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IN COLLABORATION WITH



INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM AND LITERATURE: THINKING THROUGH “UGLY FEELINGS”?

Gabrielle Adjrad

In light of what has been institutionalized in the nineties as “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989), but emanated from a long tradition of feminism fostered by women of color (Hill-Collins, Bilge, 2016), feminist theory has increasingly shed light on the plurality of women’s experiences, the inseparable, overlapping and simultaneous differences constituting their identities, and the materiality of the various dominations engendered. At the turn of the twenty-first century, this paradigm seems compelling to address fictional diasporic narratives addressing the diverse discriminations encountered by migrant women and their descendants in the United States.

However, adopting an intersectional feminist approach of literature, for research or in the classroom, raises methodological issues that this paper contends with. Some thinkers have considered the double pitfall of considering, on the one hand, the text as a mimetic document of plural lives and, on the other, of essentializing a symbolical “écriture féminine” (Felski, 1989). Some have highlighted the necessary critical movement between the archetypal dimension of gender and the social and historical individuals diversely affected by this ideology (De Lauretis, 1987).

Yet, beyond this tension between an attention paid to abstraction on the one hand and experience on the other, we can consider that hegemony is made of different ideologies that may contradict one another (Balibar, Wallerstein, 1991). While intersectionality insists on not understanding identity as a compilation of various layers that could be easily partitioned, we should be wary of a critical approach that would consist in an addition of various theoretical filters somehow reconciled by the researcher. Going against such a harmonizing method, our paper will focus on the method of “interruptions” developed by Gayatri Spivak in which reading methodologies of the same text are pitted against each other, “re-constellated” to confront their flaws and socially anchored in the position of the institutional interpreter (Spivak, 1987).

In line with this pivoting role of contradiction, this paper will also demonstrate that one way to approach the literary text with an intersectional outlook is to pay attention to the representation of certain affects. Opposing a feminist tradition stressing the existence of “mass intimacy” in women’s culture (Berlant, 2008) and dialogic methods assuming a similarity of experience between reader and character (Kaplan, 1996), we will focus on “ugly feelings” challenging the circuit of sympathy and communication (Ngai, 2005) as the best embodiment of a theoretical feminist approach which values dissensus (Rancière, 2010) and seeks to foreground the structural role of difference. Doing so, we will reflect on the predominance of ethics in the feminist approach of texts and seek to substitute a political reading to a moral one, emphasizing the antagonistic “middle ranges of agency” (Sedgwick, 2002) which are neither fully hegemonic nor fully subversive.

Gabrielle Adjrad (she/her) is a PhD student at the university Paris Nanterre in France. She works under the supervision of H  l  ne Aji in the CREA (Centre de Recherches Anglophones). Her dissertation focusses on the interrelation of bad affects and difference in migration writing by women writers of the early 21st century. She has published an article on Sandra Cisneros in the

peer-reviewed journal *EOLLES* (Epistemological Others, languages, literatures, exchanges and societies) and another one will be published on the novel *Americanah* in the journal *L'Atelier* in 2021.

GLOBALIZING DOMESTIC FICTION: NARRATIVES OF MOBILE CARE AND TRANSNATIONAL HOMES

Nermine AbdulHafiz

Women account for almost half of the world's migrant workers nowadays (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 5), a phenomenon referred to as "the feminization of migration" (Hochschild "Love" 18). Female migrants mostly travel to perform reproductive labor, a highly gendered and racialized form of labor. My paper analyzes the new thematical concerns in contemporary domestic fiction and how this genre re-theorizes and re-conceptualizes notions such as the domestic space, domesticity and motherhood with strong connection to current global phenomena of "the feminization of migration" and the commodification of care within the global care industry. Through the textual analysis of two contemporary North American Novels: *My Hollywood* (2010) by American author Mona Simpson and *Between* (2014) by Canadian author Angie Abdou, my paper shows how topics of domesticity, motherhood and the home are changing in a globalized world. I argue that the novels conceptualize global domestic spaces as sites of dialectical encounters that allow for the critical examination and negotiation of power relations and gender, race, and class hierarchies embedded in the domestic sphere, particularly by examining the relationship between women their domestic workers. The novels also give voice to a counterhegemonic subculture of domesticity provided by the migrant nannies. This subculture redefines domestic themes such as home, domesticity, and motherhood and leads to the creation of ideologies, practices, and spaces of dissent and subversion for the nannies that have always existed at the periphery of life, but in these novels, they are brought to the center.

Nermine Abdulhafiz (she/her) holds a master's degree in English and American Studies from the University of Bamberg. Originally from Cairo, Egypt, she is currently working on her Ph.D. as an independent researcher in Germany. Her research project examines Artificial intelligence (AI), racial profiling, and predictive policing from a cultural studies perspective. Her research interests include 20th and 21st century American literature, African American literature, Immigrant literature, Arab American literature, diaspora, exile and migration theories, feminist theory, race theory, and globalization and gender studies.

BORDER CROSSINGS IN ANA TERESA FERNÁNDEZ’S “ABLUTION” AND “OF BODIES AND BORDERS”

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Ana Teresa Fernández’s projects, including *Erasing the Border/Borrando La Frontera* (2013), together with the community project of the same title, and selected paintings from her series *Foreign Bodies* (2013) and *Pressing Matters* (2013), have always re-visioned the border, turning it into a cultural palimpsest. Her most recent works collected in the series “Ablution” and “Of Bodies and Borders” address the question of migration across the U.S.-Mexico border and across the Mediterranean Sea, respectively. In “Ablution” the artist “submerges the body into specific sites, addressing rituals of cleansing and maintenance, focusing on gender, labor, sexuality and race, “playing an ironic dirty twist for ‘wetback’” (anateresafernandez.com). “Of Bodies and Borders” identifies “what exists within liminal spaces, seeking what is lost in the margins, between light and shadow, positive and negative space, heavy and buoyant, seen and unseen” in the process of forced migration (anateresafernandez.com).

The purpose of this presentation is to analyze and compare the artistic representations of border crossings between the U.S. and Mexico and in the Mediterranean, respectively, as addressed in the two aforementioned collections by Ana Teresa Fernández.

Ewa Antoszek (she/her) is an Assistant Professor at the Department of British and American Studies of Maria-Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. Her interests include American ethnic literatures with a particular focus on Mexican-American and African-American writers, women’s studies and representations of space(s) in literature. Her PhD analyzed multiple ways of identity construction in Chicana literature. She is the author of *Out of the Margins: Identity Formation in Contemporary Chicana Writings* (2012) and several articles analyzing issues related to the situation of ethnic minorities in the U.S. She is also the co-editor of *Inne Bębny: różnica i niezgoda w literaturze i kulturze amerykańskiej* (*Different Drums: Difference and Dissent in American Literature and Culture*; 2013). Her current research examines Latina authors and artists in the U.S. (re)writing the border

THINKING PANDEMIC ECOLOGIES WITH LARISSA LAI’S *TIGER FLU*

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This is a collaborative paper, in which we will combine our expertise in queer ecocriticism and feminist posthumanism to analyze Larissa Lai’s newest novel *Tiger Flu* (2018), which the author herself termed “weirdo-bio-transplant-geno-planetary-cyber-oldchinese-ladypunk” (Lai, quoted in Semel). Set in a futurist, post-fossil-fuel Canadian society that has to deal with the outbreak of a pandemic (the eponymous tiger flu), the novel follows a community of parthenogenic women, sent into exile by a patriarchal and corporate government, go to war against disease, technology, and an

economic system that threatens them with extinction. We argue that the palimpsestic mixture of speculative, feminist, and fantastic fiction offered by this novel provides a productive lens through which to re-think the relational precariousness of various life-forms, and to consider feminist solidarities as modes essential to survival.

Our analysis will have two focus points: Firstly, we will work with Judith Butler's concepts of precariousness, relationality and grievability (2004; 2009) to illuminate how *Tiger Flu* attends to environmental destruction as deeply entangled with social and gendered inequalities. In a society divided into a central city and four quarantine rings, access to resources – including knowledge – is under the control of a central corporation; in response, some try to survive by growing crops in a contaminated environment, some by bio-technological tinkering, while others subsist only by looting, but any of the groups in the novel seems to inevitably live at the peril of another. We will illustrate that *Tiger Flu* pushes its readers re-think relations of belonging and survival in terms of feminist and queer ecologies (Seymour / MacGregor), for example via the protagonist Kirilow Groundsel, a doctor in the Grist sisterhood, an all-female community of mutants.

Secondly, we will read the posthuman "bodies" of the Grist sisterhood and their innovative reproductive processes as enabling a re-politicization, as particularly the latter infuses their interspecies bodies with a pointedly non-bioeconomic agency (cf. Haraway 1989; 1991) and thus challenge both the aforementioned environmental destruction and social inequality present in *Tiger Flu's* dystopian world. Moreover, the novel's posthuman iterations of feminist community/solidarity invite reconsiderations of feminism as an intersectional mode of thinking which challenges binaries between human and nature, as well as between human and technologically engineered life. Drawing both observations together will lead us to an interrogation of a timely – if fictional – vision of queer-feminist posthuman existence that can survive the pull of an apocalypse triggered by a global pandemic.

Ina Batzke (she/her) joined the University of Augsburg, Germany as a post-doctoral researcher and lecturer in American Studies in 2018, after she received her PhD from the University of Münster. She is author of the monograph "Undocumented Migrants in the United States. Life Narratives and Self-representations" (Routledge 2019), which summarized her research interests in life writing and critical refugee studies, and co-editor of the volume "Exploring the Fantastic: Genre, Ideology, and Popular Culture" (transcript, 2018). She is also co-editing the open access journal "Textpraxis," and is technical editor for the "European Journal of American Studies" (EJAS). In connection with her new project, she has recently become interested in feminist technoscience, ecocriticism/ecofeminism and reproductive futurisms and investigates how interrelations between these concepts play out in contemporary speculative fiction.

Linda M. Hess (she/her) is a senior lecturer and postdoctoral researcher at the Chair of American Studies at the University of Augsburg. After receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Münster in 2016, she worked for three years as a post-doctoral researcher at the IEAS at the University of Frankfurt. Her first monograph *Queer Aging in North American Fiction* was published with Palgrave Macmillan in 2019. Her current research project, located in the field of Ecocriticism, has the working

title “Grievable Nature? American Nature, Citizenship, and Discourses of Preservation and Loss,” and is concerned specifically with relationality and grievability in the network of human and non-human agents. Her first explorations of grievable nature have appeared in her article “Networks of the Grievable in Richard Powers’ *The Overstory*” (*REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 2019). Her teaching interests include Ecocriticism, Science Fiction, and Queer & Gender Studies.

‘I WORK MY ASS OFF FOR ALL THE POETS’: WOMEN POET-EDITORS AND SMALL PRESS PUBLISHING IN MID-CENTURY NEW YORK

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During the 1960s, non-commercial small-scale publishing thrived in downtown New York, made possible by the increased availability of mimeograph machines. Communities of experimental, iconoclastic poets established a dynamic publishing subculture characterised by what ‘the sheer joy of the activity’ (Larry Fagin). Although these magazines and presses primarily published men’s writing, many were helmed or co-helmed and distributed by women poets: among others, *Yugen* was published by Hettie Jones and Amiri Baraka, *Floating Bear* by Diane Di Prima and Amiri Baraka, *Angel Hair* by Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh, *0-9* by Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer, and *Telephone* by Maureen Owen. In spite of this, these poets were repeatedly labelled in reductively gendered terms by the very poetic culture they were integral to shaping and promoting (‘wife of Paul’; ‘Baraka’s white wife’; ‘Mrs Lewis Warsh’, ‘Ted Berrigan’s girlfriend’ etc.).

This paper explores the formative but largely unacknowledged role played by women in shaping the material and intellectual cultural productions of the mimeograph revolution in mid-century New York City. I argue that women poets used their positions as editors of little magazines to claim space – material, textual, cultural, and metaphorical – in literary and social networks in which they faced gendered marginalization. I suggest that the varied success with which they were able to do so reveals the complexities of editing, the uneven nature of the influences of gender, the determining role of domestic spaces, and the significance of affective labor in relation to the mimeograph revolution.

Rona Cran (she/her, they/them) is Lecturer in Twentieth-Century American Literature at the University of Birmingham, and the Director of the University’s Centre for the Study of North America. Her research and teaching centres on the literature and culture of New York City, queer writing, and modern American poetry. She is the author of *Collage in Twentieth-Century Art, Literature, and Culture: Joseph Cornell, William Burroughs, Frank O’Hara, and Bob Dylan*. She is currently writing her second book, *Everyday Rebellion: Poetry and Resistance in New York City, 1960-1995*, which explores the relationship between poetry and resistance from the counterculture to the AIDS crisis.

ICE CROSSING: LYN HEJINIAN AND HER FRIENDS IN LENINGRAD IN 1989

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In the paper I intend to discuss the encounter of American and Russian poets and critics occurred off the map of the predictable international dialogues. Lyn Hejinian and her fellow L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets and jazz companions were invited to Leningrad in 1989 before the end of the Soviet regime to meet with their fellow artists and writers. They discussed both formally and informally language, art, and politics, sharing precious moments of convivial life which strongly affected their art and poetic works to come. Their geographical and political trespass into a country still haunted by surveillance and censorship occurred at the beginning of the Gorbachev's reforms and originated what can be considered the ultimate collective diary of the *Grand Piano* project of lyrical and collective autobiographies. Such a West Coast project of lyrical autobiography has long entered Hejinian's main poetic experiments and is reflected in the compelling collective diary titled *Leningrad. American Writers in the Soviet Union* (1991). Starting from that intense literary and cultural encounter, a unique collaboration started between Russian and American poets and a number of joint memoirs, poems, translations, and American versions of Russian literary classics followed. More specifically, my paper accounts for Hejinian's creative response to the city of Leningrad and its poets, which evolved into her long friendship and collaboration with Arkadii Dragomoshchenko. The Californian poet ventured into his work whose language she ignored to the point of conceiving an imaginative and perhaps imaginary translation of his works and an even more unique English version of the famous *Eugeny Onegin*, as divided into eight books as Pushkin's masterpiece. I thought that this lyrical and political encounter with Russian poetry which she named *Oxota* is truly worth recalling in the context of the biannual congress of EAAS in Warsaw, in an European continent strongly challenged in the last thirty years by the Eastern side of its vast and hopefully expansive, if not expanding territory. More in particular, I would like to recall the groundbreaking role played by Hejinian as an American experimental poet and feminist philosopher who interrogated her Russian colleagues' notions of self, sexuality and womanhood by entering untrodden cultural and domestic Eastern paths for the sake of mutual understanding and cultural dialogue across blocks, as it is typical of the political and lyrical agenda of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets.

Daniela Daniele (she/her) teaches Anglo-American literature and literary translation at the Univ. of Udine, Italy. She collaborates with the EAAS 19th-century American Literature Group and studies the nongeneric forms assumed by contemporary American experimental fiction and poetry to resist the crisis in mutual understanding within nations increasingly challenged by the current and recurrent states of emergency.

“OUR FIGHT TODAY IS TO SURVIVE AS A PEOPLE”: W.A.R.N.’S STRUGGLE FOR CORPORAL, SPIRITUAL, AND POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY CONTINUES

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The mainstream feminist movement made activist Carol Hanish’s “the personal is political” resonate around the world, yet largely failed to understand the intersectionality of Native women’s experiences. Native women’s issues at their base were not commonly attributed to Native men, but rather to settler colonial structural violences, which included the Eurowestern gender binary. Gender violence interrupts Indigenous relationality with the land and each other. It was understood that settler violence against Native women affected entire communities and their spiralic generations, linking corporeal with economic and political sovereignty. Early movements like W.A.R.N. (Women of All Red Nations, established in 1978) brought some collective concerns to light, but it did not assume any woman (cis or trans*) would ever claim a feminist stance. Yet, the issues that they readily agreed on were responses to particularly genocidal settler programs that directly affected the Indigenous family, and the families *as peoples*. In this paper, I center the concerns of W.A.R.N.’s first conference—sterilization abuse, political prisoners, education, the destruction of the family and the theft of children, the destruction and erosion of the land base—and discuss how Native women’s creation of their organizing principles and literary writing informed each other, and were informed by a strong necessity to express the family as the nation. Indigenous nations are formed through familial ties and understood as families informed by a spiralic understanding of temporality and intergenerational relationships. Thus, the continuous recurring of sexual violence against Indigenous women in every generation including today, the continuous recurring of attacks against Indigenous women’s bodily autonomy and ability to reproduce, and of caring for their children (transformed in each iteration, each child removal, to boarding school, or forcibly put in foster care) are direct attacks to Indigenous family that are always also an immediate attack on the Peoples. This insight makes it possible to read Native women’s activism in our current moment in a way that acknowledges the long spiraling transformations that made them what they are today, while making imaginable how they could successfully support the building of thriving Indigenous futures.

Dr. Laura De Vos (they/them) is a lecturer in the Departments of American Indian Studies, American & Ethnic Studies, and English at the University of Washington. They graduated from the University of Washington English Department in Seattle with the dissertation *Spirals of Transformation: Turtle Island Indigenous Social Movements and Literatures*. They received their MA in English Literature and Linguistics and their MBA in Cultural Management from the University of Antwerp, Belgium. They also did selected graduate course work in Gender Studies at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. Laura initiated and was the Research Assistant for the interdisciplinary research cluster "Developing a Graduate Certificate in American Indian and Indigenous Studies"; the resulting Graduate Certificate is now teaching its first cohorts. They are also an Assistant Editor for *Process: Journal for Multidisciplinary Undergraduate Scholarship* (processjmus.org). Their work has appeared in or is forthcoming from the Indigenous Studies journal *Transmotion* and the 2021 *Settler Colonial Studies* journal special issue on Gender.

KHATRU 3&4 RECONSIDERED: FEMINISM, SCIENCE FICTION, AND THE PERILS OF UTOPIA

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In October 1974, a science fiction fan by the name of Jeff Smith sent a questionnaire to a group of Science Fiction writers, almost all of them (white) women, initiating a letter-based Symposium on Women in Science Fiction that lasted seven months. This symposium eventually became a double issue of Smith's zine *Khatru* (1975), though Smith's involvement was challenged from the beginning, as were the involvement of two other supposedly male participants. Regardless, *Khatru* 3&4 is an important archive of writers and thinkers trying to work through the needs and demands of their feminisms at a crucial point for women in American life. They disagree, they take things personally, and they offer few conclusions, yet the voices of these writers still speak to us today, as do voices added to the original zine in 1993 as a retrospective on the original documents.

In this paper, I explore *Khatru* 3&4 as a critical feminist text, in the context of 1970s and 1990s feminism, and with particular attention to the role of feminist science fiction to reimagine the possible. I will examine the different perspectives offered, recognising the major setback posed by the lack of women of colour in creating this document. I will survey the role of men in the Symposium, from Jeff Smith to Samuel R. Delany, perhaps the only person of colour on the original panel, to James Tiptree, Jr., the decidedly masculine pen name and persona of Alice Sheldon, whose "real" identity was not known at the time to even her friends on the panel. Finally, I will discuss the importance of documents such as *Khatru* 3&4 to creating utopian space for thinking through what feminism is, has been, and can be. In 2021, the many conflicting voices of this Symposium speak to the needs and demands of our own feminisms. Perhaps asking more questions than can be answered, just as the original symposium did, I intend to present a small amount of the lessons we can learn from this important document.

Janice Lynne Deitner (she/her) is recipient of the 2019 Trinity College Dublin Provost's PhD Project Award "Shirley Jackson: Beyond Hill House." Her PhD focuses on the interaction of bodies and minds in Shirley Jackson's America. She is currently one of the convenors of the TCD School of English Staff-Postgraduate Seminar Series.

DE-CONSTRUCTING WHITE FRAGILITY IN THE NARRATIVE LAYERS OF KILEY REID'S *SUCH A FUN AGE*

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Already at the beginning of Kiley Reid's debut novel *Such a Fun Age* the tone of the narrative is set, and the reader is introduced to issues of race, class, gender, white fragility, and the attempt of a cross-racial dialogue between the narrative's two protagonists, Emira Tucker, a 25-year-old, recent Temple University graduate and babysitter on the hunt for her calling, and Alix Chamberlain, Emira's white, upper-class boss and small business owner. Reid alternates between the two point

of views in the voice of third-person narration, unveiling their stories. Whereas the reader learns about Emira's inability to claim her voice in the racist discourse she is positioned into, Reid thematizes the opposing struggle of Alix who starts questioning her white supremacist position without having ever questioned her privilege. Alix' polished life is turned upside down when Emira enters her life and Alix finds herself in the wake of a journey towards making up for having been color blind all her life.

After an incident at an upscale supermarket when Emira is accused of having kidnapped Briar, Alix and Peter Chamberlain's older daughter, and a racist comment Peter, a news anchor, makes on television, Alix decides it is time "to wake the fuck up. ... To get to know Emira Tucker" (Reid 35). This quest of dissecting her own racial understanding interspersed with what DiAngelo refers to as "white solidarity" ("White Fragility" 57) by her white girlfriends results in an obsession Alix develops for Emira. Moreover, Emira starts dating Kelley, a stranger who filmed the supermarket incident, and Alix' obsession with Emira continues in Kelley as both objectify Emira's persona as a Black person and fail to grasp her full character. Thus, the diegetic worlds that make up this text tackle the dichotomy of the white attempt of understanding Blackness in order to overcome color-blindness and participation in clearly racist systems.

The aim of this talk is to provide an analysis of how the characters of Alix Chamberlain and Kelley Copeland, programmed by white supremacy, experience racial discomfort and attempt to overcome racial bias by engaging in contact with Emira Tucker on a professional and personal level. By looking at the two narrative layers the novel is comprised of, I will, however, show how the narrative despite being constructed of authentic and well-intentioned dialogue between the races fails to allow character development to a large degree and in the end continues to perpetuate white supremacy. Therefore, my goal is to offer a case study of Reid's narrative in the context of DiAngelo's concept of "white fragility" (2011), claiming that in the end of the novel Emira Tucker still occupies the role of the racial "loser".

Marie Dücker (she/her) is a Postdoctoral University Assistant at the Department of American Studies at the University of Graz where she also teaches American Literary and Cultural Studies. Her research interests are in Intermediality Studies, Cognitive Literary Studies, Affect Studies, and Feminist Literary Criticism. She holds a PhD from the University of Graz and her dissertation, *Affect and Emotion in the Intermedial Interfaces of the Contemporary American Young Adult Suicide Novel*, was awarded the Fulbright Prize of American Studies for the best doctoral thesis of 2018. Her doctoral research was supported by a research grant from the JungforscherInnenfonds of the University of Graz and a doctoral scholarship for women by the University of Graz. Several study abroad opportunities in the United States and holding a Joint Master's Degree from the University of Roehampton, United Kingdom, contributed to her gaining a highly nuanced understanding of current trends within American Studies. She has significant experience in researching and teaching, worked as a Teaching Associate at Williams College, Massachusetts, and has been teaching a variety of classes on literature and cultural phenomena at the undergraduate level at the University of Graz since 2015.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF WOMEN'S STUDIES AND THE UNDERCOMMONS

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Recent contributions to critical university studies have responded to the failure of multiculturalism and diversity initiatives by imagining alternative spaces for marginalized scholars to communicate with one another about and to produce radical thought. In these critiques, scholars engage Black studies and critical Indigenous studies, in particular, in order to confront the paradox that while the university is the site of much radical knowledge production, it continuously acts to discipline and normalize this thought through administrative (and corporate) decision-making, largely related to the budget. For instance, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten imagined a kind of “third space” in their development of an “undercommons” in their book of the same name. As J. Halberstam writes in the preface to *The Undercommons* (2013), the Black, Indigenous, queer, poor, and otherwise broken “we” who inhabit/s this space “cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that we deserved to be the broken part; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls” (6).

In this paper, I ask how the undercommons can shed light on the institutionalization of women's studies and on the ongoing threat made of university budgeting (and the related ideological attacks on the viability of the interdiscipline from within and outside the university). For the purposes of this specific paper, I focus explicitly on the women's studies department at San Diego State University, which was the first women's studies department to be established in the United States. White women's widespread support for neoconservative political candidates and policies has reminded us in recent years of white women's troubled relationship to fights that foreground society's most marginalized people. In light of these tensions, I will explore a number of questions in this paper, such as: How have women's studies departments like San Diego State's capitalized on the normativity of whiteness in order to establish and maintain institutional presence? Alternatively how do women's studies departments mimic, represent, or accommodate a kind of undercommons? What are the limitations and/or possibilities of considering the undercommons and women's studies departments together?

Abigail Fagan (she/her) is an assistant professor (wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin) in American Studies at the Leibniz University in Hannover. She is currently working on a new project, a decolonial feminist critique of the university in American society, literature, and history. She is particularly interested in the role that the university has played as the arbiter of knowledge, ways of knowing, and use of Indigenous land. She received her PhD in 2019 from the University of Connecticut, where her dissertation, "Bloated: Power and the Body in American Temperance Literature," was subsequently selected to represent the university in the national CGS/ProQuest Dissertation competition. Her work has been published in *Žižek Studies: The Greatest Hits (So Far)* (2019).

THE EFFECTS OF SEXISM AND MACHISMO ON FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY— A CASE STUDY ON ELAINE BROWN AND KATHLEEN NEAL CLEAVER

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In 2018, I graduated from Goethe-University in Frankfurt, Germany with a final M.A. thesis in which I take a look at autobiographical primary sources relating to two leading Black women in the self-proclaimed vanguard organization of the Black Power movement, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, in order to determine the effects of their femininity on their leadership.¹ Founded in Oakland, California in 1966, the organization started out on a platform for local, Black, armed self-defense and ended up mobilizing supporters for their militant civil rights causes across the United States.

The historiographical analysis shows that while the declension model of the Civil Rights Movement (division of the Civil Rights Era into “good” and “bad” parts) has been revised over the past two decades, it is still common for Black men to take center stage in the context of public Civil Rights history.² Historical research of the past two decades has shown that the grassroots efforts of Black women such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Gloria Richardson, and Ruby Doris Smith Robinson were what gave the movement traction in the first place.³

This analysis is an extension of said research, as it adds to the current corpus on the intersections of gender, race, and class in the Black Power Movement.⁴ Significant work on these issues has shown that, against common misconception, Black Power organizations were not exclusively fortresses of Black militant masculinity, but also offered various emancipatory roles and spaces for Black, female identified members.

The analysis of three target groups includes male members of the party leadership, female rank and file members, as well as female party leaders and their respective autobiographical sources in the form of autobiographical texts, interviews, and statements printed in the organization’s newspaper. The analysis of these sources not only shows a development of the male party leadership’s position on gender equality, in fact a progressive development which attracted many women to the Black Panther Party in the first place, but also reflects feminist sentiment and positions among the rank and file. Finally, the results show that both Kathleen Neal Cleaver (former Communications Secretary, 1966/7) and Elaine Brown (Head of the BPP, 1974-1977) categorize their roles as women in different ways. While both women are affected by their male comrades’ sexism and machismo, which results in sexual harassment at times, they interpret and react to their experiences differently. This case study is of particular interest now more than ever, as it reflects the development of feminist activism in a seemingly hostile environment.

¹ Black capitalized throughout this text as a reference to cultural identity rather than skin color.

² Rhodes, Jane. *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon*. New York: New Press, 2007. Print.

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³ Glasrud, Bruce A., ed. *Southern Black Women in the Modern Civil Rights Movement*. 1st ed. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013. Print.

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⁴ Collier-Thomas, Bettye, and V P. Franklin. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. Print.

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"THE QUESTION OF SOULS IS OLD – WE DEMAND OUR BODIES, NOW" (1890).

VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE'S ANARCHIST-FEMINISM

Rita Filanti

While in late 19th century the so called "Woman question" flared up in the US prompting political activists and freethinkers throughout the country to fight for women's rights, – including marriage reform, birth control and suffrage, – a number of anarchist women envisioned a more revolutionary future. Inflamed by what they described as "sex slavery" and rape-in-marriage, these radicals rejected patriarchal institutions altogether, demanded sexuality separate from reproduction, and denied motherhood as intrinsic to woman's nature in outright defiance of the puritan ethos.

Focusing on Voltairine de Cleyre's substantial corpus of essays on feminist-anarchism, namely "Sex Slavery" (1890), "The Gates of Freedom" (1891), "The Political Equality of Women" (1894), "The Case of Woman Versus Orthodoxy" (1896), "The Death of Love" (1901), "They Who Marry Do Ill" (1907) and "The Woman Question" (1913), this paper will argue for the modernity of de Cleyre's iconoclastic writing (DeLamotte: 2004; Marsh: 1981; Presley and Sartwell: 2005) and for its marginalization even within the anarchist movement. Moving beyond the prevailing critique of marriage as prostitution, which Emma Goldman had also maintained (Palczewski: 2002), yet distancing herself from free lovers, polygamists and sexual varietists, de Cleyre asked not for an improvement in the structure of marriage but for its complete abolition. While Goldman, in tune with other US anarchists and freethinkers of the time (Falk: 1990; Marso: 2003; Shulman: 1972),

recognized abuse in marriage but did not reject permanent relations, romantic passion as well as the “joy of motherhood” (“The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation” 1910), de Cleyre’s views differed substantially, expanding the notion of love beyond the familial and advocating sexual expression as a universal human right. Unveiling the role of Church and State in the construction of woman’s inferiority, de Cleyre was aware of the manipulative power of language and its abuse under patriarchy, thus anticipating themes that would be relevant to twenty-first century feminist theory and women’s studies.

By comparing de Cleyre’s incendiary works to those of other contemporary anarchist-feminists, this paper will offer a reading of one of the most neglected radicals of US modern history. Her “sectarian temperament” and uncompromising, almost “fanatical code of behavior” (Avrich: 1978), often leaning towards asceticism, was doomed to be misunderstood, even by her own kin and comrades.

Rita Filanti (she/her, they/them) holds a PhD in Translation Studies & Anglo-American Literatures from the University of Bari, Italy. Currently an English teacher and literary translator, Rita has been a Lecturer of Italian and taught in Australian and North American universities for more than ten years. She has written essays on Ada Prospero Gobetti, James M. Cain, Zora N. Hurston, Sophie Treadwell, and O. E. Rølvaag, among others. Her work on Voltairine de Cleyre’s transnational anarchism is forthcoming. She is co-translator of *La luce migliore* (Milan 2006), an anthology of contemporary American poetry, and editor of numerous translations from Italian into English. Her latest publications include the Italian translations from American-English of Maxim D. Shrayer’s memoirs: *Aspettando America: Storia di una migrazione* (Pisa UP: 2017) and *Fuga dalla Russia* (forthcoming in 2021). Her latest academic interests are: censorship, gender and translation; American anarchist women; American proletarian writers of the 30s.

RESISTING CULTURAL CONTAINMENT BY RENOUNCING (BLACK) FEMINISM?: UNIVERSALIST IDEALS OF CONSERVATIVE BLACK WOMEN (2017-2020)

Atalie Gerhard

This paper analyzes how prominent self-declared conservative black women activists rhetorically legitimate their advocacy on behalf of former President Donald J. Trump under the banner of post-Enlightenment universalist visions, such as economic self-determination, familial cohesion, or intellectual independence, in selected speeches and social media posts from the years 2016 to 2021 in which they argumentatively renounce liberal feminism and multiculturalism. Simultaneously, Candace Owens in her *Blexit* campaign and the video bloggers Diamond and Silk (a.k.a. Lynette Hardaway and Rochelle Richardson) attribute to their perspectives as black women a greater centrality than to those of a (white) liberal élite against the backdrop of current politicized crises surrounding the MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements. Concerning their vocal identity performances, I thus ask whether Madina V. Tlostanova’s decolonial insistence still applies here that the everyday performances of gendered agency of non-white women should be recognized as participating in contemporary feminist discourses promoting women’s liberation even if they

explicitly reject adopting the label of feminism, which they identify as a Eurocentric legacy of colonialism. Considering how Candace Owens and Diamond and Silk strategically invoke their black community's history of enslavement and disenfranchisement to legitimate their turns to reactionary politics, however, I further situate their self-expressions along the continuum of (false) liberal universalism and "marketable" minority identity politics, as these traditions of thought have both benefitted white privilege in the past, according to Slavoj Žižek. Finally, I probe how the passionate engagements with post-Enlightenment *grand récits* of liberty (Seyla Benhabib) that Candace Owens and Diamond and Silk can be considered to claim as enabled by their intersecting racialized and gendered identities actually preclude them from imagining transgressive solidarity that diverges from ideals of inclusion into a community regulated by principles of republican nationhood (Sara Ahmed).

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GENDER VIOLENCE, POWER AND DIY RESISTANCE IN AMERICAN ANARCHA-FEMINIST ZINES

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Contemporary anarchist scenes in the United States have produced a surprising number of zines dealing with questions of gender violence, sexual assault, and responses to these phenomena. Informed by a feminist critique of rape culture, infused with an anarchist sensibility that bridges personal and political spheres, and inheriting from the riot grrrl movement a commitment to do-it-yourself (DIY) cultural production, these texts intervene from a perspective that operates at a distance from the state, preferring to pursue autonomous and prefigurative solutions through direct action. This paper will assess the distinctive accounts of power and resistance developed in these zines, and the ways in which their responses constitute DIY textual interventions.

Domination is understood by the zines' authors as something that takes over and subverts subjectivity, as an infection of the social body, or "a Culture of Rape that is totally ingrained, like an occupation that has become so entrenched as to render the tanks and soldiers unnecessary" (*Betrayal: A Critical Analysis of Rape Culture in Anarchist Subcultures*, p. 9). While zine culture as a form of participatory media has been noted for its DIY approach to cultural production, through which readers are encouraged to become authors, I argue that in their account of how to challenge this modality of power, anarcha-feminist zines also develop a DIY *politics* through their didactic and dialogic functions. These texts are oriented toward concrete intervention in the political sphere, and

guide their readers not only to become cultural producers, but also to become agents of resistance who combat rape culture in ways that are by turns caring and confrontational. As such, the zines' didacticism remains open-ended and anti-authoritarian, and their proposals for processes of restorative justice and community accountability sit alongside critiques of their insufficiency. As a result, the accounts the zines give of their central problematics, far from being dogmatic or idealistic, are grounded, reflexive and multifaceted.

Frankie Hines (he/him) is a doctoral researcher in English Literature at the University of Westminster. His research concerns anarchist literary theory and the literary production of anarchist movements in the United States since the 1990s, focusing in particular on zines about gender violence, black bloc communiqués, texts describing anarchist “dropout culture” and anarchist approaches to the city and urban space.

ACTIVIST ART AND HOPE IN THE DARK FOR FEMINIST COLLABORATION AND MOBILIZATION

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In a time of global environmental crises, the feminist movement needs to de-colonize its approaches and incorporate environmental justice and diverse voices in order to ensure a livable future, literally and figuratively. An investigation of the intersections of art, in particular literature, activism in the US and worldwide, and the notion of hope highlights the centrality of storytelling in the ongoing discussion of our role as humans in this time of global crises. Womxn like Robin Wall-Kimmerer (*Braiding Sweetgrass*) and Rebecca Solnit (*The Mother of All Questions* and *Men Explain Things to Me*) have provided invaluable written contributions and food for thought. In our tumultuous times, “artists” are aiming to raise social, political, and environmental awareness with their art. Eve Ensler, for instance, defines activism as a practice “where edges are pushed, imagination is freed, and a new language emerges altogether”. By focusing on the role of narratives, including for example poems and creative non-fiction, to convey feminist and environmental messages in contemporary activist art, I will discuss a variety of genres and technologies that are currently being used for resistance purposes. A selection of contemporary and older texts, such as Audre Lorde’s *Sister Outsider*, and other narratives, images, and songs, allows for a holistic discussion of how these texts were and are used in resistance and activist movements in terms of communication, collaboration, and mobilization. Solnit’s essay collection *Hope in the Dark* aids in focusing on the accomplishments and changes that have already happened by introducing the idea of hope as a resistance practice against feelings of despair or optimistic naiveté. The collection, which has been called a foundational text of modern civic engagement, presents hope as an act of defiance that can lead to transformative movements. In their collaborative poem and video “Rise”, Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands and Aka Niviâna from Greenland convey a sense of hope while juxtaposing the fates of their respective islands, thus reconceptualizing the notions of solidarity, stewardship, and global activist collaboration in the 21st century.

Yvonne Kaisinger (she/her) currently lectures at the German Studies department at Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland. She successfully defended her PhD dissertation, which is titled “An Ocean of Words: Literature and the Environment on Caribbean and Pacific Islands,” in the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Salzburg, Austria where she also worked as a research and teaching associate. Her research interests include activism, postcolonial ecocriticism, gender studies, American Studies, and island studies. She co-edited a collection of essays on manifestos and a collection on US American utopias and dystopias.

RECIPES FOR HEALING: THE DIVERSITY OF CARE WITHIN CONTEMPORARY CHICANA LITERATURE

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Care ethics have become a central focus of feminist thinking, but definitions of care are too often conceptualized through the filter of white women’s experiences, which ignores the fact that definitions of care are rooted in place and culture, as well as influenced by factors such as class and race.

Defining care is, I argue, a central undercurrent in writings by contemporary Chicana feminist writers, who offer an intersectional and culturally specific perspective on care, by exploring what good care looks like within working-class Chicana culture.

These writers challenge the dominant culture’s obsession with health and its denial of vulnerability, by highlighting vulnerable bodies and minds and trying to pinpoint what is involved in the work of caring for them. In so doing, they foreground non-stereotypical models of care.

In the conception of care those writers put forward, institutionalized medicine is only one piece of the puzzle, and has to be complemented by communal care and caring relationships taking place at other sites of care (such as the home or the land). Technical gestures are not by themselves presented as conducive to good care, which is more often described in terms of a caring physical and emotional presence. Western medicine and science can only do so much and often occupy a marginal place within these writings’ explorations of care.

In those texts, care can come from unexpected directions— from benevolent grandmothers as well from prostitutes, from the land, from food (in keeping with the tradition of “curanderismo,” a form of Mexican folk medicine which uses medicinal plants and foods as ingredients for remedies). Contemporary Chicana literature presents us with a diversity of carers but also of cared-for subjects. Within these texts, the subject of care—or who care is addressed to—is also diverse, including living people, spirits, animals, and the land.

Therefore, this paper will explore the idea that contemporary Chicana writers (including Ana Castillo, Kali Fajardo-Anstine, Sandra Cisneros and Pat Mora) suggest that care can take diverse forms, explore various practices of caring and answer Parvati Raghuram’s call to dislocate care “from the normative white body through which much care is theorized” (17).¹

Those literary texts echo care ethics by thinking about vulnerability and relationality, and by looking at the particulars of specific caring interactions. In so doing, they encourage us to recognize the diversity of care, drawing our attention to the varied textures of ordinary caring relationships.

¹ Raghuram, Parvati. "Race and feminist care ethics: intersectionality as method." *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1-25.

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FATHERING BETWEEN BLACK MALE FEMINISM AND TOXIC MASCULINITY IN THE SELLOUT

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Black fathers are misrepresented in America. This is generally related to society's problematic view about Black men that led to their victimization by the judicial system. In recent years, President Obama added to this complexity when he accused many Black fathers of acting like boys instead of men in his 2008 speech at the Apostolic Church of God. Through searching in the literature, a positive image for the Black father in the African American literary works is almost missing. What I am trying to do in this paper is to search for a new Black father. In order to achieve this objective, I will analyse Paul Beatty's novel, *The Sellout* (2015). In this paper, I will argue that although the novel uses the narration of the traditional Black masculinity, it is, in fact, a novel that bases itself on the principles of Black Male Feminism to present a healthy form of Black fatherhood. Black Male Feminism is an essential theoretical tool in making this new Black father. According to Ronda Anthony, this new Black father is "non-hegemonic, [who uses] alternative black masculinities that are nurturing, supportive, and productive to black people and communities" (*Searching for the New Black Man* 13). Also, Michael Awkward says that when Black men explore family matters, such as fatherhood, they "can expand feminist inquiry's range and utilization" ("*Black Man's Place(s) in Black Feminist Criticism*" 14). Paul Beatty, through his characters in the novel, provides this exploration. One of the novels' fathers represents traditional masculinity but fails miserably in his family relationships. On the other hand, the protagonist is successful in being a father figure for the children in the ghetto because he is a nurturer and empathetic. In conclusion, although the teaching of traditional masculinity is the predominant mentality for the Black men in the novel, those men who choose not to follow these principles are happier and better fathers. As the narrator breaks the traditional mentality, he wins the city's people, and his hometown is placed back on the State's map. However, it is hard to find a complete form of new and healthy fatherhood inside the ghetto because structural racism creates social obstacles.

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INTERTWINING GENDER AND RACE IN *GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER*

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Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967) forced upper middle-class white parents to face the results of their well-meaning support of the Civil Rights movement as their daughter announces her engagement to a black man. Stanley Kramer, director and producer of the film, and William Rose, who wrote the original screenplay, intended this film as an entertaining sermon to white Americans that would convince them of the foolishness of racial prejudice. The plan was to eliminate any potential objection to the couple so that the only remaining objection would be color prejudice. To draw audiences, Kramer convinced Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn to star as the parents in what would be the dying Tracy's final film and their last work together. He matched them with Sidney Poitier – the major black star of the day. Joining these three powerhouses was Hepburn's niece, Katharine Houghton as the ingénue. Perfection of character type was key to this tale of happy integration.

I doubt that Kramer or Rose themselves fully understood the intersectionality of each of his characters – both major and minor. Generational assumptions about race, gender, and class define the characters.

It is clear he had no understanding of the burgeoning feminist movement of the 1960s that would break many old boundaries in the next decade. He did not merely argue against feminism. He eliminated it. In part, this may be as a trade-off to allow for racial change. Kramer goes beyond ignoring feminism. His portrayal ignores feminism to the point that his portrayal of white women imagines an extreme anti-feminism as a given.

This paper will explore several variations of intersectionality in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and assess how each combination is integral to this story. Even the black supporting characters contribute to lessening the perceived threat of interracial love. Stereotyping the intersectionality of each character while refusing to question many racial stereotypes of the past, contributes to making white Americans comfortable. The result of these portrayals in this iconic cultural production became a strong collective memory that may have led to a sense of self-satisfaction among many white people.

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have trained, I am the only historian of American Women (Gender and Race) in Norway. Others study Literature. My work looks at how gender and race intersect. Currently under submission is an article using Critical Race Theory to analyze Hidden Figures. This paper is intended as a chapter to a book on Guess Who's Coming to Dinner. Another book and an encyclopedia are also intended to examine interracial sex and romance in the movies.

“PEOPLE V. O.J. SIMPSON: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON THE ‘TRIAL OF THE CENTURY’ AND THE WOMAN AS SPECTACLE”

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The 1990s were promising times for women in the US. Building on the achievements and protections obtained by first- and second-wave feminists, the new generation seemed to thrive with new-found self-determination, joining the workforce or pursuing higher education, delaying marriage and children, questioning and redefining popular ideas about beauty, womanhood, gender, and sexuality.

In the highly media-saturated milieu of the mid-1990s, however, the promise of equality and parity was ultimately undermined by what Allison Yarrow called the process of “bitchification.” With the ubiquity of 24-hour news cycles, the media and public developed a persistent fixation on female public figures, who were often reduced to and discredited based on misogynistic stereotypes. In this scandal-driven environment, former NFL-player O.J. Simpson stood trial for double murder in Los Angeles in 1995. Over the course of the legal proceedings, prosecutor Marcia Clark and the murder victim, Nicole Brown Simpson, moved to the foreground, revealing the danger of unidimensional perspectives on the issues of gender, race, and class.

Marcia Clark's public image, for instance, swung between two extremes and was characterized by sexual ambiguity. While supporters praised the single-parent prosecutor for using her intelligence instead of exploiting her femininity in legal arguments, critics perceived Clark's actions as a feminist attempt to demean O.J. Simpson's symbol of black masculinity. Any change towards a more feminine appearance, however, was equally met with judgment, particularly from feminists, who accused Clark of trivializing the issue of sexism in America by using it as a trial strategy.

In contrast to the toughness of the prosecutor stood the eroticized pin-up image of Nicole Brown Simpson, promoting the woman as sexual object and spectacle. White feminists' attempts to frame the murder victim as a casualty of misogynist violence were met with resistance and particularly and widely rejected by African American women, who were torn between gender solidarity and the fight against stereotypical antiblack sentiment in the media and the criminal justice system.

By bringing their attention to the domestic issues in the Simpson family, the media also inadvertently placed miscegenation to the forefront of the case by contrasting the traditional nuclear white American family model to modern family norms. Consequently, it stood out that O.J. Simpson had not only potentially killed his ex-wife, but he as an African American man had allegedly killed his *white* ex-wife. Simpson's celebrity and marriage thus became a gateway through which

dominant ideological messages about gender, race, class, and sexuality were transmitted and opened up for debate.

Tatjana Neubauer (she/her) has been teaching and researching as a doctoral student at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, GERMERSHEIM campus, since 2016. She is a member of the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies, the American Studies Association, and the German Association for American Studies. In 2019, she completed a six-month research stay as a Fulbright grantee at Columbia University in New York City.

RACIST FEMINISM(S): WHITE SOUTHERN WOMEN'S POST-CIVIL WAR COMMEMORATION AND EMANCIPATION STRATEGIES

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For several elite white Southern women, the American Civil War gave birth to emancipation, a new reality most meant to preserve. In the postbellum period, these women were trying to have it both ways—on the one hand, they longed to return to the glory days of the Old South when life was better for their (white) selves, but on the other hand, they were finding it beneficial to have more rights and opportunities, including political clout and professional careers. In this paper, I shall illustrate that while the Lost Cause was nominally celebrated to memorialize the lives of dear ones, these women even more so felt the need to connect their moment of self-assertion and engagement in public affairs to the national momentum and pride in the rebirth of the American nation that the Civil War had ushered in. The legitimacy of their new public roles indeed emanated from their self-glorified participation in the Civil War. Eminent scholars of Civil War culture have maintained that white Southern women nostalgically hailed the Southern past from a wish to return to antebellum race, class, and gender structures that would guarantee their former comfortable life-style. However, my study of white women's Civil War and postwar diaries indicates that, on the contrary, glorifying the South's character and role in the war became a means of asserting newly won female agency and the right to participate in public life. My aim is to outline that Southern women's engagement in the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), a Southern commemoration institution, is therefore not a paradox of emancipated lives versus old-fashioned, but glorified gender hierarchies. On the contrary, the UDC provided a legitimate stage for women to join public debates on Civil War history, school curricula, and race relations. In addition, the United Daughters celebrated the Confederacy as a joint venture of Southern men and women and thus as the cradle of Southern women's emancipation. Finally, participation in the UDC also set these white women off from African American women, perpetuating their assumption of racial supremacy without necessarily returning to Old South patriarchy and planter class dominance. White UDC members' exclusivity from black women not only contributed to the retention of older attitudes toward blacks, it also led to the implicit and often explicit support and validation of the new white supremacist terrorism.

Julia Nitz (she/her) is Lecturer of Anglo-American Cultural Studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. She has served as Executive Director at the Center for American Studies and is co-founder of the Intercontinental Crosscurrents Network for the study of transatlantic women's networks in the long nineteenth century (crosscurrents.uni-halle.de). Her research focusses on the American Civil War, women's life writing, intertextual cultural studies, historiographic and museum narratology as well as Anglophone (Caribbean) film and adaptation studies. Her most recent monograph *Belles and Poets: Intertextuality in the Civil War Diaries of White Southern Women* (LSUP, 2020) establishes the extent to which literature offered a means of exploring ideas and convictions about class, gender, and racial hierarchies in the Civil War-era South.

OUTSIDE OF THE COLLECTIVE AND OUTSIDE OF THE "SISTERHOOD"? PROBLEMATIC FEMINIST POSITIONS IN WOMEN'S UNDERGROUND COMIX IN THE US

Małgorzata Olsza (malgorzata.olsza@amu.edu.pl)

American women's underground comix from the 1970s and the 1980s, including *It Ain't Me Babe*, *Wimmen's Comix*, *Tits'n'Clits*, *Dynamite Damsels*, *Twisted Sisters*, *Dyke Shorts* and others, emerged in direct correlation with the rise of the second-wave feminism, allowing women to express themselves artistically (against the dominant, as the comix artist Trina Robbins put it, "old boys' club" mentality of the male-dominated field) and politically. Many feminist comix magazines operated as democratic collectives, propelled by the notions of sisterhood, often with a rotating editor. In my talk, I wish to revisit this particularly interesting period in the history of feminist comix, focusing on problematic feminist positions inscribed both in the practices and products of the women's underground comix movement in the US, specifically as regards LGBTB comix artists. Despite its collective nature, women's underground comix emerge as a complex space for lesbian comix artists, either (mis)appropriating their voice or problematizing their position on the comix scene. A prime example of the former is the short comix story "Sandy Comes Out" published in the first issue of the now legendary feminist comix collective *Wimmen's Comix* in 1972. Although it is arguably one of the first lesbian comix stories ever published, it was nevertheless created by Trina Robbins, who identifies as straight, and was thus an "imagined" and (mis)appropriated voice constructed in keeping with the ideals of lesbian feminism. The critique of this comix story by Mary Wings and Roberta Gregory, lesbian writers and comix artists, resulted in their search for new creative outlets, positioned in a more nuanced relation to the women's underground comix scene. Both artists created their own comix, *Come Out Comix* (1973) and *Dynamite Damsels* (1976) respectively, which functioned outside of the collective and outside of the "sisterhood." Ultimately, in my survey look at the history of women's comix in the US in the 1970s and the early 1980s, I want to trace the problematic transition from feminism as a utopia to a more complex space, located at the intersection of theory, activism, and representation.

Dr Małgorzata Olsza (she/her) is Assistant Professor at the Department of American Literature at AMU. Her Ph.D. thesis was devoted to the poetics of the contemporary American graphic novel

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THE FIRST LADY MYSTIQUE: FEMINISM, AMERICAN WIVES AND THE GENDERED LABORS OF CIVIL SENTIMENTALISM

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This paper historicizes the First Lady role from a feminist perspective as American wife. It proposes a taxonomy of American wifedom and recalibrates the study of the First Lady: away from white liberal feminist questionings about her “agency” and towards a transnational look at the role, the sentimental meaning and care work laid at the door of this political spouse, and a study of FLOTUS’s “domesticity” and republican motherhood. The case studies I employ to delineate my argument are Michelle Obama and Melania Trump, thus locating my paper in relation to intersectional and white liberal feminisms. And seeking to map FLOTUS as a controlling image of American wifedom and as a tool of what Heike Paul calls “civil sentimentalism”.

Stefanie Schäfer (she/her) is a scholar of North American Studies and currently a Marie-Curie fellow at the University of Vienna’s Department of English and American Studies and author of *Yankee Yarns: Storytelling and the Invention of the National Body in 19th Century American Culture*. (forthcoming May 2021 with Edinburgh UP). Her research interests are situated at the crossroads between Feminist and Gender Studies, Visual and Popular Culture, and Mobility Studies. She holds a PhD in English (Heidelberg, 2009) and a *venia legendi* in North American Literature and Culture (Jena, 2017) and has worked as visiting professor of American Studies at the universities of Erlangen-Nürnberg and Augsburg, Germany.

FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP IN/AND THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM: POLITICAL CONTEXTS AND THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

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The paper will attempt to reflect on the recent developments in the interdisciplinary field of American studies and its imbrications with its cultural and political contexts. Pushing for the need to take the popular seriously - popular film and television as well as popular political movements – and considering the growing demand from students for a deeper and more sustained engagement with intersectional feminism, the Paper will endeavor to urge even the confirmed feminists as also academicians, researchers and students, to rethink and refresh their approaches to teaching and

performing scholarship. Due care needs to be taken to ensure that Feminist Theory/ Studies is not subsumed by American Studies/ Literature, and that the two fields are equally linked. We have seen how the political, social and intellectual feminist movements have always been chaotic, multivalenced, and disconcerting: a sign that they are thriving! What we, therefore, need is a weaving together of academic and pop-cultural sources to underscore our responsibility to maintain, nurture, and contribute to the progress made by previous generations of feminists. Given the fact that feminist theory today is defined as not solely an analysis of gender but of the intersections of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, and other markers of difference that characterize individuals and their relationships to institutionalized power, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the increasing relevance of feminist theory and the discipline's current push towards Transnational Studies as well. A transatlantic feminist lens would also bring to light and historicize the different constructions of masculinity and their interactions with race, class, and culture. In addition, the extensive academic and theoretical apparatus needs to be deployed in order to drive home the importance of inclusion; an acceptance of the sexualized human body as non-threatening; and, the role of social media in gender-bending and leveling hierarchies. The idea is to best provide students with the theoretical tools to strengthen and define their understanding of feminism as a discipline as well as an attitude, ready to support a new broad-based (feminist) activism in the home, in the workplace, in the sphere of social media, and in the streets.

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'WHITE TEARS' FEMINISM: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF WHITENESS, WOMANHOOD, AND FEMININITY

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Toni Morrison identifies the significance of race as well as "the presence of the racial other" (46) as the fundamental pillar of US American identity construction, stating that Americanness is ubiquitously associated with whiteness and juxtaposed by Blackness. Robin Di Angelo further explains that 'us' and 'them' thinking continues to saturate the very fabric of American society, creating a feeling of internalized white superiority and resulting in a biased racial equilibrium

perpetuated by institutional power. While US American feminist scholarship and movements have continuously advocated for the equality between men and women, considerations of race and racism have historically received significantly less attention and alienated Black women from the cause. According to Morrison, US American society considers “a black female as the furthest thing from human” (85), an observation, which resonates in the discriminatory stereotypes, such as the biased trope of ‘the angry Black woman’. Feminist scholars, among them Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term ‘intersectionality’, have critiqued the virtual erasure of Black women’s experiences within US American feminism and examine the intersecting forces of discrimination pertaining to race and gender. Relying on Nahum Welang concept of ‘triple consciousness’, based on W.E.B. Du Bois’ ‘double consciousness’, that affects the lives of Black US American women, this paper will discuss how (feminist) discussions about racism are commonly distorted by ‘white fragility’ (Di Angelo) and its deflecting mechanisms, often involving ‘white tears’, which aim to preclude meaningful conversations and turns the tables forcefully eliciting Black emotional labor. The following will further examine the continuously pervasive juxtaposition of Black and white women in feminist contexts and explore how the claim of feminist universalism and cultural constructions of whiteness inform historic and contemporary perceptions of Black and white womanhood and femininity.

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BLACK GENEALOGIES IN YAA GYASI’S *HOMEGOING*

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The debut novel *Homegoing* (2016) by Ghanaian American writer Yaa Gyasi follows six generations of Ghanaian and African American descendants of two half-sisters born to an Asante woman named Maame in the territory of today’s Ghana in the eighteenth century. While one of the sisters and her descendants remain in West Africa, the other is captured, shipped to North America, and enslaved. The two family branches reunite in the late twentieth-century US where the African American descendant Marcus and the Ghanaian descendant and second-generation US immigrant Marjorie meet. Covering the two family branches across the Atlantic and three centuries, the historical novel reflects genealogies of twenty-first century transatlantic Blackness through the trope of the family and its perpetual quest for escape, refuge, homegoing, and homemaking in the face of enslavement,

(post)colonialism, migration, imprisonment, and poverty on both sides of the Atlantic. In doing so, it traces contemporary Black presences in North America not only to the history of the transatlantic slave trade but also to more recent migration across the Atlantic between Africa south of the Sahara and the United States in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, while insisting that both have a common origin in the transatlantic history of slavery, colonialism, and their afterlives. Joining the ranks with prize-winning realist novels, such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* (2007), Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011), and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), *Homegoing* brings together discourses around US immigration and slavery that until recently have been received "as two distinct stories" and together challenge "expected ways of narrating both America and Africa" (Goyal, *Runaway Genres* chap. 5). Due to its complex transnational and diasporic disposition, *Homegoing* negotiates past and present concepts of Blackness and the anti-blackness that both African Americans and Black migrants face without distinction in the United States and elsewhere (cf. Sexton, "People-of-Color Blindness" 53). Drawing on recent Afro-pessimist and Black feminist critical interventions, this paper analyzes how *Homegoing* rethinks these concepts in the "afterlife of slavery" (Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* 6). As Marjorie, the daughter of Ghanaian immigrants in Alabama, is told at school: "Here, in this country, it doesn't matter where you came from first to the white people running things. You're here now, and here black is black is black" (Gyasi 273).

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PROVINCIALIZING U.S. FEMINISMS

Katharina Wiedlack

In this short presentation I want to ask the question what we could learn, if we understood US feminism, and especially its radical iterations that fundamentally challenge conservative and neoliberal institutions, not as a progressive force that emerged and thrived in the West, before it was exported to safe 'the Rest' of the world, but as a multiplicity of imports. To put it slightly

differently: what if feminism was historically non-western knowledge imported to the US by exiles, migrants and travelers to the US from elsewhere?

We live in a highly polarized world today, where on the one hand different forms of feminisms, including queer feminisms and trans*feminisms enjoy broad acceptance and even support, while on the other, anti-feminist forces, populist neo-conservatives and right-wingers have an equally broad fellowship. Although this polarization is still somehow understood to follow a West/East and North/South divide, especially within the US context, these worldwide polarizations became visibly pronounced during the term of the 45th US-president among the US people. What complicates the picture of a “righteous” western feminist front fighting its opposition is that “nationalist, (alt)right, racist, and xenophobic “feminisms” have been gaining popularity and populist support in Europe and the United States, deploying racist and racializing tropes firmly rooted in anti-Black and anti-Muslim racism,” as the call for this conference states. Moreover, white academic feminisms often participate or adapt right-wing political positions without actively or visibly explicating their positionality. Feminist theorists and scholars such as Audre Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (1981) protested the anti-Black racism of different feminisms already in the 1980s, while queer feminist scholars such as Jasbir Puar (2007), Hartman (2019) and many others address the current undergird of racist thinking within queer and feminist politics and theories. Importantly, these scholars have sharply criticized feminisms western-centrism and its perpetuation of western hegemonies. Building on these scholars’ work, as well as approaches that protest the silencing of knowledge from the so-called global South (de Sousa Santos 2014, Anzaldúa 1987, etc.) and coming from a historical perspective that focuses on the late 19th and early 20th century, I want to understand feminism not as a genuinely western and US-American movement and corpus of theories, but as an assemblage of positions that emerged elsewhere and were imported by travelers, immigrants and exiles.

While I do not want to limit this elsewhere to a specific location, for the purpose of my talk, I will focus on the import of Russian Marxism to US-feminism, and particularly Black feminisms, from Louise Thompson Patterson’s and Eslanda Robeson’s to Angela Davis’. Changing the perspective on US-feminisms, I intend to “provincialize” white US-feminisms, and deconstruct notions of US progress and hegemony. At the same time I intend to take historic transnational alliances seriously, and offer them as positive example of the creation of change.

Katharina Wiedlack is FWF Senior Post-Doc Researcher at the Department of English and American Studies, at the University of Vienna. Her research fields are primarily American Cultural and Literature Studies, American-Russian relations, queer and feminist theory, popular culture, postsocialist, decolonial and Dis/ability Studies. Her first book “Queer-Feminist Punk: An Anti-Social” was published in 2015, by the feminist publisher Zaglossus. Currently, she is working on two independent research projects. Her FWF Elise Richter project “Rivals of the Past, Children of the Future” focuses on the discursive construction of Russia within Western thought between the time of the American purchase of Alaska and the beginning of the Cold War. Her second FWF project is an arts-based research project and collaboration with Masha Godovannaya, and Ruth Jenrbekova from the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. It focuses on questions of in/visibility, queer ways of living, community building, and archiving within the post-Soviet space.