“Women” as the Subject of Feminism

But must there be a Womankind? A female Heart and female Mind? For Feminism to exist then must there be a Second Sex? If Feminism’s greatest goals are liberated gender roles then Gender we presume as given—it is the base from which we’re driven. This Woman then would constitute the prosecutor of our suit and she’s the one politically whom we are serving fervently and She’s the one we’d represent with Feminism’s argument. Yet “Politics” is no sure term nor “Representing” very firm.
Well Representing helps, it’s true to win a Civil Right or two but it oppresses us as well. A man-made mold or iron shell it must distort what it would show (at least that’s how I read Rousseau). But we have tried to represent this Woman to her betterment—to find a language or discourse that we could use as a resource to make this Gender visible and make our protest critical. Indeed there’s some necessity in razing visibility since Woman’s life is not presented in ways with which we’re well contented. And so it seems we need a Woman—the a priori Subject given. Yet Woman is no longer stable—a term whose standing’s now ill-able—because there is of course debate on what by “Woman” we’d relate for surely there aren’t Absolutes nor Truth that “Woman” constitutes.

Now first of all there is some doubt on what the Subject’s all about. I’m sure by now that you will know the theories of Michel Foucault, who claims that Power will create
the Subjects it would subjugate. This Power works by prohibition, by regulation, limitation and discipline for our protection (perhaps with choices and election) and so its Subjects are controlled as Power shapes them in its mold, for it defines and then produces these Subjects for its certain uses. If this be true then we must ask what is the “Subject” of our task?

If Feminism takes as given that there are Subjects known as women, how can we trust this formulation that’s simply Power’s machination? In fact the Subject whom we’d free is Power’s Subjectivity. This system made those very Subjects according to its rules, and its checks dictate those terms, so we will find that we are caught up in a bind.

The Subject is the question crucial. It is to Feminism central because the Subject is included by what is otherwise excluded. It is created by Repression and so it makes up our Oppression. The chains that bind it once it’s rationed
hide beneath the form that’s fashioned. Repressive practices don’t “show” (at least that’s how I read Foucault). And so the Subject’s a construction that’s made by Politics’ production. And when we think of Politics in terms of States and their Subjects, we would conceal the operations of Power and its own relations. The legal forces must invent the Subjects whom they’d represent. The Law produces and conceals the Subject who to Law appeals. This “Subject before Law” is prized as premise that is naturalized— this process magnificently making Law’s legitimacy. And so it’s not enough to try correcting Patriarchy’s lie by finding ways to represent this Woman with good faith intent by showing literarily this Subject more compellingly. For we must also undertake a study of the things that make this Woman as a Category and Subject whose goals liberatory we would support, but who’s produced by structures we’ve not yet deduced.
So when we ask about this Subject who stands before the Law’s strict compact now we must entertain the thought that actually the Subject’s not. Perhaps it is just fictional, a myth or construct cynical?

The Law makes fables that would trick us, ascribing reality status to Law and its dutiful subjects who stand before the Law’s strict precepts.

The Feminists who speak of women would act as if one thing is given, and yet the term is hardly stable—to mean one thing it is ill-able—nor can command the strong assent of those whom it would represent. For what we would a Woman call is more than that, since it’s not all—not everything that she would be. The term’s not used exhaustively and Gender is not constituted coherently but convoluted particular to Time and Place, to Class or else to different Race. For clearly Gender intersects with Race and Class and Creed and Sex and every which Identity we formulate discursively!
And so it’s not yet possible to keep this Gender in control. It’s caught in many intersections and mired in interconnections. For Feminism then the case is there’s no one universal basis. And there is no Identity that can exist cross-culturally.

To say it somewhat with more candor: there’s not just one form of Oppressor. A patriarchy universal as concept isn’t all that useful because so many different contexts there are in which Oppression exists. Nor can we look at the specifics to find examples of our concepts, thus making them illustrations of principles that beg our questions.

We’re quick to label as one status the Patriarchy’s weight upon us in order that we show the wisdom of the claims of Feminism. So as a shortcut we created a Woman who is dominated by a force that’s universal—a Subject who is shared by all.
A universal Patriarchy 
appears now like so much malarkey. 
And yet this other concept—Woman—
is waiting still to be disproven. 
Can Woman ever preexist 
Oppressor’s grinding her to grist? 
Or is it just in nation States 
where Woman as a group relates? 
Will Woman always be defined 
against and within male Mankind? 
And is there any Feminine 
that every Woman has within? 
Some Essence that’s not Masculine— 
a Universal Feminine? 
Within the Gender Binary 
sits Woman in her finery 
and yet without that boundary 
no females have camaraderie. 
Whatever specificity 
accrues to Femininity 
is cut off analytically 
and ghettoized politically 
from every which Identity 
like Class and Race/Ethnicity 
and so the so-called Unity 
of Woman’s Subjectivity 
is filled with ambiguity 
and riddled with disunity. 
Of course the source of all its force? 
Representational discourse!
Now has this sketch exploratory destabilized the category of Woman seen as seamless set a notion we must now reject. And these domains exclusionary reveal of course the regulatory consequences of the construction when put to our emancipation. Indeed there is much fragmentation in Feminism’s coalition and even there’s some opposition from women whose representation would never fit so seamlessly in Feminist femininity. If Feminism’s the suggestion that there is a Representation for all of those Feminist Subjects whom Feminism itself thus constructs, then this has had the consequence of failing those constituents whom Feminism represents not giving an accounting for Representation’s power hoard.

We can’t appeal to Strategy to justify this Category as though for purposes strategic this Woman needs must be our Subject. All strategies will mean much more than what they are intended for
and in this case exclusion might be an unintended Exigency: by having fixed a stable Subject, Representation’s a false project.

Of course we cannot just refuse Representation. We must use the Language and the Norms today which make the field on which we play. There is no place outside this locus. Therefore its practice is our focus. We must address in any event what Marx termed “historical present” and so within the present frame our task will be to give a name to features of the Binary which would construct the Category in structures now contemporary which certain Selves would naturalize and others would immobilize.

So now within our Politics which some would call “post-feminist” we must interrogate this given—the subjects who are known as “women.” We must critique this entity which is human Identity and track the Genealogy of Gender as Ontology. Then with smarter formulation
we can advance representation. We necessarily critique the theory feminist and seek escape from the necessity of holding an Identity. To pose a rhetorical question: Isn’t it actually the notion of the category of Woman that thwarts goals of Representation? Or perhaps it’s that the Construction of the category of Woman is made partly through regulation and serves as a reification of what is a gendered relation? Is Gender’s categorization heterosexualization? Is Feminism not contrary to reify the category? If Gender as a stable notion can be no longer our foundation then we must probe the nitty-gritty and question Gender Identity. Now if we make Identity a problematic entity then we might trace politically what forces work juridically and seek a Genealogy of the very Ontology and set out in our inquiry to deconstruct the Binary that forms the Gender category.