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Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction (1979; English Translation 1984)

Distinction gave me a way of thinking about the politics of culture that broke through exhausted debates about whether the political rested in the form or content of works. Some books alter the way you think; others systematize what you were already thinking. *Distinction*, which hardly talks about popular music, hit me at a time when I was immersed in clubs and music scenes and gave me a vocabulary with which to express unformed intuitions. Few works have been criticized on such weak grounds (that it is too French, or only about the 1960s, or that it cannot account for the struggle over meaning). In France, where the legacy of Bourdieu is oppressive, it may well be time to move on. In Canada, where we are still reluctant to think of our tastes as having a social location, it still has much to teach us.

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Feminism

The Lesbian Herstory Archives and the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, two radical lesbian feminist organizations that have become crucial to my intellectual life, recently celebrated fortieth anniversaries. In 1976, when I left Canada in search of radical politics and knowledge at a college in the U.S., I had no idea they existed. Although feminism was a forceful cultural and political movement, it didn't reach my academic life until the 1980s, when a potent fusion of poststructuralist theory and feminist canon-busting produced critiques of radical feminism. Today when critique finds itself in a state of fatigue and feminisms can sometimes be taken for granted, I can nonetheless trace the latest keywords in literary studies—*affect*, *materialism*, *posthumanism*, *environmentalism*—back to feminist attention to the body. Returning to the archive of radical feminist literature, including writers such as Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, as well as others whose names I'm still learning, I have come to a new appreciation for this history, with its contentious relation to the present, and for what we can't know about what will be important forty years later.