
THEORIES of the AESTHETIC

RETHINKING CURRICULA IN PHILOSOPHIES OF THE ARTS AND CULTURE



MONIQUE ROELOFS

Amherst College &
Hampshire College

Overview

The concept of the *aesthetic* is among the chief notions in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Theorists of color, critical philosophers of race, and postcolonial, feminist, queer, and disability theorists have subjected this concept to implicit and explicit critiques. Among these critiques are discussions that revise conceptions of the body, culture, experience, normativity and value, aesthetic concepts, and the role of universality and difference at the core of theories of the aesthetic. Conjoining texts on these themes, this project gives teachers and students the tools to reflectively engage one of the principal notions in aesthetics and philosophies of the arts and of culture.

The annotated bibliography that follows juxtaposes mainstream work on the concept of the aesthetic with approaches challenging philosophy to rethink and adjust significant tenets of traditional theories of the aesthetic, on the grounds of their connections with systemic forms of difference and identity. Thus, the project purports to promote an up-to-date curriculum for teaching a fundamental concept in aesthetics, cultural theory, and philosophies of art.

Reading Modules

Ten reading modules develop sub-themes within the broad thematic of theories of the aesthetic. The modules have been designed for use in an array of courses. Most obviously, these include introductory and advanced courses in aesthetics and the philosophies of arts and culture. Further, modules are relevant to courses in art and ethics, art and politics, eighteenth-century aesthetics, analytical aesthetics, continental aesthetics, and aesthetics and race, among other topics.

While most of the modules will be suitable to being taught independently from one another, multiple modules build on one another, and can be combined, if it is so wished, in accordance with the methods and aims of specific courses.

Reconfiguring difference in philosophical aesthetics

In selecting its **sources**, the project aims to balance three goals:

1. To assemble a repertoire of writings by members of underrepresented groups and from non-European traditions that casts light on the philosophical concept of the aesthetic, and to situate these writings at the core of our theorizing on the aesthetic, where they indeed belong.
2. To do justice to a body of literature the philosophical relevance of which has not yet been sufficiently recognized. The bibliography features sources the implications of which for the notion of the aesthetic have been downplayed in mainstream aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Foregrounding these texts will shift teachers' and students' sense of the ramifications of principal philosophical ideas about the notion of the aesthetic.
3. To create thought-provoking thematic clusters and unexpected groupings of texts. With this last aim, the project not only seeks to allow the intrinsic excitement of the material to shine forth, but to avoid

A Shifting Field; Interweaving Agendas

The project seeks to embody difference in the field of theories of the aesthetic in the following five respects:

1. It broadens and deepens the range of considerations that are typically brought to bear on theories of the aesthetic, particularly in view of the structural asymmetries that historically divide social groups.
2. It explores mainstream philosophical conceptions pertaining to the notion of the aesthetic in light of a crucial set of writings by members of underrepresented groups. While many of these texts have been written by non-philosophers, this work clearly has philosophical implications and speaks to philosophical assumptions and concepts. Along with the cluster descriptions and the thematic organization of the bibliography, the annotations signal the philosophical relevance of each of the sources.
3. The reading list features numerous analyses that focus on artworks by members of underrepresented groups and from non-European traditions (including Asian, Asian-American, African, African American, Native American, Arab, Latin American, Caribbean and Latina/o, traditions).
4. Combining multiple theoretical vocabularies and analytical methods in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, the reading list focuses on philosophical topics pertaining centrally to the aesthetic positioning of underrepresented as well as of dominant social groups, and to intellectual and artistic traditions from the Global South.
5. The reading list brings together writings by scholars of underrepresented groups whose approaches are not usually seen as involving interconnected theoretical perspectives. The project thus will achieve a rearrangement of the philosophical terrain surrounding theories of the aesthetic. Particularly noteworthy will be the inclusion of queer of color and de- and postcolonial analyses that are infrequently acknowledged in mainstream philosophical aesthetics.

Method; Reach

Aesthetic theory is a historically embedded form of narration, interpretation, and concept building. Each text selected here contributes unique insights, styles, and motifs to our inquiries into the aesthetic. While I have wanted to address gaps in philosophical aesthetic theorizing, significant lacunae inevitably remain. The list of readings is far from exhaustive. The materials for the modules have been chosen for their relevance to our themes, and for the ways in which they work together. The bibliography, hence, reveals a certain eclecticism and contingency. Rather than narrowing the scope of debate, this outlook, I hope, serves to open up questions and precipitate further queries.

Note on the 2020 update:

I have retained the original 2015 project, adding an 11th module in 2020.

generating new kinds of unwarranted homogenization, and to avert forms of exoticization and paternalism. Through a carefully tailored choice of theorists and topics, and by highlighting surprising intertextual crosscurrents, the project aims for a curriculum that fosters the creation of rigorous and innovative philosophical perspectives.

Author bio

Monique Roelofs is Karl Loewenstein Fellow and Visiting Professor of Political Science at Amherst College and Professor of Philosophy at Hampshire College. She teaches and writes on the connection between aesthetics and politics with a focus on dynamics of race, gender, coloniality, and the global. Her book *Arts of Address: Being Alive to Language and the World* appeared with Columbia UP in 2020. Roelofs is the author of *The Cultural Promise of the Aesthetic* (2014; paperback 2015) and has published articles in journals such as *Hypatia*, *Confluencia*, *differences*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, *M/m Print Plus Platform*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *Flash Art*. Current projects include a new monograph on address, a coauthored book on temporality and aesthetics in Latin(x) America, and a coedited collection on Black Aesthetics.

Annotated Bibliography

Ten Modules on the Aesthetic

1. The aesthetic: history and critique

Two fundamental outlooks in the traditional Western history of aesthetics:

Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (1757)

Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790)

Both texts lay grounds for understandings of aesthetic normativity, meaning, and experience.

Views that reconceptualize pillars of the aesthetic on account of its imbrications with colonial, racial, and class domination, and with neoliberal systems of communication:

Wynter, “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’”

The aesthetic as a culturally operative, symbolic phenomenon. A critique of false universalism in aesthetics. Toward a transcultural aesthetic framework, applicable to the human species as a whole.

Richard, Introduction to *Cultural Residues*

The aesthetic as working in tension and collaboration with culture and politics to reintroduce fractures and experiential complexity to homogenized languages of the market.

Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

Situates racism and racialization at the core of modern European aesthetics, modernity, and the modern Western subject. Black modern countercultures that intertwine ethical, aesthetic, and political dimensions as located simultaneously inside and outside Western modernity.

Mignolo, “Delinking”

Advocates dissolving the ties between modernity and coloniality. Theorizes alternative, negated philosophical and artistic traditions, ones that take a critical distance from the aesthetic and political groundings of Western modernity.

References

Hume, David. “Of the Standard of Taste” [1757]. In *Selected Essays*. Ed. S. Copley and A. Edgar. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. [1790] Ed. Paul Guyer. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.

Wynter, Sylvia. “Rethinking ‘Aesthetics’: Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice.” In *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*. Ed. Mbye Cham. Trenton, NJ: Africa World P, 1992. 237-79.

Richard, Nelly. Introduction to *Cultural Residues: Chile in Translation*. Trans. Alan West-Durán and Theodore Quester. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2004.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993. [For a short selection, see Ch. 1].

Mignolo, Walter D. “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality, and the Grammar of De-Coloniality.” *Cultural Studies* 21, 2-3 (2007): 449-514.

2. Culture, nation, and the global

Theorizing culture beyond frameworks that reify conceptions of the global North and South, nation and empire, tradition and modernity:

Spivak, Introduction to *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*

Locates aesthetic possibilities for critical agency in late capitalist, data-driven information societies in a training of the imagination, forms of reading, and the negotiation of double binds.

Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”

Cultural identities and practices as positionalities, that is, as transformative, contextually situated processes of becoming, involving a politics. In particular, Caribbean identities as evolving in dialogical engagement with African, European, and “New World,” or American traditions.

Bhabha, “DissemiNation”

Culture and nation as disjunctive processes of differentiation: identifications and differences are under production; sites of critical aesthetic agency can be found in forms of cultural translation.

3. Aesthetic normativity and value

On the implications of systemic, asymmetrical social and institutional conditions for questions of aesthetic normativity and value.

Korsmeyer, “Perceptions, Pleasures, Arts”

A discussion of challenges to the allegedly universal scope of aesthetic value. On the culturally specific character of aesthetic perception and of art’s presumed public standing. Points to the false universalism characterizing historical notions of the aesthetic in view of their links with gender, class, race, and nationality.

Cooper, “The Negro as Presented in American Literature”

Describes freedom as a condition for the creation of beauty in the arts. Offers a critique of white and black people’s aesthetic standards. Emphasizes the need for a realistic view of self and (racial) others on the part of black people, in order to create truthful, authentic portrayals of black lives and to develop adequate aesthetic standards.

References

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. Introduction to *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012.

Hall, Stuart. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. 392-403.

Bhabha, Homi K. “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation.” In *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

References

Korsmeyer, Carolyn. “Perceptions, Pleasures, Arts: Considering Aesthetics.” In *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*. Ed. Janet A. Kourany. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. 145-172.

Cooper, Anna Julia. “The Negro as Presented in American Literature.” [1892] In *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*. Ed. Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.

Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art”

Recognition of the value of black art as a condition for recognition of the humanity of black people. Structural racism as an impediment to the evaluation and development of black arts. Freedom, bodily self-respect, and justice as conditions for aesthetic judgment on the part of black people. On the need for whites and blacks to acquire tenable criteria of aesthetic evaluation.

Rama, *The Lettered City*

Writing and literature as instruments of colonial rule and political control, and as sources of urban architecture in Latin America from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Modernization on a model that inverts European norms of urbanization. Documents the changing function of the “lettered city” in constructing norms for community life.

Du Bois, W. E. B. “Criteria of Negro Art.” [1926] In *Writings*. Ed. Nathan Higgins. New York: The Library of America.

Rama, Angel. *The Lettered City*. Ed. and Trans. John Charles Chasteen. Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 1996. [For a short selection, see Chs. 1-3.]

4. Theorizing difference in culture and the arts

Intersectional approaches to social difference in and beyond the arts (though without necessarily using the term “intersectionality”):

Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex”

An intersectional perspective on social difference that opposes understandings of difference as a threat. A rejection of what are often called single-axis views. Toward new modes of relating across differences.

Hall, “New Ethnicities”

Delineates a new cultural politics of difference that takes into account the culturally constructed nature of blackness and the heterogeneity of black subjective positions, experiences and identities. Develops implications for the politics of art criticism and interpretation.

Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation”

Global culture as decentered. According to Enwezor, in this article, the multiplicity of contemporary art is resistant to totalizing models, reveals fractured networks of artistic production and reception, and eludes grasp in terms of a single modernity.

References

Lorde, Audre. “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.” In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing, 1984.

Hall, Stuart. “New Ethnicities.” In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. New York: Routledge, 1996. 441-49

Enwezor, Okwui. “The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition.” In *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*. Ed. Terry Smith, Okwui Enwezor, and Nancy Condee. Durham, N.C., Duke UP, 2008. 207-34.

5. Race, ethnicity, and the aesthetic

Views that explore the links between race and aesthetics.

Davis, *Blues Legacies*

A reading of the racial, class, gender, and sexual politics of women's blues as black feminist aesthetic interventions into the social and musical fabric.

Ortega, "Exiled Space, In-Between Space"

The racialization and gendering of space as a dimension of human beings' interdependence with space. The space of exile as a space and time of in-betweenness, which harbors an uncanny coincidence of absence and presence, familiarity and the unfamiliar. Ana Mendieta's art and work by other Latina artists as disclosing exilic space and time. On the centrality of these artists' specific positionalities to their work.

Chow, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

On conceptions of race and ethnicity as dimensions of a division of labor, patterns of knowledge formation, and constructions of culture within a biopolitical organization of the social body. Liberal disaffiliations from brutal forms of racism as generative biopolitical forces within this system. Notions of protest as corollaries of universal moral principles and as merging with the dynamics of global capital.

James, "Contort Yourself"

Analyzes disorienting, rhythmically and formally contorting, noisy music that makes whites aware of structures of racial privilege conditioning their aesthetic tastes, challenges those structures, and acclimates whites to forms of disorientation occurring when white dominance diminishes.

Gooding-Williams, *Look, A Negro!*

Critical analyses of cultural productions, philosophical writings, and contemporary conditions (such as multiculturalism and the Simi Valley trial of police officers in the case of the Rodney King beating) speak to the workings of interlinking aesthetic and racial forms, as marking and marked by gender, sexuality, and class. Formulates a notion of racial ideology and outlines modes of ideology critique it necessitates.

Taylor, *Black is Beautiful*

A philosophical account of black aesthetics as a whole, one that recognizes the centrality of race to modernity. Centers black aesthetics in artistic, critical, and theoretical explorations of the role of expressive practices in the creation and maintenance of

References

Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billy Holiday*. New York: Random House, 1998. [For a short selection, see the introduction and one of the chapters.]

Ortega, Mariana. "Exiled Space, In-Between Space: Existential Spatiality in Ana Mendieta's *Siluetas* Series." *Philosophy and Geography* 7.1 (2004): 24-41.

Chow, Rey. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. [For a short selection, see the introduction and Ch. 1.]

James, Robin. "Contort Yourself: Music, Whiteness, and the Politics of Disorientation." In *White Self-Criticality beyond Antiracism: How Does it Feel to Be a White Problem?* Ed. George Yancy. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015.

Gooding-Williams, Robert. *Look, A Negro! Philosophical Essays on Race, Culture and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2006. [For a short selection, see Chs. 1 and 6.]

Taylor, Paul C. *Black is Beautiful: A Philosophy of Black Aesthetics*. Malden,

black life worlds. Investigates themes that emerge in this field, such as questions about authenticity, appropriation, forms of black invisibility, racialized beauty judgments, and features of black music.

MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Forthcoming.
[For a short selection, see Ch. 1.]

6. Class, taste, and the market

On the powers of taste as a force within contemporary class-inflected market economies.

DuCille, “Toy Theory: Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference”

Manufacturers of consumer goods play into racialized and gendered preferences for their products, while also generating consumer desires. On the production and marketing of differences, similarities, role models, and both looking-like-me and looking-unlike-me experiences, through toys and games.

Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation”

In a globalized, postcolonial world, in which the role of curators and art exhibitions has been transformed, the idea of a singular locus of taste and ground for aesthetic judgment loses its applicability.

Mariátegui, “Literature on Trial”

Toward an analytical framework for interpreting and evaluating Peruvian literature, an account that recognizes the connections between the aesthetic and the political, and the aesthetic and the economic. Indigenism, which seeks to repair economic and political injustice, as a vital national current.

Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants*

Aesthetics and economics as developing in tandem and informing one another. The emergence of the modern individual as the subject of insatiable desires. Documents the shift, after the 1870s, from a view of *homo economicus* as a productive agent to the notion of a consumer endowed with taste, and the attendant loss of a critical tension between the universal and the historical. Contrasts this notion with alternative nineteenth-century models.

References

DuCille, Ann. “Toy Theory, Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference.” In *Skin Trade*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996.

Enwezor, Okwui. “The Postcolonial Constellation.” In *Antinomies of Art and Culture* (see Module 4).

Mariátegui, José Carlos. “Literature on Trial.” [1928] In *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*. Trans. Marjory Urquidi. Austin: U Texas P, 1971.

Gagnier, Regenia. *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*. Chicago: U Chicago P, 2000. [For a short selection, see the introduction and Ch. 1.]

7. Gender, details, and the future

On the aesthetic functioning of details, constructions of time, and orientations toward the future.

Schor, *Reading in Detail*

The gendered character of the aesthetic surfaces in the status of the detail. On the historically pervasive associations of the detail with pejorative kinds of femininity, and the question of how the detail's transvaluation in the twentieth-century affects its gendering.

Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*

On the worlds promised by queerness in the aesthetic realm. Queer aesthetics as rejecting the present in favor of possibilities for a different universe and as mapping future social relations, in contradistinction to the phantasmatic future imagined through and in the forms of heterosexual reproduction.

Freeman, *Time Binds*

On queer temporalities in the arts and culture. Nonsequential pieces of time as embodying structures of belonging and becoming that elude normalized, coordinated slots of quick and slow tempos, of labor and leisure times. Aesthetic rearrangements of detail that open up and bend dominant forms of Western modernity.

References

Schor, Naomi. *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and The Feminine*. New York: Methuen, 1987. [For a short selection, see the introduction and Chs. 1-2.]

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York UP, 2009. [For a short selection, see the introduction and Ch. 1.]

Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. [For a short selection, see Preface, Introduction, Ch. 1, and Coda.]

8. The body, sexuality, and the aesthetic

The body and sexuality as sites and forces of aesthetic differentiation.

Fanon, "The Facts of Blackness"

Racialization takes effect at the level of the body. Aesthetic meanings and perceptions play a part in such racialization and are affected by it.

Ahmed, "The Skin of the Community"

Spaces assume a racial character, in part, through the corporeal workings of affects, such as disgust, love, and hate, and through perceptions of bodies as familiar or strange. The idea of the nation, rather than being abstract, tends to be tied to specific bodies and to histories of bodily encounters.

hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance"

A critique of white male practices of sexual commodification of racial others. Problematizes white desires to selectively

References

Fanon, Frantz. "The Facts of Blackness." In *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove, 1967.

Ahmed, Sara. "The Skin of the Community: Affect and Boundary Formation." In *Revolt, Affect, Collectivity: The Unstable Boundaries of Kristeva's Polis*. Ed. Tina Chanter and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek. Albany: SUNY P, 2005. 95-111.

hooks, bell. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Black looks: Race and*

appropriate aspects of black, Native American, Asian, and Middle-Eastern culture in consumerist regimes of experience that require otherness to take recognizable forms.

Musser, *Sensational Flesh*

Theorizing structures of sensation that embody difference and that throw light on the experience of existing in a space between agency and subjectlessness. Possibilities for subversive desubjectification, resistance to domination, as well as privileged forms of enmeshment in power. Masochism as an aesthetic category.

Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy*

A view of gender and blackness as sites of potential aesthetic, bodily, erotic, and sexual pleasure and possibility, rather than of mere violation creates space for readings of black women's ecstatic pleasures in viewing racialized pornography. An analysis of complex performances of blackness that can excite as well as wound, pushing aesthetic interpretations beyond exposures of injury and narratives of recovery.

Representation. Boston: South End, 1992.

Musser, Amber Jamilla. *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism*. New York: New York UP, 2014. [For a short selection, see Introduction, Ch. 1, and Conclusion.]

Nash, Jennifer C. *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014. [For a short selection, see the introduction and conclusion.]

9. Rethinking aesthetic experience

Divergent approaches to aesthetic experience:

Johnson, "'Aesthetic' and 'Rapport' in Toni Morrison's *Sula*"

Aesthetic experience as a site of ambivalence: the risk, fascinations, and politics of aesthetic transformations of the horrific into the pleasurable, the violent into the beautiful, and mourning into nostalgia.

Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Understands aesthetic experiences of objects, places, narratives, images, and performances beyond the cartographies of Western art and, specifically in a Chicana context, as involving cosmologies, spiritualities, mythologies, and social functions, and as enmeshed in communities and everyday practices.

Kuppers, "Visions of Anatomy"

A critique of enlightenment regimes of vision that make the disabled body invisible, and remove bodies from their daily contexts. An embrace of fantasy, epistemic opacity, and the phenomenal experience of having a disease as dimensions of alternative modes of looking.

References

Johnson, Barbara. "'Aesthetic' and 'Rapport' in Toni Morrison's *Sula*". In *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race, and Gender*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. "Thilli, Tlapalli / The Path of the Red and Black Ink." In *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.

Kuppers, Petra. "Visions of Anatomy: Exhibitions and Dense Bodies." *differences* 15.3 (2004): 123-156.

10. Revising aesthetic concepts

Toward an expanded and revised repertoire of aesthetic concepts, that is, of the value-laden, experiential categories that structure aesthetic apprehension and meaning, such as, for example, notions of beauty and the grotesque.

Cheng, “Shine”

Shine as a dimension of racialized bodily performance that displaces the skin, self-commodifies, and enacts a form of nonsubjective agency, inciting spectatorial fantasies of subjectivity.

Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*

The zany, the cute, and the interesting as signaling ambivalent aesthetic experiences inherent in contemporary processes of production, consumption, and circulation in late capitalist societies, societies in which distinctions between work and play erode, the artwork and the commodity are close, and art and theory intermesh.

Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*

The imperfect, the transient, and the insufficient as indexing difficult aesthetic qualities pervading human lives and the world. The *wabi* tea ceremony as an occasion for bringing about these qualities and appreciating and celebrating them. Limits attaching to these kinds of valuation and creation in everyday circumstances in contrast to primarily artistic contexts.

Pérez, *Chicana Art*

The ephemeral, the unseen, and the half-present as embodying spiritual elements connoting nonmaterial, either divine or socially ghosted forms and meanings. Work by Chicana feminist artists that challenges dominant views of rationality, puts pressure on racialized gender and sexual inequities, points toward more egalitarian social arrangements, and enacts multiple conceptual frameworks and the tensions among them.

References

Cheng, Anne Anlin. “Shine: on Race, Glamour, and the Modern.” *PMLA* 126.4 (2011): 1022-41.

Ngai, Sianne. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012. [For a short selection, see the introduction.]

Saito, Yuriko. Introduction and “Everyday Aesthetic Qualities and Transience.” In *Everyday Aesthetics*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.

Pérez, Laura E. *Chicana Art: The Politics of Spiritual and Aesthetic Altarities*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007. [For a short selection, see the introduction, conclusion, and one of the chapters.]

11. Selection of Works, 2020

Maitra, *Identity, Mediation, and the Cunning of Capital*

Taking up aesthetic controversies such as the debates around Dana Schutz's painting *Open Casket* and a billboard by Sharad Haksar critical of the Coca-Cola Company, this book argues that identity involves splitting mediations (linguistic, visual, auditory, tactile, institutional) employed to shifting ends by capitalism. Identity requires ongoing processes of critical aesthetic reading alert to the politics of these mediations. A call for interdisciplinary inquiry.

Damião, "Woman as Constellation"

Traces the notion of woman as a constellation, comprising dissonant images in tension, in writings by Benjamin. Marks a transgender aspect. A transdisciplinary epistemic and aesthetic method of interpretation emerges that, while acknowledging essentialist and naturalized views, puts them into motion and uncovers proximities between aesthetics and figurations of femininity.

Chu, "On Liking Women"

For Chu, she states, "liking women" has been indistinguishable from her desire "to be like them." She mentions the role of aesthetic judgment in transitioning and in feminist political stances. Article pushes back against grand lines of feminist historiography, while signaling the fear of the ungovernability of desire in political lesbianism and trans-exclusionary feminism.

Sheth, *The Production of Acceptable Women in the United States*

Within U.S. liberalism, "unruly subjects," who violate the default hegemonic social and aesthetic norms marking "good" liberal citizens, are constructed as threats. Procedures of neoliberal governmentality centered on the hijab produce "unruly" and "good" Muslim female citizens by reference to what count as suitable secular women. A cultural aesthetic drawing on economic and sociopolitical forces conditions expansions and contractions of acceptability.

Cheng, *Ornamentalism*

Analyzes the distinctive racialization and gendering of Asiatic femininity in the form of ornamental personhood. A constitutive dimension of modern aesthetic constructions of subjectivity and materiality, ornamentalism entails an amalgamation of person and thing. This kind of "perihuman" existence puts pressure on modern notions of agency and flesh, the central and the peripheral, subject and object, interiority and exteriority, real individual and synthetic formation.

References

Maitra, Ani. *Identity, Mediation, and the Cunning of Capital*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020. [For a short selection, see the introduction, conclusion, and one of the chapters.]

Damião, Carla Milani, "Woman as Constellation in Walter Benjamin's Aesthetics." *Estetyka i Krytyka: The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* 41 (2016): 119-33.

Chu, Andrea Long, "On Liking Women." *n + 1*, issue 30 (2018). <https://nplusonemag.com/issue-30/essays/on-liking-women/>

Sheth, Falguni A., "The Production of Acceptable Muslim Women in the United States." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 77.4 (2019): 411-22.

Cheng, Anne Anlin, *Ornamentalism*. Oxford UP, 2019. [For a short selection, see the preface, introduction, coda, and one of the chapters.]

Acknowledgments

This project was funded through a 2015/2020 Curriculum Diversification Grant awarded by the American Society for Aesthetics. I would like to thank all those involved in revisioning aesthetics over the years for this opportunity. Thanks to my students at Amherst College and Hampshire College for the curiosity, imagination, and intellectual eagerness they bring to the aesthetics-politics classroom and for their readiness to delve into philosophy, political theory, and the arts. Thank you Norman S. Holland, Mariana Ortega, and Elizabeth V. Spelman for helpful feedback. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the American Society for Aesthetics.