Feminism, Queer Theory, and the Politics of Representation

This list attempts to trace a series of culturally situated conversations about feminism, queer theory, and queer-of-color critique concerning the politics of representation. Spanning the late 1980s to the present, some of these conversations are simultaneous; others are outgrowths of—or challenges to—feminist and queer interventions made at earlier moments. Although these critical texts are grappling with a number of epistemological questions, one stands out for me: how can feminists ethically represent gender or sexuality in relation to race, ethnicity, and nation, or vice versa? Alongside responses to that question, I have included a number of canonical feminist texts that implicitly fail to grapple with issues of race, ethnicity, and/or nationality when making arguments about women’s rights. To what extent has canonical feminism risked replicating white Western femininity as a universal standard for articulation around the world? What –isms (sexisms, racisms, etc.), Western prejudices, and universalizing impulses continue to characterize queer theory in the contemporary moment? And how have feminist and queer theorists from outside of the West or within the margins of Western academia endeavored to decenter a hegemonic politics of representing gender and sexuality in their local contexts? In order to contextualize these theories, I have framed the list with a few culturally situated and contemporaneous works of fiction. As a feminist and queer scholar of postcolonial literature, I hope to strengthen my understanding of the ways in which questions of representation concerning alterity, epistemological violence, hegemony, positionality, and universality resonate within and across cultures of academic criticism.

Primary Sources
2. (1987) Toni Morrison, Beloved
3. (1990) Lauretta Ngcobo, And They Didn’t Die
4. (1990) Jamaica Kincaid, Lucy

Critical Theory
1. (1952/1967) Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (selections)
5. (1982) Barbara Smith, Gloria T. Hull, & Patricia Bell Scott (eds.), All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men: But Some of Us Are Brave (selections)
8. (1984) bell hooks, Feminist Theory from Margin to Center
12. (1989) Trinh T. Minh-ha, Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism
15. (1990) Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (selections)
16. (1991) Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is about You” in Touching Feeling
20. (1994) Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism” in The Location of Culture
29. (2005) J. Jack Halberstam, In a Queer Time and Place (selections)
32. (2007) Jasbir Puar, Terrorist Assemblages (selections)
35. (2009) José Esteban Muñoz, Cruising Utopia (selections)