

Lecture Series on Contemporary Theories Feminist Criticism: Lecture 7

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Feminist Criticism

Black Feminist or Feminist of Colour: Alice Walker (b. 1944) *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (1983)

Main Ideas:

Walker defined a “womanist” as a black feminist or feminist of color. The term comes from the black folk expression of mothers to female children, ‘You acting womanish’, referring to grown-up behavior. The womanish girl exhibits willful, courageous, and outrageous behavior that is considered to be beyond the scope of societal norms.

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She goes on to say that a womanist is also:

A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility ... and women's strength. ... Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health ... Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit ... Loves struggle. *Loves* the folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*.
Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender

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According to Walker, while feminism is incorporated into womanism, it is also instinctively pro-humankind; womanism is a broader category that includes feminism as a subtype. The focus of the theology is not on gender inequality, but race- and class-based oppression. She sees womanism as a theory/movement for the survival of the black race; a theory that takes into consideration the experiences of black women, black culture, black myths, spiritual life, and orality.

(Fighting “double marginalization”)

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Ecofeminism:

This branch of feminism is much more spiritual than political or theoretical in nature. It may or may not be wrapped up with Goddess worship and vegetarianism. Its basic tenet is that a patriarchal society will exploit its resources without regard to long term consequences as a direct result of the attitudes fostered in a patriarchal/hierarchical society. Parallels are often drawn between society's treatment of the environment, animals, or resources and its treatment of women. In resisting patriarchal culture, eco-feminists feel that they are also resisting plundering and destroying the Earth. And vice-versa.

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Ecofeminism: Sherry B. Ortner (b. 1941) “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” (1974)

Main Ideas:

In “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” Sherry Ortner defends and further explains a previous essay she wrote where she describes and explains the concept of “universal male dominance.” Her previous writing said that universal male dominance arises from the way females are closer to nature through reproduction and child-rearing and males are closer to culture through production of enduring objects.

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The essay concludes that male dominance is not based on female/male, nature/culture and is not accurate to say culture dominates nature, because not all cultures view the relationship this way.

Domination is not intentional and genders can have separate realms of power.

Still, she generally views men dominating women.

(Some of the content has been taken from open sources on Internet)