality can enter a linguistic process (a literary work or a cultural situation) the textual "split" will mark the folly of a/the sign, granting nothing but a *trace*, a hinge, or an *edge* position. Derrida relates this trace to what is at center of Levinas's critique of ontology, that is, a relationship between the knowing subject and the illeity (alterity) of the past that "can never be lived in the originary or modified form of presence" (*Of Grammatology* 42). As a trace of this alienated other, the witch (in the feminist project) becomes a trace of alterity, suggesting an ethical possibility that "begins" in the articulation of that trace. To locate this trace as a feminist strategy, I am specifically turning to Irigaray, Kristeva, Butler, and Braidotti, whose concepts provide central navigating tools from the start. The lack of agreement between these theoreticians on the issue of "sexual difference" is significant and constitutes an important element of my discussion. However, the employed method of thinking is that of convergence of feminist thought, which, in disabling fixed references, shifts our attention towards the interrelations and intersectionality of various feminist positions on the subject of difference.

My theoretical approach focuses on the feminist practice of overthrowing the notion of "difference" as a negative sign of presence permanently inscribed within the dialectics of Self and Other. Irigaray's and Braidotti's poststructuralist philosophies of sexual difference represent these deeply anti-Hegelian positions translated philosophically into the critique of phallogocentric normativity of humanism. Kristeva's "different legality" associated with a provisional, dialogical, but strategically political project also belongs to this line of thought, which, in the context of Anglo-American feminism, culminates in Butler's and Haraway's postulates of the subversion of gender and its (Western) cultural foundations. I enlarge this debate by introducing a postcommunist perspective that builds on the feminist rejection of the illusionary hegemonic Western identity and its opposition to a "substandard" East European identity. What this particular convergence implies is that transnational exchanges of feminist theories/narratives produce "boundary work"—works "on the edge"—that posits the witch as a set of constructs that are both contested and difficult to displace in contemporary representations of women. In order to elucidate this convergence, the witch, in my analysis, goes through the stages that feminism went through: from positing feminist practice as a process developing along with liberal feminist demands of equal access to the symbolic order, towards a radical feminist rejection of phallogocentric sameness, and culminating more recently in a critique of the metaphysical dichotomy between masculine and feminine constructs. Advocating a deconstructive approach to sexual difference, the third (transgender) wave necessarily challenges the very concept of identity; however, its political significance remains in reference to the earlier feminist positions. In this sense, as Butler concludes, there is "no story to be told about how one moves from feminist to queer to trans. The reason there is no story to be told is that none of these stories are the

past: these stories are continuing to happen in simultaneous and overlapping ways as we tell them" (*Undoing Gender* 4). In setting up this relational perspective, the book traces the interactions between feminist theories and narrative (cultural) reformulations of the "witch" into a multiple fantasy of gender, transgression, and un/belonging. These reformulations converge with a number of theoretical concepts, such as resistance, parody, and subversion, and finally lead to the emergence of a subculture as a political form of expression. Although configurations of the contemporary witch have been distilled from various feminist standpoints, three theoretical positions prevail and have their precise chronology, which I subsequently analyze in chapters: 1) as a radical feminist (political) figure representing the culturally subjugated and victimized woman (Daly, Dworkin), and her subsequent *herstorical* reconfiguration into a sovereign, mythic, and powerful "superwoman" (Cixous, Wittig, Gearhart, Walker); 2) as a problematic dialogical figure collapsing into the archaic forms of the presymbolic mother and the phallic monstrous feminine (Kristeva, Creed); and 3) as a borderline phenomenon suspending logocentric discourse and opening thus heterogeneous spaces beyond the accumulation of stigmas, but also beyond the mythic origin, maternal *jouissance*, or femininity (Irigaray, Butler, Braidotti).

Relevant to my comparative cultural studies analysis of these positions is the conceptual confusion of femininity and femaleness. The theoretical use of "feminine," understood as a sociocultural construction of woman's biological body, is differentiated from both "female" and "feminist" (Moi, "Feminist" 120-27). "Femininity" as a cultural construct imposes "naturalized" standards on the biological body ("one is not born a woman, but becomes one" perspective). Seen through this constructionist lens, it is in the logocentric interest that "femininity" and "femaleness" stay thoroughly confused, labeling a nonconforming "woman" *unfeminine* and *unnatural* (Moi, "Feminist" 123). Patriarchy, although increasingly difficult to define, operates in this perspective as a paradigm of institutionalized authority. It is best understood as a sociopolitical structure interwoven with complex cultural framework of kinship that rewards the conforming and stigmatizes undesired forms of sexuality. While patriarchy is a shared target of various forms of feminism, it exhibits different characteristics, which I address along the late capitalist and post/communist axis of difference. The blurred categories of the "feminine"/"female" designation have significant consequences for all feminist interrogations of difference as negativity. Irigaray's position, central to my readings of the "feminine," undercuts the use of feminine persistently defined as the masculine other, the "other of the same" ("Questions" 178). Although sympathetic to Levinas's ethical position, Irigaray reads Levinasian "feminine" "as the underside or reverse side of man's aspiration," as its negative counterbalance. The apprehension of the "feminine" is "not in relation to itself" but "through a purely erotic strategy dictated by masculine pleasure" that underscores this ethical gesture. Consequently, what Irigaray suspects "the philosopher" is seeking is "neither the qualities of the other's flesh nor of his own," but the very same phallogocentric play with cartographies of "elusiveness": "with something other, always inaccessible, always in the future" (178). In this aesthetic play,

Irigaray asserts, "the only function of the feminine other is to satisfy the hungers of the philosopher," to "nourish the intentionality of his pleasure" (179). To satisfy this pleasure, the "feminine" needs to remain marginal, available, at service of the philosophical inquiry. More recent feminist interpretations of Levinas allude extensively to Irigaray's standpoint. The Levinasian "feminine," to follow Tina Chanter, is "a condition of 'slipping away from the light' that interrupts the economy of being, whereby a subject who seeks to know the world ends up negating the otherness of objects and reducing the world to itself." Even with most sensible metaphysics of difference, this economy remains intact (16).

In an addendum to Irigaray's readings, my standpoint with respect to femininity adopts Kristeva's, Butler's, and Braidotti's perspectives, which equally question the philosophical marginality of the feminine subject. The symbolic repression of "femininity," according to these thinkers, is to be viewed in terms of positionality and relationship rather than of essence. Like any other cultural construct, femininity and masculinity are shifting *positions* (see Kristeva), fantasies, parodies (Butler) or metamorphoses (Braidotti). If there is anything right in Beauvoir's claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it is that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, ongoing construction. This positional perspective offers an escape from biology (on this, see Moi; Fraser), but it does not resolve the complexity of "sexual difference." Activating a deconstructive approach to sexual difference, recent feminist positions necessarily challenge the very notion of gender identity (Butler), however, their political usefulness is maintained in reference to the feminist past. In this sense, feminist positions, past or contemporary, must be simultaneous. Advocating the "postfeminist" (or third-wave) position as "exclusive of the first two is to lose touch with the political reality of feminism," but more importantly perhaps it is to realize that "labels," such as "femininity," "masculinity," "feminism," or "sexuality," are categories operated for specific political reasons (Moi, "Feminist" 132). The employment of a positional simultaneity is thus a necessary intellectual strategy for any of the feminist futures. What it offers is a perception of sexuality as a physio-social fantasy combining nature and culture into a form of (repressed) supplementation. As defined by Irmtraud Morgner (one of the authors selected for this study), "sexuality is a precious state of unrest that makes erotic relations possible, not only towards people, but also toward landscapes, sounds, colors, smells—phenomena of this world in general. Without sexuality, there would be no enthusiasm, no intellectual passion, no *esprit*" ("Making Use" 277). Definitions proposed here are thus intended for debate, although they also delineate the ground on which the debate might effectively be staged: identity, marginality, and cultural transgression are the issues of this exploration.

Narratives through the Lens of Trans/feminist Debates

Within the theoretical and methodological framework of comparative cultural studies, I focus on the contextual comparison of literary and theoretical texts across languages and cultures, in particular of less-known literatures (on the framework of

comparative cultural studies, see Tötösy de Zepetnek). The choice of narratives is based on my personal experience with Central and East European and North American (U.S. and Canada) theoretical and literary contexts, and my ongoing nomadic interest in cross-cultural encounters. The narratives, written in the English, German, and Polish, have been selected from numerous contemporary stories about witchlike characters that I have come across or that were suggested to me at different stages of my project. This rather transitory research pattern has allowed me to introduce several less-known Continental women authors into the widely discussed North American feminist context. Their narratives, mostly untranslated, and therefore inaccessible to English-language readers, provide a striking literary parallel to the contemporary Continental and North American feminist voices. They demonstrate clearly that feminist representations of witches are not exclusive to Anglo-American or French-language literatures; however, their relation to second-wave feminism is different because of their culturally distinct contexts. My selection creates space for discussion on what these heterogeneous narratives have in common, what their references to witches convey, and whether they are attributable to different cultural traditions, political systems, and feminist ideologies. While writers' biographies are not central to my analysis, the particular contexts in which they write is relevant, and thus their culturally specific agenda as well as their relationship to Western European and North American feminist frameworks will be addressed. Within this relational context, I examine the ways in which the selected authors (as it happens, all having academic backgrounds) interact with feminist knowledge. The literary works serve as equilibrium in a field of theoretical (representational) writing. As "boundary work," this interaction points to some important convergences of French/European and North American influences, although these "national" divisions are inadequate, and should not limit the diversity of feminist approaches, whether US-American, French-Bulgarian, or Polish-German. Neither is this "coming together" to be confused with globalized methods of sisterhood that invokes internationality at best ambiguously, but it is set to draw our attention to boundaries delineating similarities among the various embodied subjectivities precisely through their claims of difference. In all these senses, my work follows one of the main principles of comparative cultural studies, namely the nonessentialist, that is, nonnational approach to literature and culture.

The earliest narratives I analyze, Andrea Dworkin's *Woman-Hating* (1974), Mary Daly's *Gyn/ecology* (1978), and Sally Gearhart's *Wanderground* (1984), are US-American publications representing a radical multigeneric criticism of patriarchal culture. In these formulations, the witch (or woman's alterity) becomes a central strategic signifier, a crucial metaphor for *herstorically* transmitted "female" values. The body contours, metaphors, and parodies providing reference for these formulations are the Middle Ages and Renaissance projections of the witch either as an evil crone who impersonates the mother, kidnaps and devours children, or as a powerful and dangerous seductress, the mythical *vagina dentata*. The identity principle, in a fierce opposition to the dominant discourse, is crucial to this early political

practice. Brought into a dialogue with Alice Walker's African American fantasies of gender and Irmtraud Morgner's East German publication from the same period, they are conveyed as narratives of cultural healing and therapies in process. These therapies intermingle in the second chapter with the methods used by "correcting" figures (doctors, hypnotists, psychoanalysts) and "unconscious" returns (see Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*) to the presymbolic maternal space that have also contributed to women's exclusion from culture. In this identification with the loss of the mother, rather than the loss of the phallus, the "witch" is redesignated as an "archaic" mother, the fantasy of the semiotic *chora,* and the feminist revision of the Freudian *unconscious* (hereafter, this psychoanalytical reference appears in italics). The archaic maternal body is no longer marked by "symbolic castration" but by "the real incision" evoked by the cutting of the umbilical cord, deferred and perpetuated by the presence of the scar, the navel. This psychoanalytical context allows me to compare contemporary Polish texts with such narratives as *Alias Grace* (1996) by Margaret Atwood, or short stories by Sara Maitland and Angela Carter, who likewise emphasize the crucial importance of sexuality in the formation of subjectivity. The Polish novels represent a so-called "postcommunist" feminism, formulated as a decisive counterreaction to "socialist emancipation" (as represented by Morgner's text, produced in the secular atmosphere of East German culture). There are few such literary examples from Poland, since this type of socialist fiction was believed to fall into the category of communist propaganda. Although Krystyna Kofta, one of the Polish authors discussed, began her literary career at the height of communism in Poland, she published without a feminist label. Her novel, *Złodziejka pamięci* ("Thief of Memories";1998), belongs to the postfeminist stance of a younger generation of women writers, represented also by Olga Tokarczuk, the acclaimed author of *Dom dzienny, dom nocny* ("The Day House, the Night House"; 1998), and a less known but promising author of *Siostra* ("*Sister"*; 1996), Małgorzata Saramonowicz.

In the "postcommunist" discourse, two distinct sociocultural developments are present. On the one hand, an increasing masculinization of the political and scientific arenas impacts the management of the social and the most private aspects of women's lives: abortion is illegal, and contraception and divorce are discouraged by Catholic dogmas. There is a return to social policies based on marriage and the family as primary to women's identities. On the other hand, the growing popularity of "intellectual" feminism, borrowed from US-American and French second-wave feminist positions, encourages a local "digging into" a collective "feminist" past. The texts selected for discussion belong to a category that visibly draws on Irigaray's theories, and displays preoccupations with the failure of the sexual revolution and with theorizing women's difference as a source of cultural possibility rather than a source of oppression. Equally these texts reflect on the Western feminist formulations of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as a discourse normalizing patriarchy, as well as on reevaluations of hysteria as the unheard voice of the woman whose language is reduced to psychosomatic symptoms (as in Tokarczuk's novels). What hinders my analysis is the relatively limited theory related to Polish feminist

history, or its resistance to Western feminism perceived as a monolithic antimale stance. In this respect, I follow Barbara Einhorn (1993) and attribute Central and East European antipathy to feminism to previous experiences with socialist slogans and the neoliberal association of feminists with "physically unattractive" and frustrated women unnecessarily politizing every aspect of life. Indeed, the few politically active women wear the stigma of being elected on the basis of quotas and are viewed by the majority as political tokens. Also, a tradition of refusal, "refusal of propaganda, ideology, political messianism, big liberatory ideas" (Busheikin 14), as part of the Central and East European psyche is certainly felt in Polish feminist context, and more generally in Central Europe. Discussions often become frustrated by the theoretical imperialism of Western discourse (on this, see Nash; Busheikin; Einhorn), and the exclusion of untranslated opinions and voices. In this sense, it is more accurate to describe "postcommunist" women's contribution (or attitudes) to gender debates as "different" rather than noncollaborative with those in the West.

An interesting parallel can be made to African American feminist attempts to define their own culturally specific place within the debates, preoccupied by two closely related questions: What is the relationship between Black feminist criticism and rather Eurocentric forms of poststructuralism, and how should this criticism proceed with a cultural translation of African fantasies and myths? Both questions refer to issues of essentialism and difference, demonstrating an attempt to widen the discipline for the actual voice of the differentiated. However, the problem of elucidating "different" gender sensitivity and perhaps even consciousness is itself problematic, because it is measured in relation to the "same," more established or familiar, Western scenarios that in themselves are far from monolithic. In fact, Western feminism has split into "a large collection of single-issue organizations that press for feminist aims in many different accents" (Walter 44). British feminism, for example, for which the postcolonial question is of central importance, and is relevant in the context of Carter's and Maitland's texts, "grew rapidly as a mass movement [from the late 1960s], peaking in the mid-1970s before dissolving as a coherent organization by the end of that decade" (Segal 9). According to prevailing European convictions, "explanations of cultural difference do not produce a greater understanding or make differences any less real" (Strathern 29), while many women seem to return to and value their roles as mothers and wives, and do not want to be involved in political decision-making (see Nash; Sempruch). Precisely in this light of "dissolving" feminist tradition, I discuss the most recent (Western) German narratives (Korte's and Finckenstein's) that contribute to recognition of the "inadequacies" of the US-American sexual revolution, raising acute questions to present-day third-wave feminists.

Bringing out the effects of these two preceding contexts, namely the valorised *herstorical* rewritings of the "witch" as a fantasy of a "superwoman" and the "witch" as an archaic mother, the texts analyzed in the final chapter propose an encounter with "cultural un/belonging" and suspensions of identity in the process of "becoming." Like gender, the terms ethnicity and race refer to culturally sanctioned but arbitrarily defined categories within the social rather than universal biological

conditions. Ethnicity, clearly intersecting with nationality and race, refers to a cultural orientation shaped by specific traditions and historical experiences: "Just as the usage of 'gender' has, until recently, implied a focus on women while masculinity remained the invisible norm, the usage of 'race' and 'ethnicity' has connoted a focus on people of color, as if persons in the white mainstream had no race" (Warhol and Herndl 741). To take any of these constructs for granted implies a retreat to the principle of self-sameness, into futile attempts to return to an origin: "Where and how does it begin…? But a meditation upon the trace should undoubtedly teach us that there is no origin, that is to say simple origin; that the questions of origin carry with them a metaphysics of presence" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 46). In this metaphysical framework, feminism involves the constitution and organization of collective memories and desires as well as resistance and consciousness of becoming-a-subject. The trace of the "witch," as discussed in the final chapter, becomes a complex interplay of social and symbolic forces: the "witch" is no longer an essence, let alone a biological substance, but a play of constructs within a complex web of social obligations. Emerging thus as a necessarily dialogical figure, the "witch" represents the split identity of the "embodied subject" that negotiates between subconscious and conscious drives, between repressed and released desires, between the condensation of maternal physiology and social dis/placement. Finally, texts written out of (or representing) particular cultures, such as issues of race and oppression in relation to gender in Morrison's *Paradise* (1998) or nationalist and sexist agendas in Polish texts, intertwine spaces of gender fantasy with age, ethnicity, and religion. Postcolonial and psychoanalytic theories of "othering" are relevant in both cases. A comparative perspective, juxtaposing Morrison's novel with Carter's "Impressions: The Wrightsman Magdalene" (1996) and "Black Venus" (1985), emphasizes the ambiguity or interchangeability of racial roles. Interestingly, these roles go beyond cultural stereotyping of the gendered body to posit women's collective crossing of boundaries and territorial borders as modes of delineating identities that are not exclusively national, gendered, or racial. Rather, their differential positions need to be acknowledged in terms of ideologies of locations, i.e., locally defined social divisions, collective memories, spirituality, or ambivalent family relations.

Consequently, the feminist theory discussed in the final chapter of the book occupies a noncompliant but vulnerable position of negotiating between patriarchy and resistance to it, between the social order and the "unspoken" semiotic territories of the maternal and the sacred. The identity transgressions, or borderline status, as emerging from these negotiating spaces offer the most convincing elements of the discussion, and build theoretical meeting points between Kristeva's, Irigaray's, Butler's, and Braidotti's stances that all seek to destabilize specific codes of logocentric culture. In the end, the question that reoccurs throughout the book is that of how to maintain the complexity of the models proposed while approaching them comparatively. What emerges as central to each of the considered views is that feminist actions do not need to be instituted from some stable, unified gender identity, since every category has in itself a definitional incompleteness. The very form of feminist

coalitional politics emerges thus as a multiplicity of positions from which one no longer speaks as a/the Woman. Indeed, the positions represented here are upheld by a split (divided) subject, even a pluralized subject that occupies politically mobile places. The "witch" figure represents such a divided subject, a fantasy deployed to convey the transgressive status of the category of "woman" and gender in general. This position reinvests the concept of fantasy as un/belonging with the strategic purpose of transgressing the confining territories of culture and therefore contesting its restrictions. It undermines the very negativity of un/belonging while bringing it into a dialogue with belonging, and can therefore be seen as a theory of cultural negotiation. I close this introduction with positively transgressive readings of difference, addressed most prominently by Irigaray and Braidotti. In these feminist readings, the subject of feminism is no longer "a/the woman" as a specular other of the universal masculinity, but "rather a complex and multi-layered embodied subject who has taken her distance from the institution of femininity" (Braidotti, *Metamorphoses* 11). Most certainly, there is an imprint of history on that "embodied subject": her traveling through centuries of subordination, silence, and negativity. This historical dimension of difference has left a permanent scar on the present feminist posture. Although a/the woman "may no longer be a she but a subject of quite another story," a "subject-in-process, a mutant, the other of the Other" (12), whoever "she" may come to be today, she wears this scar all along: the repressed past of her patriarchal duties. The ultimate inquiry thus, pertaining to the political meaning of the scar, is how to read it today, without losing its complex relationship with history and its multiple potentials for the "embodied subject." The theoretical approach and concepts presented in these introductory remarks will frame the discussion of selected texts in the three chapters to follow.