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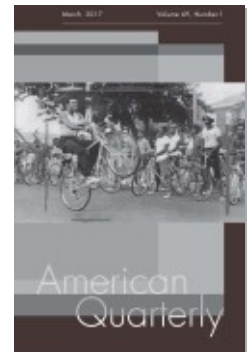
## Intersectionality and Its Discontents

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# Intersectionality and Its Discontents

*Jennifer C. Nash*

***Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons.* By Anna Carastathis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. 300 pages. \$55.00 (cloth).**

***Intersectionality (Key Concepts).* By Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge. New York: Polity, 2016. 256 pages. \$69.95 (cloth). \$24.95 (paper).**

***Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries.* By Vivian May. New York: Routledge, 2015. 286 pages. \$116.00 (cloth). \$37.56 (paper).**

These are anxious times for intersectionality and its practitioners. For example, at the “Key This Keyword” panel at the 2014 American Studies Association conference—where scholars reflected on widely circulating keywords to determine whether they should be salvaged or banished from our collective lexicon—nothing generated more unease than intersectionality. The analytic was immediately declared dead. Moments after a collective performance of fatigue amplified through an exasperated sense that intersectionality had already delivered what it promised, scholars voiced discomfort with “killing” intersectionality because to do that would be to “kill” black feminism or perhaps even to “kill” black women as objects of study. The room grew quiet at the prospect of symbolically slayed black women. As intersectionality slipped into black feminism slipped into black women, the analytic moved from dangerous to desirable, from peril to promise, and the audience that had been quick to kill had been convinced to rescue. The “Kill This Keyword” episode reflects one moment in a much larger theoretical, pedagogical, political, and experiential archive where intersectionality generates unease even though it has become institutionalized, made into a defining analytic across the humanities and a core program-building initiative in women’s studies, even as it has become a theory, method, and analytic used across the humanities and social sciences, and the primary way that so-called difference is theorized and described.<sup>1</sup>

Feminist debates around intersectionality—which I term the intersectionality wars—have become particularly and peculiarly contentious.<sup>2</sup> Nearly

everything about intersectionality is disputed: its histories and origins, its methodologies, its efficacy, its politics, its relationship to identity and identity politics, its central metaphor, its juridical orientations, its relationship to “black woman” and to black feminism.<sup>3</sup> At the heart of these debates is an anxiety over feminist theory’s key symbol: black woman. Feminist theory has long imagined black woman as the quintessential location of complexity and marginality, a figure that disciplines the interdisciplinary project of feminist theory by demanding an account of gendered racism and racialized sexism, and by advocating a feminism that transcends a preoccupation exclusively with gender.<sup>4</sup> Intersectionality is regularly envisioned as *the* paradigmatic analytic that stands for both black feminism and black women (indeed, the two are regularly collapsed and conflated), the theory that requires women’s studies to reckon with black woman and her imagined complexity. It is intersectionality’s ostensible capacity to remedy all that has ailed feminist theory, to provide “political completion,” that gives the analytic its analytical, political, theoretical, and even administrative-programmatic muscle.<sup>5</sup>

In the midst of the intersectionality wars, a proliferation of new scholarly work—including the three monographs under review—has emerged. If these texts reflect on intersectionality’s status as “buzzword,”<sup>6</sup> as “citationally ubiquitous”<sup>7</sup> and dominant in the field of women’s studies, they do so in the face of the significant intellectual challenges intersectionality faces, including work on postintersectionality and assemblage.<sup>8</sup> Though my own work is deeply suspicious of the reduction of Jasbir Puar’s theorizing of assemblage to a critique of intersectionality (and sometimes *the* critique of intersectionality), her analysis of intersectionality’s use as a “tool of diversity management” and “mantra of liberal multiculturalism”<sup>9</sup> reveals how intersectionality has been institutionalized in troubling ways, often made to operate as a kind of “racial alibi”<sup>10</sup> either where the invocation of intersectionality is performed instead of actual intersectional labor or where intersectionality is called on to do precisely the kind of diversity work it critiques. Indeed, Puar offers a careful reading of how intersectionality has become dominant in women’s studies so that “an interest in exploring other frames, for example assemblage, gets rendered as problematic and even produces WOC [women of color] feminists invested in other genealogies as ‘race-traitors.’”<sup>11</sup>

The three monographs that are the subject of this review—Vivian May’s *Pursuing Intersectionality*, *Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge’s *Intersectionality (Key Concepts)*, and Anna Carastathis’s *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons*—respond to the intense

battles surrounding intersectionality by operating through the corrective mode. Collectively, they constitute scholarly attempts to speak on behalf of intersectionality and to rescue the analytic from its critics, real and imagined. They perform this work through an insistence that intersectionality's critics have failed to read its foundational texts correctly, and they advance their own "accurate" readings of the analytic that are rooted in careful engagement with those foundational texts (as I argue in earlier work, they often do this by treating their own readings as acts of close reading and textual fidelity).<sup>12</sup> It is crucial to note that these three texts perform their corrective labor in distinct ways, with different levels of anxiety about intersectionality's circulations and critiques, and with different commitments to the corrective project. Yet they are marked by a similar affective thrust, a desire to save and to salvage, and to insist that the labor of rescuing intersectionality hinges on teaching other feminist scholars how to *read* and *perform* intersectionality correctly. Importantly, the corrective mode emerges in a particular institutional context, one that has allowed black feminist intellectual production to circulate apart from black feminists,<sup>13</sup> that has often fetishized black feminist work without supporting either black feminists or black feminist intellectual production, that has often allowed intersectionality to become "ornamental" or, worse, a synonym for diversity.<sup>14</sup> I linger in this context to make clear that my investment in naming the corrective mode is *not* an attempt to pathologize it; rather, in detailing its lure, I seek to destabilize the idea that if we could just perform intersectionality correctly, we would find our way out of the bind we are in.

May's point of departure in *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* is that "intersectionality seems, for many, hard to grasp or hold on to" (vii). Her project makes intersectionality tangible and responds to the myriad ways the analytic has been "misconstrued" and "used by practitioners in ways that uphold single-axis thinking, rather than align with its matrix orientation" (ix). The text productively advances a clear definition of intersectionality, mapping its distinct and significant contributions to feminist theory and practice, and articulating ways that feminists might reimagine our relationship to the analytic to unleash its explanatory power. Feminist scholars might know what intersectionality is, May contends, but we have not yet unleashed what it can do, and we often undermine intersectionality's analytic powers by refusing its "matrix orientation." Indeed, May notes that intersectionality's "misrecognition" is ubiquitous: "Intersectionality seems to risk misrecognition on nearly every front, whether co-opted by the state, corporatized in the neoliberal academy, or regulated by feminists committed to intersectionality

but who inadvertently norm it to disciplinary logics, methodological conventions, or gender-primary theoretical premises” (95).

May begins by carefully defining intersectionality: it is an “orientation” that “developed largely in the context of Black feminist and women of color theoretical and political traditions” (3). It promotes a way of thinking about power that treats “privilege and oppression as concurrent and relational and attends to within-group differences and inequities, not just between-group power asymmetries” (4). If intersectionality is often genealogically tethered to Kimberlé Crenshaw’s two articles “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex” and “Mapping the Margins,”<sup>15</sup> May emphasizes that a truly rigorous understanding of intersectionality requires a historical approach to the analytic. For May, intersectional genealogies must be more expansive and should include the black feminist scholar-activists Anna Julia Cooper, Harriet Jacobs, Ida B. Wells, and Sojourner Truth; placing these figures in intersectional genealogies reveals just how long black feminist scholars have emphasized an approach to power and inequality that emphasizes “matrix thinking” and complexity. May even reads one of Crenshaw’s two now-famous metaphors—a basement in which the multiply-marginalized are refused entry into a house because they cannot articulate their experiences of discrimination in a single-axis logic (e.g., “But for my race, I would be able to enter”)—as one that references other metaphors of containment in black literary traditions, including Ralph Ellison’s basement in *Invisible Man*. In effect, May’s insistence on intersectionality’s long roots decenters Crenshaw as intersectionality’s inaugural scholar and emphasizes intersectional theory as a long part of black feminist intellectual and political traditions.

After historicizing intersectionality, May turns to dismantling critiques of intersectionality, emphasizing that these critiques emerge from incorrect readings of intersectionality’s canonical texts. Here May curiously veers from her argument that intersectionality has myriad roots and instead treats Crenshaw’s work as *the* location of intersectional theory, asserting that critiques of intersectionality fail to adequately grapple with Crenshaw’s scholarship. She asks, “How many bother to read (and not just hastily reference) her [Crenshaw’s] larger and rather extensive body of work, attend to how she has shifted (and used various) metaphors over time, or consider how she has further explicated what it means to think of intersectionality as a heuristic, for example?” (93). She contends that scholars “hastily reference” Crenshaw rather than meaningfully engaging her ideas, that they familiarize themselves only with the two canonical articles rather than her “extensive body of work,” and that they refuse to

consider how Crenshaw has “further explicated” intersectionality in the two decades since the term was coined. Moreover, critiques of intersectionality are underpinned by a range of troubling affects including “pity or condescension” and “fear or horror,” all of which suggest that intersectionality is “a villainous destroyer of a once-coherent feminist project” (105). It is this fundamental carelessness that animates intersectionality’s critiques, a set of criticisms that May argues has become “all the rage,” a turn of phrase that suggests that the “mushrooming intersectional critique industry” is animated by trendiness and institutional incentive rather than lively and important intellectual debate (98). Finally, and most damning, intersectionality’s critiques are undergirded by a pernicious racial politic. May notes that “intersectionality turns up regularly in the critical literatures as akin to: a destructive, unruly Sapphire figure (who needs to be tamed/ taken down); . . . or a deficient body of thought in need of a remedial/ eugenic cure. These clichés have long distorted the bodies, and bodies of thought, of women of color: they are neither random nor innocuous” (106). In May’s troubling account, intersectionality’s critics enlist and reproduce racist logics as they challenge intersectionality.

If May seeks to reveal the problematic politics underpinning intersectionality’s critiques, and to save intersectionality from its critics, she ultimately advocates that we reinvest in the analytic’s fundamental and liberatory commitment to challenge single-axis thinking. Part of this investment requires freeing our own intellectual imaginations. She reminds readers, “I suggest . . . that what may be requisite is a twofold practice: actively bracketing conventional ways of knowing and, at the same time, engaging in focused bias toward intersectionality in ways that do not seek to ‘understand’ it simply by folding it into conventional logics, since this is a violation, a means of refusing or not-knowing intersectionality” (221). We must be, she notes, “biased” for intersectionality, we must actively embrace the analytic, recognizing that it “directs our attention to referents/lives/worlds that may not be understandable or perceivable within the bounds of usual cognition” (239). If intersectionality is distinctive in helping us “find ways to realize a more just world” (252), we must embrace it in all of its complexity even as it challenges us.

Like May, Collins and Bilge celebrate intersectionality, an analytic they treat as uniquely able to grapple with “complexity in the world, in people, and in human experience” (25). This capacious definition of intersectionality leaves usefully open-ended whether intersectionality is theory, method, analytic, practice, and instead renders it synonymous simply with “complexity.” Collins and Bilge emphasize that the term is both a form of “critical inquiry” and a

form of “critical praxis.” It is marked by certain “core ideas” (25), including an interest in social inequality and power, an investment in relationality, and a reliance on social context, social justice, and complexity. It is, then, a tool both of feminist theory and of feminist politics and practice, and in its breadth resides its analytical and political power.

Indeed, the greatest contribution of Collins and Bilge’s account of intersectionality is their investment in underscoring the analytic’s political work and activist underpinnings. Collins and Bilge emphasize that their project is one of making intersectionality accessible, transparent, “democratized” (30), which is to return the analytic to its roots. Intersectionality, they remind readers, was not born in the pages of a law review journal but in the political labor of women of color activists. If May emphasized intersectionality’s long roots in black feminist theory, Collins and Bilge underscore intersectionality’s long roots outside the academy. They emphasize that “intersectionality’s critical praxis can occur anywhere” (32), and they note that “college classrooms may be the place where students first learn about intersectionality, yet their experiences in dormitories, dining halls, libraries, sporting events, and for those who must work to pay for their education, their jobs become the places where intersectionality is lived” (47). If intersectionality is complex theory, method, and critical practice, for Collins and Bilge, intersectionality’s analytical bite comes from its rootedness in the experiential, the practical, and the quotidian.

Yet Collins and Bilge also aim to correct the scholarly record on intersectionality. In one chapter, “Getting the History of Intersectionality Straight?,” they ask, how do certain “histories about intersectionality’s origins become authoritative at the expense of others? What kinds of intellectual and political work do these legitimate accounts achieve in academic and activist settings? What does not getting the history of intersectionality straight tell us about how power relations influence intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry and praxis?” (64). Like other scholars who perform the corrective turn, Collins and Bilge emphasize that they are *not* “set[ting] the history of intersectionality straight” (64) even as they clearly seek to clarify and correct how intersectionality has been imagined, historicized, and narrated. It is this elaborate dance between the corrective move and the gesture to hide that move, the impulse toward “getting it straight” and the desire to hide that impulse, that often marks the corrective impulse. In Collins and Bilge’s account, intersectionality began long before Crenshaw’s canonical articles and is rooted in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. They note, “Intersectionality seemingly didn’t exist until it was discovered by academics and named and legitimated within the

academy. Via institutional amnesia that rewrites history, entire categories of people who were central to intersectionality's inception become erased from the intersectional canon" (85). It is "institutional amnesia" that allows scholars to forget intersectionality's activist orientation and to instead treat it as merely an intellectual innovation. Moreover, they emphasize that intersectionality is not the property of black women because black women have long had "heterogeneous alliances with Chicanas and Latinas, Native American women, and Asian-American women" (71). In their account, intersectionality is a *woman of color feminist* political strategy that has been taken up by the academy in ways that neglect its origins.

After engaging in their own corrective gestures, Collins and Bilge end by suggesting that "intersectionality remain open to the element of surprise" and underscore that "our efforts to provide a useful but not final definition of intersectionality speak to the impetus to invite others into the conversation" (203). Collins and Bilge find promise in intersectionality's potential and invite feminists to embrace intersectionality's "politics of the not-yet" (204). They celebrate intersectionality's complexity and difficulty, and suggest that its challenges do not mean that we should abandon it. Instead, we should see the analytic's "heterogeneity" as "a source of tremendous potential," as a vehicle for "moving toward a more just future" (204).

Carastathis's *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons*, the most analytically compelling of the three monographs, is a text that self-consciously unfolds. Carastathis begins by noting that "this is a book about reading and listening" (xi), and while her fundamental investment is in underscoring intersectionality's coalitional politics and possibilities, her key method *and* political investment is in close reading. In other words, Carastathis argues on behalf of closely reading intersectionality's foundational texts, and she performs that investment by mining Crenshaw's canonical articles again and again, often with an eye on portions of those texts that have been neglected or elided. She contends that engaging with what might seem marginal (a footnote, for example) or what has been cast aside would prove fruitful for reimagining intersectionality and its political and theoretical possibilities. Her commitment to close reading is manifested in a rejection of both intersectionality's skeptics and its fervent supporters. The book, then, performs two interventions: it disrupts "the triumphal narrative" that intersectionality has become the primary way to think about inequality and structures of domination *and* rejects "calls to go beyond intersectionality" (4). Instead, the book champions "analytic clarity, contextual rigor, and a politicized historicized understanding of the trajectory of this concept" (5).



Like May and Collins and Bilge, Carastathis performs her own historicization of intersectionality. For Carastathis, it is key to disrupt the idea that terms like *double jeopardy*, *multiple jeopardy*, and *interlocking oppressions* are proto-intersectionalities. Instead, Carastathis notes, a “deep” and “close” engagement with Crenshaw’s work reveals its particularities, specificities, and novelty. Here Carastathis breaks with May and Collins and Bilge, who look to build continuities between intersectionality and earlier terms. As Carastathis notes, “Intersectionality has a determinate extension, indexes a specific set of meanings, and is motivated by particular political and theoretical concerns” (19). It is intersectionality’s specificity, and its particular origins in Crenshaw’s work, that requires renewed feminist interest.

If intersectionality has been improperly historicized, Carastathis argues, it has also been improperly analyzed, without rigorous engagement with Crenshaw’s work. For example, Carastathis argues that intersectionality has long been tethered to Crenshaw’s metaphor of a traffic intersection. According to that metaphor, discrimination is analogous to traffic: it can flow through an intersection in one direction or another, but it can also flow through the intersection in both directions, causing particular kinds of accidents. It is these accidents “in the intersection” that Crenshaw likens to black women’s experiences of race *and* gender discrimination, experiences that antidiscrimination law renders invisible unless they can be articulated as *either* racial discrimination *or* gendered discrimination. Carastathis advocates returning to the other metaphor in “Demarginalizing the Intersections,” the one that is often overlooked: the basement. In this metaphor, Crenshaw describes how “but for” logics of discrimination operate, leaving those who cannot articulate “but for my race, I would be treated fairly” *or* “but for my gender, I would be treated fairly” relegated to the metaphorical basement, a space for those whose injuries law refuses to recognize. She asks, “Of the two spatial metaphors, why has the basement been relegated to obscurity? What happens to the metaphor of intersectionality if we detach it from the account of sociolegal hierarchy that the basement metaphor evokes?” (71). Indeed, Carastathis argues that the basement metaphor both “describes social hierarchy” and productively reveals that “the liberation of black women has the potential to uproot social hierarchy” (91). This metaphor, she argues, can displace the “mainstreaming approach to intersectionality which seeks to secure its postracial arrival by reducing intersectionality to an inclusionary politics of diversity rather than to a citational politics of anti-subordination” (95). A renewed attention to the basement, the book asserts, has the capacity to fundamentally remake feminist engagement with intersectionality and its transformative politics.

Carastathis makes a similar move when she turns to a footnote in Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins." (Here, again, she makes her point about close reading—a "real" engagement with close reading requires an attention even to the footnotes.) With this footnote, Crenshaw emphasizes that she imagines her concept of intersectionality to be a "provisional" attempt to map structural inequality. Carastathis reminds us that "a provisional concept tentatively bridges the heuristic gap between present and future, between dominant ideologies and socially transformative justice claims, anticipating or pointing toward the transcendence of a way of thinking that maintains a hold over our imaginations, or which we are not capable of overcoming, yet which we can recognize as inadequate" (109). For Carastathis, the idea of intersectionality's "provisionality" suggests that it is an analytic that we can constantly remake, one that we can embrace not only for what it has done but, more important, for what it can make possible. The idea of provisionality rescues intersectionality from critique by emphasizing that it is a work in progress, that it has begun to address complex issues of discrimination, but is merely an early attempt. It also reveals that intersectionality can be more than what it has been; for Carastathis, this means that intersectionality can be a tool for deep political coalitions and that intersectionality can be a critical tool for performing decolonial feminist work.

For Carastathis, intersectionality's perhaps still-undiscovered utility is in its potentiality. She constantly invokes the idea of the "horizon" to refer to what intersectionality might allow us to think. Intersectionality, then, is less analytic, theory, or method than a commitment to dreaming, to wondering, to imagining, to world making. This is, perhaps, Carastathis's greatest insight: she urges us to think about intersectionality as "a profoundly destabilizing, productively disorienting, provisional concept" whose work remains to be done. In this account, intersectionality refers to our desire to keep dreaming of a more just social world.

If these three texts perform their own interventions into the contentious intersectionality wars, they also raise important questions about feminist battles over this key analytic. First, all three scholarly works situate historicization as the singular method that can unearth the truth of intersectionality—its meanings and origins. Yet historicization is not without risk, and these texts often neglect to meaningfully grapple with those risks. The historicization impulse often presumes that *all* black feminist intellectual production in *all* historical periods is always already intersectional, that the labor of a whole host of black feminist scholars and activists—from Anna Julia Cooper to Deborah King—is part of the canon of intersectional thought. While my contention

is not that these scholars would resist or reject intersectionality, it is crucial to push against the notion that the work of black feminist theory has *always* been to consider the interlocking nature of structures of domination. This view can elide black feminist scholarship on love, desire, eroticism, pleasure, mourning, grief, corporeality, self-making, to name just a few of the myriad questions black feminists have considered, ignoring the myriad moments when black feminists have turned their critical attention toward theoretical and political questions removed from the interlocking nature of race and gender.

Moreover, the impulse toward historicization all too often becomes a battle over origin stories, a struggle to determine who “made” intersectionality and thus who deserves the “credit” for coining the term, rather than a rich engagement with intersectionality’s multiple genealogies in both black feminist and women of color feminist traditions. Here historicization is deployed to challenge prevailing origin stories by offering counterorigin stories. If Crenshaw did not “discover” intersectionality, Cooper, King, or the Combahee River Collective did. Yet the labor of historicization does nothing to upend the incessant desire—and pull—of locating a “coiner,” an inaugural scholar. Upsetting the impulse toward historicization, then, is also a strategy for destabilizing the lure of origin stories that necessarily attempt to tether intersectionality to the singular rather than the multiple and that yields to the university’s logic of single authorship (rather than collective creations) where a single scholar produces a distinct idea and receives credit for that concept.

Second, underpinning the corrective impulse is a fundamental suspicion of “critique.” In my own work, I suggest both that we critically interrogate how the term *critique* circulates in the intersectionality wars and that we carefully trace how and why feminists deem certain work as “critique,” effectively labeling it destructive rather than generative. Indeed, it is puzzling that in the intersectionality wars, critique is envisioned exclusively as a malicious practice undergirded by questionable motives, rather than as a critical practice that advances scholarly conversation. In place of the deep anxiety with which intersectionality’s critics have described and even condemned, I suggest that we treat the critic with love and curiosity, that we consider the world-making possibilities of the scholars and movements that have, so far, been deemed destructive to intersectionality but that have actually productively interrogated the theory and its limits. Perhaps a new approach to the scholarly debates around intersectionality—one rooted in love rather than defensiveness—can move us beyond the impasse of the present by deflating the lure of territoriality that marks so much of feminist engagement with intersectionality. Rather than

guard intersectionality's precious territory from dangerous interlopers, we can consider intersectionality as a capacious feminist gathering that has become a rich location of myriad feminist conversations.

Finally, the texts under review are surprisingly silent on the institutional politics of intersectionality, despite the proliferation of scholarly work both in American studies and in women's studies on institutionalization, the corporatization of the university, and the place of diversity in the neoliberal university. Rather than critically interrogate *why* intersectionality has become so central to academic feminist practice in the United States, the texts that are the subject of this review both presume and celebrate it. When, for example, an American studies or women's studies program makes visible its commitment to intersectionality, it is often imagined as making visible a commitment to diversity and difference (even as intersectionality is deeply critical of the rhetoric of diversity), a crucial claim in a moment where universities frequently deploy the language of diversity and allocate resources accordingly. When an American studies or women's studies program makes visible its investment in intersectionality, it is often asserting not only a theoretically sophisticated approach to so-called difference but an ethical approach as well, one deeply attentive to the complexity of the social world. These texts, then, could be deepened through a rigorous engagement with intersectionality's institutional locations and lures, asking how and why it is that intersectionality has become the primary way that women's studies and American studies programs and departments organize and orient themselves. They could pose questions like the following: How and why is it that a commitment to intersectionality is taken as a commitment to black women across the university? Why has intersectionality had a program-building muscle in US women's studies that, for example, transnationalism or decoloniality has not, and perhaps never could?

Ultimately, what is absent from these texts, and perhaps from the intersectionality wars more broadly, is a sustained interrogation of the ways that "black woman" haunts the unconscious of both women's studies and American studies. In the case of women's studies, intersectionality's promise of a "horizon" suggests a future that can account for "black woman," the field's most troubling, challenging, and ultimately rewarding figure. In American studies, intersectionality's imagined imbrication with identity politics, and black women's imagined imbrication with identity politics, means that intersectionality occupies a curious position. As the "Kill This Keyword" episode suggests, the analytic is both celebrated and reviled. In considering intersectionality's institutional lives, these texts would have an opportunity to grapple with the racial politics

of American studies and women's studies in a way much deeper than a defensive hold on intersectionality, in a way that might expose and unlock all the symbolic work "black woman" problematically remains called on to perform.

## Notes

Thank you to Samantha Pinto and Amber Jamilla Musser for their tremendously helpful feedback on this review essay.

1. While it is beyond the scope of this review, it is worth noting the importance of further theoretical and even historical work on the relationship between American studies and women's studies (the ASA notes that the discipline includes "American Women's Studies," but it is worth interrogating the form of that inclusion), and the place of feminist theory within American studies (and the question of whether American studies is necessarily a feminist discipline).
2. I develop this concept in my forthcoming book *Black Feminism Reimagined*.
3. For critical texts in these debates, see Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Nikol Alexander-Floyd, "Disappearing Acts: Reclaiming Intersectionality in the Social Sciences in a Post-Black Feminist Era," *Feminist Formations* 24.1 (2012): 1–25; Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs* 30.3 (2005): 1771–800; Kathy Davis, "Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful," *Feminist Theory* 9.1 (2008): 67–85; Hae Yoon Choo and Myra Marx Ferree, "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research: A Critical Analysis of Inclusions, Interactions, and Institutions in the Study of Inequalities," *Sociological Theory* 28.2 (2010): 129–49.
4. Black woman is imagined both as a figure that must be contended with by feminist theory and as an embodied performance in the classroom, the faculty meeting, the hiring committee where black woman is regularly conflated with black feminism and intersectionality. Thus the black female scholar is expected to perform certain kinds of disciplinarian work for women's studies, as well as to perform and embody particular forms of (exhausting) diversity labor for the field. See Amber Jamilla Musser, "Specimen Days: Diversity, Labor, and the University," *Feminist Formations* 27.3 (2015): 1–20.
5. Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 240.
6. See Kathy Davis, "Intersectionality as Buzzword," *Feminist Theory* 9.1 (2008): 67–85.
7. Wiegman, *Object Lessons*, 240.
8. Jasbir Puar's work is often taken up as the paradigmatic critique of intersectionality. In my forthcoming monograph, *Black Feminism Reimagined*, I trouble the host of ways Puar's work is treated exclusively (and dismissively) as critique. For some of these "critiques," see Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Darren L. Hutchinson, "Identity Crisis: 'Intersectionality,' 'Multidimensionality,' and the Development of an Adequate Theory of Subordination," *Michigan Journal of Race and the Law* 6.2 (2001): 285–317; and Peter Kwan, "Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation: Jeffrey Dahmer and the Cosynthesis of Categories," *Hastings Law Journal* 48 (1997): 1257–92.
9. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 215.
10. Rachel Lee, "Notes from the (Non)Field: Teaching and Theorizing 'Women of Color,'" *Meridians* 1.1 (2000): 86.
11. Moreover, Puar's work on assemblage advocates a conception of relationality and subjectivity that de-centers identity and instead embraces affect, sensation, and motion. In this account, intersectionality's imagined fixity and stasis is replaced by assemblage's dynamism and movement. I find this portion of Puar's work in many ways less significant than her engagement with the analytic's institutional life.
12. I think through this paradox in some of my earlier work on "intersectional originalism." See Jennifer C. Nash, "Feminist Originalism: Intersectionality and the Politics of Reading," *Feminist Theory* 17.1 (2016): 3–20.
13. See Nikol Alexander-Floyd, "Disappearing Acts: Reclaiming Intersectionality in the Social Sciences in a Post-Black Feminist Era," *Feminist Formations* 24.1 (2012): 1–25.

14. See Sirma Bilge, "Intersectionality Undone? Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies," *Du Bois Review* 10.2 (2013): 405–24.
15. Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989): 139–67; and Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991): 1241–99.