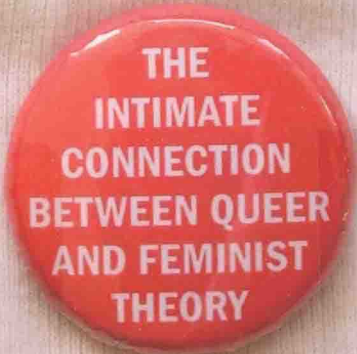
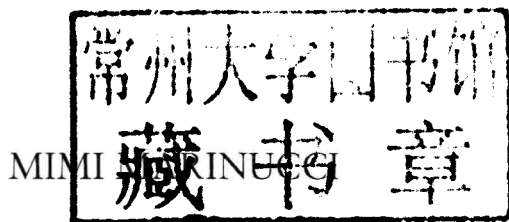


MARNUCCI



FEMINISM IS QUEER

The intimate connection
between queer and feminist theory



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FEMINISM IS QUEER

About the Author

Mimi Marinucci completed a PhD in philosophy and a graduate certificate in women's studies from Temple University in 2000. Currently serving as associate professor of philosophy and women's and gender studies at Eastern Washington University, Marinucci teaches courses on feminism, philosophy, and feminist philosophy. Marinucci, who is especially interested in the subjective and social aspects of knowledge production, particularly knowledge produced around issues of gender and sexuality, is the author of several articles that employ references from popular culture in the service of a more scholarly agenda. Examples include 'There's Something Queer About The Onion' (forthcoming in *The Onion and Philosophy*, edited by Sharon Kaye), 'What's Wrong with Porn?' (in *Porn – Philosophy for Everyone: How to Think with Kink*, edited by Dave Monroe), 'Television, Generation X, and Third Wave Feminism: A Contextual Analysis of the Brady Bunch' (*Journal of Popular Culture*, Volume 38, Number 3, February 2005), and 'Feminism and the Ethics of Violence: Why Buffy Kicks Ass' (in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale*, edited by James B. South). Marinucci is also the founding editor of *Wave 2.5: A Feminist Zine*, a two-time Utne Independent Press Award nominee (2005, 2009).

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understanding of who I am as a teacher, a philosopher, and a person, and also for helping me to develop my understanding of teaching philosophy and doing philosophy as complementary practices, rather than competing or conflicting activities. Indeed, while much of the work for this project was done during a 2007–2008 sabbatical from teaching, generously funded by Eastern Washington University, most of it was done in direct connection with my teaching. I have benefited from discussions with students in many of my classes, most notably ‘GLBT Studies’ and, more recently, ‘Queer Theory’, which I offered for the first time in the spring quarter of 2010. The students in this course graciously read the chapters of this manuscript, occasionally as unedited first drafts, providing formative feedback and welcome encouragement along the way. Over the past several years, many students, including some I now count among my friends and colleagues, have contributed substantially to my understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality. One such example is Kenny Capps, who served as a teaching assistant for my ‘GLBT Studies’ course in the fall quarter of 2006. Others include Megan Cuilla, Sali McNamee (now Sayler), and Kimberly Stankovich, with whom I collaborated on a ‘Constructed Identities’ panel for the Queer ID Conference at Boise State University in October 2006. I am also grateful for conversations, some more recent than others, with Michael Barrett, Willow Moline, Krista Benson, and countless others.

Before I even knew what it meant, my friend Jeff Thorpe accused me of being a philosopher. Almost thirty years later, I now understand how remarkable it was, first, that someone knew me well enough to accurately project the trajectory of my adult life and, second, that I had a friend who liked me because of, rather than in spite of, my penchant for analysis and deconstruction. I am fortunate to have the support of a few other equally remarkable friends, including Jeff Wootten, Kim Rosenthal Budner, and Polly Buckingham. Polly Buckingham also deserves special thanks for teaching me that the surest way to get my work published is to submit my work for publication.

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When the adventurers reassembled upon the roof it was found that a remarkably queer assortment of articles had been selected by the various members of the party. No one seemed to have a very clear idea of what was required, but all had brought something.

(L. Frank Baum, *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, p.67)

Preface

Not Just the New 'Gay'

It was a queerly assorted company, indeed, for there are more quaint and unusual characters in Oz than in all the rest of the world, and Ozma was more interested in unusual people than in ordinary ones – just as you and I are.

(L. Frank Baum, *The Magic of Oz*, p.568)

Once considered quite offensive, 'queer' is now used with increasing regularity, often as a straightforward alternative to 'gay'. Consider, for example, its use in the title of the recent HBO hit *Queer as Folk*, which featured a group of friends comprised mostly of gay-identified men, or Bravo's *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (later just *Queer Eye*), which featured fashion and lifestyle advice from, again, a group of gay-identified men. While I am neither naive enough nor arrogant enough to suppose that 'queer' admits of just one interpretation, namely the one I happen to provide, I do recognize that the casual trend of replacing 'gay' with 'queer' ignores some important theoretical work aimed at exposing the representational limitations of 'gay' and the comparable representational richness of 'queer'. I also recognize that the oversimplification of complicated concepts in the popular media is a sure sign that the larger culture is at least vaguely aware of those concepts. This book aims to provide background and context for those who are curious about the recent insertion of 'queer' into polite vernacular. This book also aims to provide background and context for those who encounter 'queer' in scholarly writing that is often so mired in technical jargon that it may seem utterly meaningless to the uninitiated.

Introductory texts in gender studies, sometimes identified as women's studies or feminist studies, address gender identity. Introductory texts

in sexuality studies, sometimes identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender studies (or LGBT studies), address sexual identity. Unfortunately, however, introductory texts situated at the intersection of gender identity and sexual identity are rare. This book is, in part, an attempt to fill that gap, and could therefore serve as a text for any course of study, be it in a university setting or in the context of independent scholarship, directed towards the examination of virtually any aspect of gender, sex, and sexuality.

The structure of this book makes it useful for readers at different levels and from different fields. While the chapters and sections of this book fit together as interconnected components of a coherent whole, they can also be read separately. Those who choose to read chapters or sections out of context or out of order should refer to the appendix as needed. Potentially unfamiliar terminology is carefully explained, often in footnotes, as it occurs throughout the text, and these explanations are in turn collected in the appendix, which is aptly titled 'Terms and Concepts'. This manner of presentation allows readers who do not require additional background information to read the main text with minimal interruption, while simultaneously offering helpful explication for those who need it. This is especially useful given that one of the greatest challenges in teaching queer theory, which is inherently interdisciplinary, is the varying degree of student familiarity with relevant background concepts. This often leads students to seek definitions, either from a dictionary or from the instructor. Unfortunately, dictionary definitions, which are detached from the specific context in which the terms occur, often do very little to promote understanding of specialized academic terminology. Indeed, queer theory resists the reductionist practice of pretending that it is possible to delineate, once and for all, the necessary and sufficient conditions for membership in any given category. Nevertheless, it is often necessary to provide an entering wedge for the uninitiated. Presenting contextualized explanations in the form of commentary and discussion provides this entering wedge without thereby pretending to offer a fixed or final account of that which is always and inevitably in a state of flux.

The book is divided into three main sections and a shorter fourth section. The first section, 'Sexuality', consists of three chapters, including Chapter 1, 'The Social Construction of Sexuality'; Chapter 2, 'The Social History of Lesbian and Gay Identity'; and Chapter 3, 'Queer Alternatives'. Chapter 1 summarizes the emergence of the various concepts of sexuality and sexual identity that exist in contemporary western culture, and compares them with concepts employed throughout history and across cultures. Chapter 2 traces the relatively recent emergence, first of gay identity, and then of lesbian identity. Chapter 3 then introduces queer identity as an alternative to more familiar categories of sexual identity, which usually concentrate on sexual partner choice and ignore the many other subtleties surrounding sexual pleasure and desire. The second

section, 'Sex', consists of Chapter 4, 'Unwelcome Interventions', and Chapter 5, 'Welcome Transformations'. While Chapter 4 examines the role of medical technology in enforcing a boundary between female and male bodies, particularly in the case of intersex bodies, Chapter 5 explores the implications of this boundary enforcement for transgender people. The third section, 'Gender', consists of Chapter 6, 'Gender Defined and Undefined', and Chapter 7, 'Feminism Examined and Explored'. Chapter 6 examines the concept of gender, especially its role in linguistic contexts. Chapter 7 summarizes the various attitudes concerning gender and gender oppression collected under the banner of feminism. The fourth and final section, 'Queer Feminism', contains just one chapter, namely Chapter 8, titled 'Notes Toward a Queer Feminism', which explores what a queer approach to feminism might involve. I should note that although it is useful as a rough and ready way of organizing a potentially overwhelming body of material, the division of this material into sections on sexuality, sex, and gender is rather imprecise given the intimate interconnections between and among these concepts.

For those seeking only a brief introduction to queer theory, feminism, or the connections between them, this book, or even individual sections or chapters of this book, may be sufficient. For those seeking a more detailed explanation of these ideas and issues, each chapter provides a list of additional resources, including scholarly books and articles, as well as audio-visual material and works of fiction. Instead of recommending obscure material that the average reader would be unable to access, I have made an effort, whenever possible, to recommend material that is fairly easy to come by, for example in online sources or widely reprinted in various anthologies. I have included videos and novels for the dual purpose of providing relevant information and examples, while simultaneously implementing my understanding that people are sometimes better able to learn new material when it is presented in a variety of different formats.

I did not cover all of the material that I could have, and my decisions about what to include and what to exclude are largely the product of my own introduction to this literature. 'It is a delusion', notes Sandra Harding, 'to think that human thought could completely erase the fingerprints that reveal its production process' (Harding, 1993, p.57). This is the case with the representation of any subject matter, and therefore it is likewise the case, not only with queer theory and feminist theory in general, but also with my own representation of queer theory and feminist theory in particular. Although queer theory and feminist theory are both informed by lived experience and grass-roots activism, much of their development has taken place inside the ivory towers of academia. Insofar as queer theory and feminist theory constitute academic projects, they are inevitably covered with the fingerprints of race and class privilege. My presentation of this subject matter is no exception,

reflecting the conditions of race and class privilege that characterize my experience as a white, middle-class, US woman with a PhD in philosophy and the security of a tenured university professorship.

Although I do not delve deeply into issues of race and class, this does not mean that queer theory and feminist theory have no bearing on issues of race and class, nor does it mean that issues of race and class have no bearing on queer theory and feminist theory. As discussed in Chapter 8, much of the appeal of queer theory and at least some forms of feminist theory is that, while ostensibly about gender, sex, and sexuality, they likewise comprise a critique of what Karen Warren (2000) refers to as the 'logic of domination', which attempts to justify the systematic subordination of those who lack power by those who possess it. Queer theory and feminist theory thus invite a critical analysis of racism, capitalism, globalization, and other expressions of the logic of domination. To the extent that a critical analysis of racism, capitalism, globalization, or anything else, can contribute to an understanding of the logic of domination, it thereby contributes to both queer theory and feminist theory.

Subtle but powerful expressions of the logic of domination are prevalent in the ordinary use of the English language, but I have taken care throughout this text to avoid unnecessarily oppressive turns of phrase. I resist what is sometimes referred to as ableist language, for example, by avoiding visual and auditory metaphors such as 'seeing' the point and 'listening' to reason. Instead, I reserve visual and auditory references for those fairly rare contexts in which vision or hearing is actually relevant to the ideas that I aim to express. This is analogous to avoiding allegedly generic uses of 'man' and 'men', as discussed in Chapter 6, and instead reserving those terms for contexts in which sex and gender are of some relevance. I also avoid the use of unnecessary bodily metaphors, such as 'standing up' for a cause. In addition, I resist the use of binary language by avoiding the gender pronouns 'he', 'she', 'him', 'his', and 'her', and I resist the use of universalizing language by avoiding the plural pronouns 'we' and 'our'. I also resist oppositional language by avoiding such expressions as 'arguably', and 'on the contrary'.

Throughout this book, I have attempted to avoid what Janice Moulton (1996) refers to as the adversary paradigm.

Under the Adversary Paradigm, it is assumed that the only, or at any rate, the best, way of evaluating work in philosophy is to subject it to the strongest or most extreme opposition. And it is assumed that the best way of presenting work in philosophy is to address it to an imagined opponent and muster all the evidence one can to support it.

(Moulton, 1996, p.14)

I therefore avoid the customary practice of offering premises in support of a clearly articulated conclusion, and then defending that conclusion by arguing against any concerns my opponents, real or imagined, would be likely to raise. Insofar as this manner of presentation disrupts the presumably stable meaning of what philosophical reasoning entails, it can be understood as an example of *queering*. This will be discussed in more detail later, but for now I will borrow from Krista Benson (2010) the delightfully simple explanation that queer theory is the recognition that ‘shit’s complicated’. Queering thus refers to the process of complicating something, and it is not necessarily limited to sexual contexts. Indeed, it is queer to do philosophy without making arguments. It is likewise queer to live in ways that challenge deeply held assumptions about gender, sex, and sexuality. Thus, queer encompasses even those who do not identify as homosexual (or even as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender), but find that we are nevertheless incapable of occupying the compact spaces to which our cultural prescriptions regarding gender, sex, and sexuality have assigned us.

My interest in queering the philosophical process notwithstanding, I also aim to produce work that is both academically rigorous and philosophically significant. Toward this end, I have provided information that I take to be relevant in establishing context and background that will, hopefully, help readers understand how I arrived at a position I characterize in Chapter 8 as queer feminism. Because queer feminism supports the simultaneous viability of multiple forms of feminism, however, I have found it unnecessary to defend this form of feminism against other forms of feminism. While I could have geared my discussion toward an imaginary opponent who does not accept the legitimacy of any form of feminism, I opted instead to address my comments to the people I believe to be my likeliest readers: namely, those with an existing interest in theories of gender, sex, and sexuality.

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SECTION I

SEXUALITY

'Dear me! Aren't you feeling a little queer, just now?'
Dorothy asked the Patchwork Girl.

(L. Frank Baum, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, p.295)

