

Toward a Coalitional Subject in Contemporary American Feminist Literature

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Abstract : Coalition politics has been one of feminists' persistent concerns. Following recent feminist discussion on new modes of affiliation across difference, she will explore how the process of female subject formation depends on alliances across different cultural locations. First, she will examine how coalition politics is reformulated across difference in contemporary feminist literature. In particular, the paper will identify the particular contexts and locations in which coalition building both enables and constrains the female subject. She will attempt to explore how contemporary feminist literature highlights the possibilities and limitations for solidarity and affiliations. To understand coalition politics in contemporary feminist works, she will engage in close readings of two texts: Rebecca Walker's *Black, White and Jewish: Memoir of a Shifting Self* and Danzy Senna's *Caucasia*. Both Walker and Senna have articulated the complex nodes of identity that are staged by a politics of location as they refuse to be boxed into simplistic essentialist positions. Their texts are characterized by the characters' racial ambiguity and their social and geographical mobility of life in the contemporary United States. Their experiences of living through conflictual and contradictory relationships never fully fit the boundaries of racial categorization. Each of these texts demonstrates the limits as well as the possibilities of working with diversity among and within persons and groups, thus, laying the ground for complex alliance formation. Because each of the protagonists must negotiate a set of contradictions, they will have to constantly shift their affiliations. Rather than construct a static alliance, they describe a process of moving 'beyond boundaries,' an embracing of multiple locations. As self-identified third wavers, Rebecca Walker and Danzy Senna have been identified and marked with the status of 'leader' by the feminist establishment and by mainstream U.S. media. Their texts have captured both mass popularity and critical attention in the feminist and, often, the non-feminist literary community. By analyzing these texts, she will show how contemporary American feminist literature reveals coalition politics which is fraught with complications and unintended consequences. Taken as a whole, then, these works provide an important examination not only of coalition politics of American feminism, but also a snapshot of a central debate among feminist critique of coalition politics as a whole.

Keywords : coalition politics, contemporary women's literature, identity, female subject

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